

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Good Resolutions are mind painted pictures of good deeds: fancies, day-dreams, whisperings of the Buddhi to the Manas. If we encourage them they will not fade away like the dissolving mirage in the Shamo desert, but grow stronger and stronger until one's whole life becomes the expression and outward proof of the divine motive within.

—A MASTER OF WISDOM

AS the sun moves northward, from December 21st, the days become longer—bringing more light, warmth and brightness. Just as in the entire day the physical and psychic atmosphere of the early morning is the most conducive for study and meditation, so also this time of the year is best suited to make resolves. H.P.B. writes:

Let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be coloured, so can a year. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfil them consistently. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 23, Foreword*)

Sun is the giver of life physical and metaphysical. During the northward movement of the sun there is renewal and refreshment of life energy. Astral body in man and astral light in nature is the vehicle of the life energy. Every thought and feeling leaves an

impression on the astral light. Good thoughts and ideation impressed on the astral are attracted to us and support us—by the law of consubstantiality—whenever we make a resolve to be good. Thus, the astral acts as an unobstructed pipe or a sieve. This support is greater during this period due to renewal of life energy.

What are we going to wish for ourselves and for others? H.P.B. advises that all of us must vow to make, not only our own lives but also the lives of others around, not just beautiful but divine. As the Buddha says, “Neither for himself nor for others will the wise man crave sons or wealth or position.” No doubt, there is only a microscopic minority that wishes and struggles for spiritual life. But all the same, our New Year greetings must not be limited to wishing our friends and loved ones mere material prosperity, but must include their inner development and spiritual progress.

The first of January was sacred to god Janus and *janua* means “the gate that openeth the year.” January 3 is sacred to Minerva-*Athene*, the goddess of Wisdom, and also to *Isis*, “she who generates life.” However, “it is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists...as their New Year.” The 4th of January is sacred to Mercury-Budha or Thoth-Hermes. It was the day on which the *Kumaras* lighted up *Manas*, making man a thinking and choosing being.

God Janus was revered as the “god of beginnings,” by the Romans. Janus watched the gate which opened a year. He is the presiding deity over the month of January. He is a double-faced god with one face old and another face young. The old face represents the past and the young represents the future. With the key of garnered knowledge, he opens the New Year and with the staff he moves to higher altitudes.

Each human being is a striving and progressing Janus-like being. The good and the bad in each one of us are wrestling for victory. Man, too, is double-faced. The two faces represent our two natures—higher and lower. We are reminded every New Year that the fight is still going on between the higher and the lower. The old face which looks from the region of past memories and the

new which peeps from the region of hope, still has hold over us. We begin the New Year with a hope, looking forward to pleasure and happiness. These hopes are frustrated. Hopes, fears, memories and anticipations keep the human consciousness in a non-integrated state. The suggestion is to forget the emotional experiences attached to the past events that tend to take control of our mind and colour the present and the future. Once we have extracted the lesson from an event, we must let it pass without brooding over it. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness. H.P.B. writes:

For the occultist and average Theosophist the Future and the Past are both included in each moment of their lives, hence in the eternal PRESENT. The past is a torrent madly rushing by, that we face incessantly, without one second of interval; every wave of it, and every drop in it, being an event, whether great or small. Yet, no sooner have we faced it, and whether it brings joy or sorrow, whether it elevates us or knocks us off our feet, than it is carried away and disappears behind us, to be lost sooner or later in the great Sea of Oblivion. It depends on us to make every such event non-existent to ourselves by obliterating it from our memory; or else to create of our past sorrows Promethean Vultures....In the first case, we are real philosophers; in the second—but timid and even cowardly soldiers of the army called mankind, and commanded in the great battle of Life by “King Karma.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 28*, p. 4)

The face that looks enquiringly and expectantly to the future, represents hope. Hope is a theological virtue, which suggests that if we struggle, we can be better. From wherever we are, there is a way leading to a state of unconditioned happiness. As a first step, we must *resolve* to be better or be perfect.

The tradition of making New Year resolutions dates back to the Babylonian period, when the most popular resolution made was to return borrowed farm equipment, writes Piali Banerjee (*The Times of India*, January 2004). The quality of resolutions and the

enthusiasm have undergone change over the years. She humorously remarks that our grandparents resolved to read 20 good books a year; our parents, 10 good books a year; we, probably resolve to read five good books a year; the next generation might resolve, “I will finish reading this one book, by the end of the year.” Some of us make small and realizable resolutions. Some make earth-shattering resolutions and work proportionately hard to make them come true. Jim Carrey wrote himself a \$10 million cheque on a New Year’s Day, and promised himself that he would make it come true. He rose to stardom and did earn a lot more than ten million.

In *The Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie writes:

All have doubtless made New Year’s resolutions, and all, no doubt, have failed to keep them. There must be reason for our failures....The reason for our failures is that we do not understand our own natures. Our first mistake is to make *negative* resolutions. We say, I will *not* drink; I will *not* lie; I will *not* do this; I will *not* do that. Whereas the proper resolve to make is that—I *will* do this, the opposite of what we are now doing. In this case, we make a direct affirmation of the will, while the other form of resolution puts us in a purely negative position. (pp. 310-11)

Often, we make resolutions only because it is proper to make them. Hence, we do not really expect to keep them, and seem to give up the struggle after a few days. We forget the need to persist and to sustain the resolution. If we do not act upon our resolution or strive to keep it, then it is as good as not having made the resolution. We need to persist, because when we make a resolve, there is an opposition on the inner planes. In the face of this resistance, we must be vigilant and refrain from taking a liberal attitude. We need to practise *Shila* virtue, harmony in word and act. A resolve is a promise made to oneself. And Mr. Judge says that the promises he made to himself, he considered to be as important as the promises he made to other people.

When we undertake self-discipline, we first make an ideal plan or *Sankalpa* and then execute it. *Kalpa* means, “to form an idea or

image.” Thus, *Sankalpa* is to so thoroughly think and imagine that the thing thought about gets translated into action. Desire and will play an important role. Sangharakshita, in his book, *Vision and Transformation*, defines *Samyak Sankalpa* (right resolve or perfect emotion) as Perfect Will or Integral Emotion. It represents harmonization of the whole of the emotional nature with our vision of the true nature of existence, *i.e.*, Perfect Vision. The first step in the Noble Eightfold Path is “Perfect Vision,” which represents the phase of initial spiritual insight and experience. However, to achieve any concrete results, this must be followed by “Perfect Emotion,” *i.e.*, one needs to transform one’s emotional nature in accordance with initial insight and understanding.

In other words, our resolves are no better than mere intellectual formulations, unless backed by intense desire or emotion. When the desire is intense, “will” comes into action. At times, we feel that we had intense desire and yet nothing happened. However, when we say “I wanted to come and see you so badly but I could not,” this “wanted to” was not intense enough. Our desire nature is so divided that we ourselves do not know it fully. The *Gita* describes the state of a man who is fully possessed by desire: “The hungry man loseth sight of every other object but the gratification of his appetite.”

Mr. Crosbie points out that we contract the divine power of Spirit within us to the pin-holes of personal desires and selfishness. We are not able to call forth the spiritual will because our ideas are small, mean and selfish. Spiritual will can be developed by true unselfishness, by being prepared to be guided and assisted by our Higher Self and being ready to undergo all the experiences of life—to be ready to drink, up to the last bitter dregs, whatever the cup of life contains. Most of all we must be willing to mortify the personal self.

The making of these resolutions at the time of the New Year has a greater relevance. We may begin by making small resolutions like “I will not take a second helping of ice-cream,” or “I will cut down on smoking,” etc. But every year we have a chance to make

more difficult resolves, which lead to purification of our personal nature.

Ultimately where does it lead? Buddhism mentions the Bodhisattva Ideal and Bodhisattva Vow. It means inflexible resolution or determination. It is understood to be something solemn and irrevocable. As Sangharakshita explains, the four Bodhisattva Vows are: (1) May I deliver all beings from difficulties. At our level it means resolving to be sympathetic and helpful. We should be caring for old people, sick people and psychologically disturbed people. (2) May I eradicate all defilements. The defilements cover all negative emotions, psychological conditioning, prejudices, in short, all that binds one to the wheel of life and death. (3) May I master all the *Dharmas*, *i.e.*, teachings of the Buddha. (4) May I lead all beings to Buddhahood.

May the year 2005 be a year of greater spiritual development than any we have lived through! “It depends on ourselves to make it so. This is an actual fact, not a religious sentiment.”

MY study of Gandhi convinced me that true pacifism is not non-resistance to evil, but non-violent resistance to evil. Between the two positions, there is a world of difference. Gandhi resisted evil with as much vigour and power as the violent resister, but he resisted with love instead of hate.

True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power. It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING

DHARMA AND KARMA

THE two words which make up the title of this article have perhaps the longest history of all philosophical and religious terms. They are age-old as words, but as ideas their life is still older. If we were to read history from the mystical or occult point of view, we would trace the curve of cycles according to the rise and fall of the real understanding of these two terms. Dharma and Karma, if rightly understood and rightly applied, make a person's life prosper, spiritually speaking; a misunderstanding, a faulty application, and the person falls from the heaven of Spirit into the hell of matter. What is true of the individual is also true of nations. Right conception of Dharma and Karma builds a wonderfully prosperous civilization; wrong views make the world err and blunder and sin. These words provide a single key by which we get at the meaning of the sorry condition of our civilization. The Dharma of our civilization is expressed in one word—competition; and Karma expresses itself in desire for *status quo* on the part of the rich, and in lawlessness on the part of those who want to become rich.

To turn for a moment from our civilization to the era of the Buddha: If one wishes to interpret his moulding and shaping of Indian history, one can best do it by noting the method he employed to elevate the concepts of Dharma and Karma that prevailed when he began his great mission. Our particular era can rightly be compared to the era that immediately followed the passing of the Buddha. It took more than two centuries for the flower to burgeon forth on the tree that he planted. The Empire of Asoka was the wonderful result of Buddha's preaching. That Empire was reared on the purified and elevated concepts of Dharma and Karma. We have before us, presented in a garb suited to the modern mind, pure and elevated concepts of Dharma and Karma which we can utilize to improve our own selves, to create spiritual homes, and to rear a prosperous state—rich in commerce and in art as well as in philosophy and religion. We can reproduce in the India of tomorrow the conditions of peace and prosperity that existed in the days of Asoka—beloved of the people.

Let us consider the corrupted views of Dharma and Karma that flourished when the Buddha began his mission of mercy. Dharma was identified with sectarian religion. From the degrading butchery called animal sacrifices to less objectionable superstitions, the same wrong views and practices of life passed under the name of Dharma-Religion. Religion had become formalism; mere outer observances, performance of rites and ceremonies unrelated to life, character and conduct, passed for Dharma or Dhamma. People consulted priests, for it was supposed that they knew everything in reference to outer formal religion. Salvation depended upon rites and ceremonies and their performance depended upon priests.

Out of this false conception of religion arose the false view of Karma: people believed that Karma was fatalism and the only way to propitiate fate was to do obediently what the outer Dharma or religion advocated. By the performance of religious rites and ceremonies, people could overcome their fate or destiny—such was the degrading belief that enveloped the people like a thick fog when the Great Master Buddha rose like a Sun and by his powerful light dispelled the fog that had gathered during the long night of some 2000 years of ignorance. Since Krishna purified and elevated the degrading conception of Dharma and Karma, the ideals they represented had once again fallen into wrong usage and the Buddha tried to restore those ideals to their pristine pure form.

What is Buddha-Dhamma, the Religion or Dharma that Buddha gave? To understand the real spirit of the Dhamma that the Master taught, we have to go to his very first sermon. We have to use our imagination and recreate the situation, the atmosphere of India of 600 B.C. Picture the Great Master after his enlightenment proceeding on his mission of human service; read his first sermon to the five recluses at the Deer Park near Benaras. Did he quote any book? Did he talk like a priest, claiming authority? Did he offer prizes of heaven or threats of hell? What was the preaching that is held in reverence by all students of religious philosophy even today? Look at the very name given to it in which this very term Dhamma is used—the turning of the Wheel of Dhamma. He preached:

(1) avoidance of two extremes—life of passion and luxury on the one hand, and life of torture and rigid asceticism on the other; (2) the Middle Path, which he described as composed of the Four Noble Truths.

Turn from that to the description given by the Lord about the Bearers of Dhamma. In *Anguttara-Nikaya* we are told that the monk or nun or lay-disciple, who *lives* according to the Dhamma and who is accomplished in Wisdom, is the Dhamma-Bearer. In the same *Nikaya*, four factors of Dhamma are mentioned and it is said that they are “reckoned as ancient, of long standing, as traditional, primeval, pure and unadulterated now as then.” What are they?—“Not coveting; not-malice-bearing; right-mindfulness; right-concentration.” The four important factors of Dhamma are not some canonical texts, nor the performance of ceremonial rites. Similarly, the Bearers of Dhamma are not holy books but are living men and women, monks or nuns or lay-disciples—those who *live* the Dhamma. Let us consider one more reference from this same *Nikaya* (II, 253).

It is narrated that the Venerable Malunkya’s son came to visit the Buddha. He was a broken-hearted man, who very probably had not lived righteously. He approached the Lord with what sounded like a strange request, but really was not so strange. He requested to be taught the Dhamma “in brief.” The Lord did not define Dhamma in any other way than as a mode of living. He did not tell him to read this book, perform that ceremony; nor even did the Lord say, “You should do thus-and-so.” What he taught was the Way of Life, *i.e.*, true Dhamma.

So the stupendous difference between the religion of beliefs—of tenets, rites and ceremonies that prevailed—and the Religion of Life, of actual Living, has to be recognized. In course of time, as in other religions so in Buddhism, the Way of Life has given way to the Way or Rites. Dharma, Religion as a way, a mode or method of living, has to be re-established in the India of today. What the Buddha said about the orthodox and ritualistic Brahmins of his day applies to the orthodox of every religious creed of our own

times. Turn to the *Dhammapada*:

Not by matted locks, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Brahmana. By his truth and righteousness man becomes a Brahamana. He is blessed.

What avails thy matted hair, O fool? What avails thy deer skin? Outwardly you clean yourself, within you there is ravening. (Verses 393-394)

Is not this equally true of all castes and creeds? One is not a Christian by reason of wearing a cross, or a Brahmin by wearing the sacred thread. This is an important point of practical value. It affects the future of our country and the stability of our civilization. Outer show for mere effects corrupts the very soul of man. Who is a Christian? He who goes to church and wears a cross, yet breaks the grand ethical tenets of the Sermon on the Mount? Or he who regardless of churches practises the ethics of Jesus? How many missionaries are there today in this country who can be called followers of Christ, though all of them wear a crucifix and attend church? There are those, few though they be, who try to live according to the Sermon on the Mount—all honour to them. But the large majority do not think it a practical proposition to live in thought and feeling as Jesus taught. The same is true of other religions. The world today needs more than ever to follow the Way of the True Religion. Let people practise the Religion of Life, true Dhamma, and prosperity of every kind will follow most naturally.

The basis of this mode of living is in the second term of our title—Dharma. Dharma is the subjective aspect of Karma, the manifested, objective aspect of Life. A person acts, now and here, according to his Dharma, his inner conviction, vision and aspiration. Karma is not destiny; it is not fatalism. Karma means action—that which we do. There are two simple ideas connected with this doctrine and applicable to our subject, which are commonly accepted but which are not really understood and still less practised. First, that which is our own real Dharma or Religion, within ourselves, and which is the basis of our thought and feeling, our speech and action, is the result of our previous Karma, action in

the past. In this life a person is born into a particular religion because of his own past views and deeds—religious views and religious deeds. But this religion and these views and deeds have a dual aspect—a seeming and superficial aspect and a true and veritable aspect. One is born a Brahmin or a Mohammedan—that is an outer and superficial aspect of his religious Karma; his religion or Dharma is made up of his own ideas about Spirit and Soul, about God and Nature, about right and wrong, good and evil. A person has two religions—by birth he is a Brahmin or a Mohammedan, but he may be a liar or truthful, a good or an evil person. There are liars among Brahmins and Mohammedans, and there are good and bad persons.

It is to this real inner religion or Dharma that we have to learn to pay attention. That is what the Buddha meant when he said in the *Dhammapada* (396): “I call him not a Brahmin because of his origin or his mother.” Whom to call a Brahmin? “He who is detached and possessionless, he is a Brahmin.” This real religion, this inner Dharma, is the result of past actions or Karma.

The second factor is this: in the present, by our own actions, whether they be mental actions, word-actions, or body-actions, we are transforming and creating a new inner religion for ourselves. A Muslim fanatic, for example, brings back from the past his fanaticism; and if he continues in his fanaticism, in another life once again he will be a fanatic, though not a Muslim fanatic; he may be a Hindu fanatic! A Christian priest may be born as a Jewish rabbi; it is his priestliness that continues. Therefore this second factor is very important. Unless we transform and transmute our inner Dharma, our beliefs and feelings, our thoughts and convictions, our words and deeds, we are not able to make progress, either rapidly or substantially.

So our present real Dharma, inner religion, is an effect from the past; it is the result of past Karma. As we act in the present, we are forming our future Dharma. The Buddha is reported to have spoken about his own sublime achievements. In the *Maha-Sudassana-Sutta* he says to Ananda: “Now this thought occurred to me, Ananda:

‘Of what Karma may this be the fruit, the result, that I am now what I am?’ Of three qualities is this the fruit—of giving, of self-conquest, and of self-control.” Controlling the self, conquering the self, giving of his self to all in wisdom and charity, the Buddha won for himself his sublimity, his high, wonderful status. So religious life, if it is to be a really spiritual and beneficent life, must be active, not passive; must be dynamic, not static. Present actions, as causes of future results, are rooted in the soil of the past.

It is an inspiring thought that we are growing within ourselves: but it is a hundredfold more inspiring to participate consciously in the work of growth. This aspect of Karma, as positive, active experiencing of Religion or Dharma, is very well brought out in what the Buddha said to people with different capacities and differing temperaments. To the philosopher he talked profoundly; to the devotee he spoke practically; to the simple-minded, simply; to Malunkya’s son, very briefly; and to the carping and argumentative his response was profound and eloquent silence.

The Buddha was as strongly against formalism and ritualism among Bhikkhus as among Brahmins. In the *Dhammapada*, in the Canto of the Bhikkhu (verse 363), we come upon the idea that the Bhikkhu should bring out the Dhamma of the events of ordinary life. This means the spirit or inwardness of the events, which can only be comprehended by a study of and meditation upon the teachings of the Great. But we should never overlook that those teachings are ancient and existed before the Buddha, that he was but one of a Mighty Chain and called himself Tathagata—he who follows in the footsteps of his predecessors. Two verses of the *Dhammapada* (256-57) sum up the truth of Dharma and Karma for us:

A man is not righteous who carries out his purpose by force and arbitrarily. He is wise who distinguishes both right and wrong. He is wise and righteous who guides others not by force and violence but equitably. He is the guardian of the Law.

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND POWERS

II

“SELF-KNOWLEDGE is of loving deeds the child,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. Hence, H.P.B. lays great emphasis on Altruism. She describes it as the keynote of Theosophy and an integral part of self-development. Forgetfulness of personal self and sincere altruism is the *sine qua non* condition to be practised, which will enable one to live the higher life.

Man is the Microcosm of the Macrocosm, as man is identical in essence with the One Reality and also the manifested *Ishwara*. Hence, man reflects in himself the forces, faculties, powers, potentialities and possibilities that are in Nature. They are dormant now. They will manifest when we unite ourselves with the Krishna within us and act from the plane of unity. Krishna says: “Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee.... There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.” (*Gita*, IV)

Astavakra Samhita states: “Oh, the root of misery is duality. There is no other remedy for it except the realization that all objects of experience are unreal and that I am pure, One, Consciousness and Bliss.” (Chapter 2, verse 16)

The Voice of the Silence suggests that we should realize the dual aspect of mind: “Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. Avert thy face from world deceptions: mistrust thy senses; they are false. But within thy body—the shrine of thy sensations—seek in the Impersonal for the “Eternal Man”; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha.” (pp. 28-29)

Manas, although an emanation of Universal Mind, and omniscient on its own plane, is only potentially so on this plane, as it has to function through its *alter ego*—lower *Manas* or personal self. Therefore, it is said that Higher *Manas* is crucified between

two thieves—one realizing and repenting his mistakes, rises to paradise with the Lord, the other being under the influence of *Kama*, becomes the kamarupic shell and disintegrates after death. In other words, it is Higher *Manas* that suffers for all the sins committed by the personal self, as both good and bad actions of the lower *Manas* are impressed on Higher *Manas*.

Here, it is necessary for us to understand the difference between personality and individuality, *i.e.*, the feeling of “I am I,” or self-consciousness, and the complex thought that “I am Mr. X.” Mr. “X” is nothing but a bundle of experiences he had during life. These experiences are not the “I” or the Ego, and most of these experiences are forgotten. These go to make up the personality. The feeling of “I am” which is not any of the experiences, which is eternal, is the real Individuality. It is this individuality which bridges the gap of sleep and waking as also life and death. It is the reincarnating Ego that plays, like an actor, various parts in the great drama of life, identifying himself with each of them. One night the ego appears as “Macbeth,” the next as “Shylock,” and so on through the cycle of incarnations. H.P.B. writes in *The Key to Theosophy*:

The Ego begins his life-pilgrimage as a sprite, an “Ariel,” or a “Puck;” he plays the part of a *super*; is a soldier, a servant, one of the chorus; rises then to “speaking parts,” plays leading *roles*, interspersed with insignificant parts, till he finally retires from the stage as “Prospero,” the *magician*. (pp. 34-35)

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* speaks of the nature of individuality. It is made up of five sheaths: the material, the vital, the psychical, the intellectual, and the intuitive. Beyond all these is the inmost reality, the *Atman*, which is the real Self of man. Its nature is described as Truth, Knowledge and Infinity—“*Satyam, Jnanam, anantam Brahma*.” The *Upanishad* adds:

That from which all these take birth, that by which they live after being born, that towards which they move and into which they merge, know that—That is Brahman.

When we are able to free our mind from the personality and

also our desires, then it is possible for us to turn within.

Krishna says that though the mind is restless and not easily controllable, it can be controlled by constant practice and detachment—*Abhyasa* and *Vairagya* (*Gita*, VI). When we live a life of altruism, with right motive, pure heart, a clean life and a keen intellect, we reach a stage of complete unselfishness and all-embracing love for all that lives and breathes. Though ensheathed in a body, which is all the time changing, we can partake of the waters of immortality while in a body. We become the ALL. The necessary condition to attain this state is given in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*:

Meditation, abstinence in all, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as good will to all and entire oblivion of Self, are the most efficacious means of obtaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom. (Rule 11)

Then all powers of Nature stand ready to serve the disciple and are reflected in him. The One Primordial Force manifests itself as various powers or *saktis*. These are: *Parasakti*—Supreme force or power. *Jnanasakti*—the Power of real wisdom or knowledge. *Itchasakti*—the Power of the Will. *Kriyasakti*—the Mysterious Power of thought which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. *Kundalini Sakti*—the Power or force which moves in a curved path. *Mantrika-Sakti*—the force or power of letters. “The six forces are in their unity represented by the ‘*Daiviprakriti*’ (the Seventh, the Light of the Logos)” (*S.D.*, I, pp. 292-93)

St. Paul, an Initiate, Apostle and Adept, speaks of spiritual gifts in his Epistles to the Corinthians. Among the gifts enumerated are: “Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking of diverse tongues, and the interpretation of the tongues.” While he appeals to them “to covet earnestly the best gifts,” he shows them the better way, namely the supreme law of love: “Now abide,” he says, “faith, hope, charity (or love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

The word gift is a misnomer, as everything is acquired through our own efforts. All the gifts come from above, *i.e.*, from within.

Mr. Judge says:

Every impulse from above, every prompting of the Divine within, should meet at once with a hearty welcome and response. If you feel as if something urged you to visit some sick or afflicted neighbour or friend, obey the suggestion without delay....Put yourself at once in line with the Divine ways, in harmony with the Divine laws. More light, more wisdom, more spirituality must necessarily come to one thus prepared, thus expectant. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 32)

(Concluded)

LIVE well your life. Seek to realize the meaning of every event. Strive to find the Ever Living and wait for more light. The True Initiate does not fully realize what he is passing through, until his degree is received. If you are striving for light and Initiation, remember this, that your cares will increase, your trials thicken, your family make new demands upon you. He who can understand and pass through these patiently, wisely, placidly—may hope....

Be temperate in all things, most of all in the condemnation of other men. It is unwise to be intemperate or drunken with wine. It is equally unwise to be drunken with temperance. Men would gain the powers; or the way of working wonders. Do you know, O man, what the powers of the Mystic are? Do you know that for each gift of this kind he gives a part of himself? That it is only with mental anguish, earthly sorrow, and almost his heart's blood, these gifts are gained? Is it true, think you, my brother, that he who truly possesses them desires to sell them at a dollar a peep, or any other price? He who would trade upon these things finds himself farther from his goal than when he was born.

—W. Q. JUDGE

REAL CHRISTMAS

THE annual festival of Christmas is celebrated all over Christendom on the 25th of December. On this day, Jesus of Nazareth is said to have been born in Bethlehem, near Jerusalem. The four Gospels give each an account of his birth, his baptism, his preaching, his trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to heaven. Yet, there are no historical records to authenticate the Gospel story of Jesus. Classical writers, historians and philosophers of the early centuries of the Christian era, who lived at the time when the Gospel account is said to have taken place, and some of whose works exist to this day, make no mention of Jesus. Owing to lack of historical evidence, modern biblical research, too, fails to throw any light on the vexed question.

Nevertheless, Theosophy shows that an Initiate, a great reformer and teacher called Jehoshua, did arise among the Jews between 103 B.C. to 76 B.C. He was the type from whom the evangelists created the “historical Jesus.” He was initiated in Egypt and recognized no Jehovah of orthodox Jews except the “Father in Heaven” with whom he communed, as every Initiate communes with his Divine Self in Yogic contemplation. He was accused by the Jewish orthodoxy of stealing the Mysteries of their temple and teaching the multitude. He was tried, stoned and allowed to die on a cross.

Theosophy further shows that the first disciples and followers of Jesus were the Gnostics, particularly the sect called Marcionites, who preserved the true history and teachings of Jesus, and believed that the Gospel accounts were simply a *carnalization* of metaphysical allegories and symbolism (*Glossary*). This is the reason why no historical evidence exists to support the Gospel story of Jesus.

“The most movable of the Christian feast days, during the early centuries, Christmas was often confounded with the Epiphany, and celebrated in the months of April and May” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 23*, p. 3). In the fourth century, Pope Julius I ordered a committee

of bishops to investigate and fix the date of the nativity of Jesus. The bishops decided on the 25th of December. It is the day when the whole of the pagan world celebrated the birth of their Sun Gods—Egyptian Osiris, Greek Apollo and Bacchus, Chaldean Adonis, Persian Mithra—when the Zodiacal sign of Virgo rose on the horizon. Thus the ancient festival of the Winter Solstice, the pagan festival of the birth of the Sun, came to be adopted by the Christian Church as the nativity of Jesus, and was called Christmas.

Winter Solstice marks the limit of the southern journey of the Sun. As the sun moves away from the Northern Hemisphere, it is plunged into icy cold winter, making nights longer and days shorter, and nature seems to lapse into dormancy. It symbolized the descent of Spirit into Matter and the consequent loss of its radiance and potency, the overcoming of the light of Spirit by the darkness of ignorance. When man begins to hunger for truth and turns inward, the hitherto apparently conquered Spirit of man begins to awaken in him. It is analogous to the commencement of the Sun's northern journey, causing the dawn of spring when the whole of Nature begins to awaken to new life and activity with renewed energy. The cosmic event was celebrated as the birthday of the Sun God by ancient nations, symbolizing the birth of Christ—Divine Principle—in man, ending the darkness of ignorance, and beginning the rebirth of man in spirit.

Christ is not the name of Jesus but a generic term meaning the Divine Principle or *Christos* residing in the heart of every man and woman. Krishna or Chris-na and *Christos* come from the same root. *Kris* in Sanskrit means the pure or the sacred, "the first emanation of the invisible Godhead, manifesting itself tangibly in spirit" (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 158), it is the Spiritual Ego (*Buddhi-Manas*). "I am the Ego seated in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna," says Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. "Within thy body—the shrine of thy sensations—seek in the Impersonal for the 'Eternal Man'; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha," says *The Voice of the Silence*. The divinity in the heart of man was referred to by Jesus as his "Father in Heaven." He said that he and

his Father in Heaven are one, which means he succeeded in uniting his consciousness with the Divine Consciousness within himself during *Samadhi*; and commended his followers to do the same. The Spiritual, Immortal, Higher Ego in every man is an emanation, like a ray, from the Central Spiritual Sun (*Paramatman*), of which the visible Sun is the direct manifestation on our physical plane and its visible symbol.

Though the Divine Principle is present in all, it does not shine forth equally in all. It only overshadows the mortal. In the distant past, when humanity in its infancy was still pure, men were fully conscious of the Divine Presence within themselves and required no religion or blind faith, for they knew the truth. As physical evolution gained ascendancy, the light of Divinity in man grew dimmer with every cycle of his descent into matter, until human beings in general chose to serve their lower selfish interests at the expense of the Spiritual, thus crucifying the *Christos* within on the cross of the flesh. Spiritual ignorance or *avidya* enveloped humanity, giving rise to dark egotism and consequent vice and wickedness. Hence, man went from death to death. This is the fall of man, the eclipse of the Light of the Spiritual Sun by the dark egotism of the lower man. This is the true meaning of crucifixion. Each time we shut out the voice of conscience, ignore the behests of the Higher Self, and follow the impulses and passions of the lower personal self we are crucifying the Christ within.

The Secret Doctrine shows that the Manasa-Putras or the incarnating EGOS have taken upon themselves, voluntarily and knowingly, the burden of all the future sins of their future personalities....Hence the mystic Hindus say that the Eternal Self, or the Ego (the one in three and three in one), is the "Charioteer" or driver; the personalities are the temporary and the evanescent passengers; while the horses are the animal passions of man. It is, then, true to say that when we remain deaf to the Voice of our Conscience, we crucify the Christos within us. (*Transactions*, pp. 68-69)

It is the duty of man to raise the self by the Self. Neglect of this

duty by man is what the Christians call *sin against the Holy Ghost* and the Hindus, *Brahma Hatya*. The Divine Ego within man, though pure and sinless, bears the sins of the lower man and suffers, so that, through repeated sacrifices, extending over innumerable incarnations determined by its own Karma, and through accumulations of essential experiences garnered from each incarnation and assimilating them to the Divine Spirit, it may at last rid the lower personality of the deceptions of Matter with the Light of Wisdom, and raise up the “thief” to heaven. Hence it is said that Christ suffered for the sins of man on the cross to save the world. The Christian belief of vicarious atonement has its origin in this Eternal Verity. The Gospel allegory is a later version of the ancient Vedic allegory of *Viswakarma*, the all-seeing Father-God, who *sacrificed himself to himself* to save the world. This sublime allegorical symbolism represents the Spiritual and physical evolution of humanity, the true story of Real Eternal Man—Manasa or ego—within the outer, physical, mortal man on earth. Spiritual Egos are the *Manasaputras*, Sons of the Universal Mind, who sacrificed themselves by incarnating in the senseless Astral Shadows at the beginning of the human cycle on earth. It was in order to make the mindless animal man self-conscious by endowing him with the principle of mind, and remaining within him as his “Saviour,” his true self, a “beam of light immaculate within, a form of clay material” on the lower plane. This beam of light is man’s life-guide, the watcher and the Silent Thinker, and is the voluntary victim of the lower self—the Crucified Christ.

Crucified Christ is said to have risen from the dead, or *resurrected*, which implies spiritual regeneration. Plato called unregenerate mortal life in the body a sepulchre, in which the Soul is buried. It is the spiritual death of man, though enjoying all the joys of the temporary evanescent earthly life. Man has to rise from the dead. Some brave ones resolutely live the higher life, conquer and crucify the lower passions and desires on the Cross of Life, and unite themselves with their Divine Ego. Buddha, Jesus, Krishna were among such great ones who permanently assimilated their

selves with the Eternal Self. Spiritual regeneration from death to immortality in Spirit or from darkness to Light, cannot be conferred on man as a boon. It is to be striven after and won by one’s own sacrifice, of the mutable to the permanent, of the personal self to Impersonal Self—the Self of all.

He who has the strength to roll back *the stone of matter* from the door of his own inner sanctuary, he *has the risen Christ in him*. The “Son of Man” is no child of the bond-woman—*flesh*, but verily of the free-woman—*Spirit*, the child of man’s own deeds and the fruit of his own spiritual labour. (*The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*, p. 2)

If we dimly grasp the nature of Masters, we will be able to reverence Them in our hearts, and to endeavour to draw near to Them in our innermost being; nor we will be deceived by claims made by, or for, this or that person, nor take it for granted that books written with the purpose of *defining* Masters’ powers, place, or imagined individual characteristics, have any value whatever. All such are mere speculations and an attempt in fact to drag those great Beings down to our plane of terrestrial conceptions—“a misuse of sacred names,” as H.P.B. wrote in the *Key to Theosophy*. Masters are *facts* in Nature, facts, however, which our highest ideals will not fully encompass. Let us therefore endow Them with the highest we can conceive of, try to assimilate that “highest” within ourselves, endeavour to draw near to Them in our heart of hearts, and thus form for ourselves that line of communication which They have said They are always ready to help establish; and let us keep that ideal as a sacred thing in the repository of our hearts, not to be lightly thought of nor spoken of, but as a shrine of our highest aspirations, safely guarded from all intrusion, sacred and secret. Thus and thus only, may we in time come to know Them face to face.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SOCIETAL CHANGE

THERE has been an ongoing debate in the circle of social and political scientists whether an organized society should be responsible to serve the individual citizen's true end, *i.e.*, his real needs and rights, such as freedom, growth, peace, security, privacy, etc. Or, is it the citizen who is to be held responsible for and made subservient to the society's needs, "in the interest of the common good"? Such "either-or" ideological confrontation is created mainly by doctrinaire philosophers, if not by the politicians with vested interests. In reality, both these claims are artificially projected. They could be made mutually complementary when properly balanced in a truly liberal and enlightened community. For, nothing and no one exists in complete isolation. At the same time, a healthy and truly civilized society thrives on co-operation between citizens, office-bearers, and authorities in any institution where an individual's voice is respected and valued. However, these ideological stands can be analyzed and understood in the light of the universal teachings of Theosophy and of some social philosophers like Plato, Socrates, Hegel, etc.

Take, for instance, what appears to be the now defunct "Socialist" doctrine. Its advocates often go to the length of saying that the individual has to be subordinated for the welfare of the community, and by *community* is often implied the monolithic state authority. Sometimes a citizen is just a fodder to fatten the economy and the power of the State so that his claims or even his freedom may be sacrificed if the power of the State is questioned! The State is supposed to play the sovereign role of a so-called benevolent Father, a King and a Protector, and all must assume their proper place in the system without a whimper!

On the other hand, "Individualism"—a politico-economic doctrine that advocates complete freedom for the common man—can go to the other extreme. For instance, sometimes its advocates interpret "freedom" as license to think and freely express, unconcerned as to its adverse impact on others! This is the danger

of bringing any concept "to its logical conclusion"—good and well meaning, at the origin—when the end is selfishly motivated.

When the inherent role, duty and responsibility—either on the part of the common man or society—are diluted, either of the above-mentioned ideologies fails to serve what Socrates calls the "Common Good," or individual well-being. An enlightened social philosophy has to take into account the basic facts relating to the nature of man and the universe.

Human society is a body of free and independent "Souls," each soul being an individual unit of life, having to fulfil his own destiny and obligations. The Society, with which he is morally bound, should be able to afford opportunities to fulfil his powers and destiny, thereby sharing and enjoying the fruits of the individual's achievements, talents and progress. This implies the mutually supportive relationship between man and his race. Man is a miniature cosmos, "a microcosm of the great macrocosm." What affects one affects the other, since "interdependence is the law of life," within the whole.

We must address these facts, just mentioned, to arrive at the proper stand on philosophical, social and moral issues. There is a "spark of humanity" [humaneness] in man as well as in the collectivity. Theosophy rejects the idea that mankind as a species belongs to the animal kingdom, only more intelligent and acquisitive! To fulfil his *Dharma*, man as an intelligent, self-conscious being, as also a moral chooser, must recognize his obligatory role in the natural order of things.

Any debate of the kind mentioned in the beginning of this article must not mislead us into sharp dichotomy by pitting an individual against the collectivity of men, and *vice versa*. After all, man is a part of the whole, and all men have a common origin, possibilities, needs and also a common destiny as a race. An individual's fate is inextricably linked with the immediate society to which he belongs, leaving out of consideration the destiny of humanity in its totality. Conversely, the plight and the tone of the society are very much affecting and are affected by the quality and the karma of the

individuals at any given period. The history of humanity shows that a group of individuals, like a family, an institution, a society or a nation, emerged and rose to its pinnacle or deteriorated, when a few individuals rose to the occasion or failed ignominiously. In crises, it is sometimes the individuals of substance who rise to the occasion and help turn the tide of events. On the other hand, calamities such as revolutions, wars, epidemics, storms, floods, etc., do not spare even powerful individuals who formerly took their cozy corner for a safe haven! None can live or act in isolation, without affecting and also being affected by the destiny of other beings.

Instead of asking which social system, whether capitalism, socialism, democracy, etc., is most suitable in a given society, we should rather inquire what is an ideal or a healthy social life. Such a state is ideally possible where an individual's presence and dignity are valued, as also the collective or common welfare of others is recognized as the sacred responsibility of the individual citizen. Besides, it is risky to ignore the rights and interests of others for long if one wants to avoid jeopardizing one's personal interests. This is well-nigh true within a family, a corporate body, an institution, or a nation. Indifference toward such well-established principles of social interaction leads to contradictions and even conflicts within the group or the society. When these anomalies and social abuse become intolerable, one of the two things, or both, seem to happen. Either there could be a leaderless mass uprising, even anarchy, or a few brave individuals stir up and take a stand in the cause of the oppressed at the risk of their own safety. Pages of history are glorified by such moral "heroes" who strived for reforms against depravities such as slavery, corruption, exploitation, untouchability, or narrow sectarian practices in the name of religious customs. They may fail if their time has not yet come. But their sacrifice will bear a golden harvest in due season.

Any progressive change in the social system must take into account whether the changed conditions are conducive to the growth of the higher part of human nature. A "healthy" society alone can

provide suitable opportunities to an all-round development of its citizens. Social order is not an accident, but the result of protracted and concerted labour and aspirations of the substantial units in a society. But ultimately it is the burden of the enlightened individual who pursues these ideals and strives to ensure their possibility. Therefore, Theosophists have a major role to play in arousing social conscience—first within the individual—on the basis of eternal Truths concerning man and nature.

THE idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption: the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain, not physical but mental and intellectual.

And this is how it is, in the course of our lives. The trouble that comes upon us is always just the one we feel to be the hardest that could possibly happen—it is always the one thing we feel we cannot possibly bear. If we look at it from a wider point of view, we shall see that we are trying to burst through our shell at its one vulnerable point; that our growth, to be real growth, and not the collective result of a series of excrescences, must progress evenly throughout, just as the body of a child grows, not first the head and then a hand, followed perhaps by a leg, but in all directions at once, regularly and imperceptibly. Man's tendency is to cultivate each part separately, neglecting the others in the meantime—every crushing pain is caused by the expansion of some neglected part, which expansion is rendered more difficult by the effects of the cultivation bestowed elsewhere.

—H.P. BLAVATSKY

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: How do we help someone terminally ill?

Answer: A terminally ill person has a few hours, days or months left for a possible stay on earth, and death resulting from the incurable illness is certain. Few of us plan for our death or are ready for the eventuality or for the uncertainty of the future. Most people shirk the very idea and the mystery of death—either their own or that of their near ones. This avoidance “to consider,” is due to fear and anxiety, arising out of ignorance regarding the processes of life and death and their meaning. Some actually shirk the reality of death staring at them and which they are forced to accept. These attitudes arise out of the anguish felt, or because of a sense of helplessness, even denial and anger. Ignorantly, some may anticipate “darkness at the end of the tunnel” or an unknown destination. There is a fear that dying is a painful end. All these negative beliefs prevent us from making ourselves capable of helping the dying, or in one’s own case, to make peace with life and death.

To be able to provide support and comfort to the terminally ill person, we must not only understand the nature of terminal illness and death but have enough equipoise to be able to first take charge of ourself. It needs a certain amount of inner stamina, but above all it is love, tenderness and concern for the possible grief and suffering of the dying person that fortifies us to release our higher instincts to guide us. Love and goodwill, after all, are the most effective remedy for all problems concerning human relationships, or in handling our co-pilgrims in need of succour. For love leads to instinctive understanding of the need of our fellowmen and helps

us handle, adequately, any life situation.

Given these qualities, needed in one on whom has fallen the opportunity to lend a helping hand and to back the sagging morale of the dying, little can be said as a thumb rule on “dos” and “don’ts.” For “love leads the way,” if we give it a chance!

By avoiding talking about death and dying, we deprive ourselves of possible moral support and emotional succour. However, if the person needs to talk, we must make ourselves fully open or show our readiness to share the grief, anxiety, anticipation and even his future plans. We have to help the individual to open up. For, some patients like to discuss freely, others prefer privacy, some resent pity, some crave for sympathy, some may actually withdraw into their shell. But even when apparently unconscious, the dying person is inwardly aware of the presence of others and that makes the difference. It makes him feel that the others do care, and let us say so by warm touch or by soothing words. No one should feel that he goes through it alone.

Dealing with emotions is an art. For instance, the crucial stage for close relatives to face, is to be able to help the individual overcome the initial shock, and later make dying acceptable to all concerned. Time and skill will help to bring this about. Meanwhile, it is soothing to talk about the things of interest or value relevant to him—“the good old days,” the precious things done together in the past, and even to revive pleasant memories and affections. Anything to bring out closeness, warmth, understanding, etc.

“Death is the final stage of growth,” and it is a door to a heaven of rest and recouping. The moment of death is never painful; it is release from pain and from a body that can serve no useful purpose any more. For some, as H.P.B. says, death comes as a deliverer and a friend. Our ancients believed that a great Being—*Yama* or *Siva* (our own Higher Self)—presides over death and dying. Such knowledge fortifies the living as well as the dying. And the hope of a great “after-life” helps many to go through it all peacefully.

The least we can do is to send our best thoughts and ideations to the dying, so as to enable them to better endure their suffering.

Question: What is the Theosophical view regarding the use of contraceptives?

Answer: Theosophically, it is wrong to use contraceptives as it is tantamount to misusing the procreative powers. The main function of the sexual activity is production of progeny. H.P.B. describes the laws of Manu on connubial life as “far-seeing and morally beneficent.” She writes: “The Brahmin was a *grihastha*, a family man, till a certain period of his life, when after begetting a son, he broke with married life and became a chaste Yogi. His very connubial life was regulated by Brahmin astrologers in accordance with his nature” (*S.D.*, I, 411 fn). Further, by using contraceptives, we prevent the egos waiting to incarnate, to come into the world. Selfish economic considerations have produced the movement of birth control. It encourages youth to gratify promiscuously their lust. This evil is widespread. It is sex impurity which corrupts marriage. Sex immorality has taken hold of our civilization. The best method is that suggested by Gandhiji, *viz.*, abstention and self-control. The Theosophical view regarding the use of contraceptives is expressed in the article “The Problem of Sex” (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 22, p. 123, April 1952):

Physical birth-control methods have vast potentialities for harm, because of their unnatural, gross character (since the sex act is not merely physical); and, though the astrological method of avoiding conception though indulging in marital relations is only the lesser of two evils, and was—up to the beginning of the present race—regarded as sin and sorcery, yet it is preferable to the crude and empiric methods of ignorant materialism. The occult influence of the moon and its conjunction regulate conceptions, and marital relations during certain lunar phases are known to be sterile. Indulgence at those times was considered as sorcery, but, being based on the knowledge of the human psycho-physical constitution, it is less dangerous to it than the empiric methods, though the moral responsibility and retribution cannot be evaded.

One desiring to live the Higher Life must learn to control the animal nature, as the sex act on the physical plane proportionately

diminishes the activity of the creative power on the higher plane. There is a direct relation between sexual act and pineal gland. In the article “The Pineal Gland and Morality” (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 7, p. 72, March 1937), we are told:

Practical Occultism founded on the Esoteric Philosophy recognizes the direct and intimate connection subsisting between the Pineal Gland and the genitalia. These two are creative poles, and when one is positive and active, a proportionate negative and passive condition is produced in the other. When the North Pole of the Pineal Gland is active, it creates children of ideas and thoughts; when the South Pole of the generative organ is active, children of the flesh are created.

The Pineal Gland is the Heart of the Mind—the seat of Love without any trace of lust, seat of Compassion without any trace of passion. In the ordinary individual both the Pineal Gland and the genitalia are active by turns, and therefore he is a mixture of lust and love, of passion and compassion, of evil and good. Our moral perceptive capacity and our mental creative faculties are impaired and distorted when the Pineal Gland becomes only the feeder of genitalia. Marriage as a spiritual institution and the foundation of the Householder stage (*grihastha ashrama*) offers the necessary means of adjustment between the two creative poles. It will be readily seen why Occultism strongly opposes mechanical devices for birth prevention; such frustrate the very purpose of Marriage. Occultism also recognizes the higher stage in which the Yogi observes strict celibacy for the harmonious development of psycho-spiritual powers.

THERE is no failure except in no longer trying. There is no defeat except from within, no really insurmountable barrier save our own inherent weakness of purpose.

—ELBERT GREEN HUBBARD

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Are recovered memories real? Richard McNally, Harvard psychologist, believes that people can and do make up powerful false memories that later take real form. Research in this direction has shown apparently sane people claiming to have memories of long repressed events, including sexual abuse, alien abduction, and past lives. Many of these cases of sexual abuse of children, of people being abducted by aliens with froglike eyes, and being dissected by them, etc., involve “supposedly recovered memory,” says McNally. Many psychologists are now skeptical about Freud’s concept of repression of distressing emotional events. “Researchers are at war because there is no definitive evidence that life-shattering events can actually be buried for years, as Freud suggested, then winched out of the deep waters of the subconscious like a long-lost corpse. Yet people who claim to have done exactly that are tremendously convincing,” writes Jill Neimark (*Discover*, August 2004). Since the 1970s, a psychologist, Elizabeth Loftus, has been implanting false memories in individuals, in lab studies. She has shown that implanted memories can influence behaviour. For instance, she successfully led people to believe that they got sick eating either hard-boiled eggs or dill pickles. McNally attributes false memories to fantasy and absorption—vivid imagining capacities. What we cannot remember, we invent. Psychologist Marcia Johnson notes: “When the brain strives to re-create an event, it often grafts details of other memories onto it.”

H.P.B. describes memory as “the most unreliable thing in us.” Memory “is a recording machine, a register which very easily gets out of order.” Further:

Memory—the despair of the materialist, the enigma of the psychologist, the sphinx of science—is to the student of old philosophies merely a name to express that power which man unconsciously exerts....to look with inner sight into the astral light, and there behold the images of past sensations and incidents. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 178-79)

H.P.B. points out that brain is not the seat of memory. Brain cells “are the *receivers* and *conveyers* of all the pictures and impressions of the past, not their *retainers*. Under various conditions and stimuli, they can receive instantaneously the reflection of these astral images back again and this is called *memory, recollection, remembrance*; but they do not preserve them.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 25*, Foreword)

During sleep, the astral body (soul) becomes free and travels round visible and invisible worlds. Pictures and images seen during astral travel are impressed on the brain, but we remember nothing upon waking up. However:

The impressions of scenes and landscapes which the astral body saw in its peregrinations are still there, though lying latent under the pressure of matter. They may be awakened at any moment, and then during such flashes of man’s inner memory, there is an instantaneous interchange of energies between the visible and the invisible universes. Between the “micrographs” of the cerebral ganglia and the photo-scenographic galleries of the astral light, a current is established. And a man who knows that he has never visited in body, nor seen the landscape and person that he recognizes, may well assert that still has he seen and knows them, for the acquaintance was formed while travelling in “spirit.” (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 180)

H.P.B. affirms that suggestions made by an adult during the childhood period or by a hypnotizer do not fade away but leave an impression that surfaces later. Thus:

Crying children frightened into silence by the *suggestion* of a monster, a devil standing in the corner, by a foolish nurse, have been known to become insane twenty or thirty years later on the same subject. There are mysterious, secret drawers, dark nooks and hiding places in the labyrinth of our memory, still unknown to physiologists, and which open only once, rarely twice, in man’s lifetime, and that only under very abnormal and peculiar conditions. (*Lucifer*, Vol. VI, June 1890)

Mr. Judge suggests—in another context—that we carry pictures

and images in our aura—which include pre-natal impressions—which are not always developed into memory, but await appropriate conditions. Thus:

These pictures are found in the aura of the person, and are due to pre-natal impressions. Each child emerges into life the possessor of pictures floating about and clinging to it, derived from the mother; and thus you can go back an enormous distance in time for these pictures, all through the long line of your descent...There would be no justification for going over a whole lifetime's small affairs in order to tell a person at what time or juncture an image was projected before his mind. Thousands of such impressions are made every year. That they are not *developed into memory* does not prove their non-existence. Like the unseen picture upon the photographer's sensitive plate, they lie awaiting the hour of development. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 171)

Our sun is slow in giving up its secrets to the modern scientists. "The sun is the Rosetta stone of astrophysics....But it is a stone that we haven't been able to decrypt entirely," says Goran Scharmer, director of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences' Institute for Solar Physics. Even with latest equipment and technologies, scientists are unable to explain, satisfactorily, the phenomena connected with the sun, writes Curt Suplee (*National Geographic*, July 2004). What interior mechanisms produce the sun's mighty magnetic dynamo? Scientists have succeeded in looking beneath the surface (photosphere) of the sun using a technique called helioseismology—a sort of ultrasound scan of the sun's interior. Scientists believe that the sun's magnetic field could be produced by internal motion of plasma. Why do sunspots fluctuate in 11-year cycles, and what effect does this have on terrestrial climate? Scientists link sunspot arrangement with sun's reversal of overall magnetic polarity every 11 years. "Its north magnetic pole becomes a south pole, and *vice versa*." But, complete understanding of the

process still eludes scientists. How is it possible that the corona—which is visible only during the total eclipse of the sun and is farthest from the surface of the sun—is typically hundreds of times hotter than the solar surface? The temperature of the corona is far higher than that of the photosphere (closest to the sun's surface). Where is that stupendous heat coming from?

Most of the solar phenomena must remain a mystery to modern science, as the visible physical sun is only a reflection, a *shell* or cosmic veil that conceals the true *Sun*—an invisible orb. The Adepts assert that no spectroscope or telescope that man invented has been able to reflect the true Sun—the body. Adepts deny emphatically that the sun is in combustion or that he is either *incandescent* or *burning*, though he is *glowing*. They maintain that scientists must "look to the 6th state of matter, for divulging to them the true nature of their photospheres, chromospheres, appendages, prominences, projections and horns." The elements known to the chemists are not present in the *sun itself* but in the outward robes, which contain all the elements present on our earth and many others not yet discovered on our globe. Chromosphere, described as the radiant zone of "red-matter," symbolizes the vital principle in the sun. Regarding the constituents of the sun and the nature of the chromosphere, the Adept writes:

The true *Sun*...has in him the spirit of every element that exists in the solar system; and his "Chromosphere"...has the same, only in a far more developed condition though still in a state unknown on earth; our planet having to await its further growth and development before any of its elements can be reduced to the condition they are in within that chromosphere. Nor can the substance producing the coloured light in the latter be properly called solid, liquid, or even "gaseous," as now supposed, for it is neither. (*The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, September 1883)

The real sun is the *head and heart* of our system, hidden behind the "robes," the nature of which is not matter, "but vital electricity, condensed and made visible." Further:

The Nasmyth willow leaves, mistaken by Sir J. Herschell for “Solar inhabitants,” are the reservoirs of solar vital energy, “the vital electricity that feeds the whole system....The Sun *in abscondito* being thus the storehouse of our little Kosmos, self-generating its vital fluid and ever receiving as much as it gives out....(S.D., I, 541)

Just as the blood circulates through the physical body, the vital fluid circulates throughout our solar system, pumped by the Solar heart. Sun contracts rhythmically at every return of the fluid, as does the human heart. The sunspot cycle is explained thus:

Astronomy knows of the fixed cycle of eleven years when the number of solar spots increases, *which is due to the contraction* of the Solar HEART.... It is similar to the regular and healthy pulsation of the heart, as the life fluid passes through its hollow muscles. Could the human heart be made luminous and the living and throbbing organ be made visible, so as to have it reflected upon a screen...then everyone would see the Sun-spot phenomenon repeated every second—due to its contraction and rushing of the blood. (S.D., I, 541-42)

Are militancy and terrorism the result of cultural differences, clashes of civilization and discontents of globalization? People often view global culture as a threat to their traditional ways. Samuel P. Huntington, a professor at Harvard University, believes that the processes of social, economic and cultural modernization are responsible for loss of personal identity and group instability, because the collapse of traditional systems of authority tends to separate people from their roots. Organized religious groups, both mainstream and fundamentalist, he says, are growing today to provide people with new sets of moral precepts, new sources of identity, and a sense of meaning and purpose. However, Wendell Bell, a professor emeritus of sociology and senior research scientist at Yale University’s Center for Comparative Research, is of the opinion that “Religious revival movements are reactionary, not

progressive” (*The Futurist*, September-October 2004). He believes that universal human values do exist. It is by building a “generally accepted ethical system based on the many similar and overlapping moralities contained in the major religions” that welfare of the future generations can be assured. He writes:

I believe the path toward harmonious global society is well marked by widely shared human values, including patience, truthfulness, responsibility, respect for life, granting dignity to all people, empathy for others, kindness and generosity, compassion, and forgiveness. To be comprehensive, this list must be extended to include equality between men and women, respect for human rights, nonviolence....encouragement of healthy and nature-friendly lifestyles, and acceptance of freedom as an ideal limited by the need to avoid harming others. These value judgements are not distinctively Islamic, Judeo-Christian, or Hindu, or Asian, Western, or African. They are *human* values that have emerged, often independently, in many different places based on the cumulative life experience of generations.

However, given similar human values, we must bear in mind the principle of “inclusion.” People often limit their ethical treatment to their own groups—people who are of their own race, religion, nationality or social class. “Today, our individual lives...are so closely tied to the rest of humanity that our identities ought to include a sense of kinship with the whole human race and our circle of caring ought to embrace the welfare of people everywhere.”

Each one has to make the beginning and set an example. We can begin by accepting responsibility for our own life choices, being more generous towards the behaviour of others. We can widen our circle of concern. “All of us must realize that the human community is inescapably bound together. More and more, as Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us, whatever affects one, sooner or later affects all.”

All religions are false on the surface—covered over with cobwebs of dogmatism and rituals—and true at the base. The

second object of the Theosophical Society [and of the United Lodge of Theosophists today] was comparative study of religions to draw therefrom universal ethics. Mr. Crosbie describes the function of true religion thus:

True Religion must give us a basis for thinking, and consequently, a basis for acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of ourselves and of other beings. Religion is a *bond* uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas or beliefs—binding not only all Men, but also all Beings and all *things* in the entire Universe, into one grand whole. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 211)

H.P.B. writes that human solidarity is a logical outcome of the common divine origin of man. Thus:

In sociology, as in all branches of true science, the law of universal causation holds good. But this causation necessarily implies, as its logical outcome, that human solidarity on which Theosophy so strongly insists. If the action of one reacts on the lives of all, and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical principles that every Theosophist should be bound, not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life....

In every conceivable case he himself must be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 232 and 243)
