

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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LET US PRAISE THE FATHERS WHO BEGOT US

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The Fifth group [hierarchy] is a very mysterious one, as it is connected with the Microcosmic Pentagon, the five-pointed star representing man. In India and Egypt these Dhyanis were connected with the Crocodile, and their abode is in Capricornus. These are convertible terms in Indian astrology, as this (tenth) sign of the Zodiac is called *Makara*.—*The Secret Doctrine*, I. 219

... the true esoteric sense of the word “Makara,” does not mean “crocodile,” in truth, at all, even when it is compared with the animal depicted on the Hindu Zodiac. For it has the head and the fore-legs of an antelope and the body and tail of a fish.—*S.D.*, II. 577

The fifth group of the celestial Beings is supposed to contain in itself the dual attributes of both the spiritual and physical aspects of the Universe; the two poles, so to say, of Mahat the Universal Intelligence, and the dual nature of man, the spiritual and the physical.—*S.D.*, I. 221

Let us note one more thing in relation to the mysterious number five. It symbolizes at one and the same time the Spirit of life eternal and the Spirit of life and love terrestrial—in the human compound; and, it includes divine and infernal magic, and the universal and the individual quintessence of being.—*S.D.*, II. 579

It becomes the task of the fifth Hierarchy—the mysterious beings that preside over the constellation Capricornus, Makara, or “Crocodile” in India as in Egypt—to inform the empty and ethereal animal form and make of it the Rational Man. This is one of the subjects upon which very little may be said to the general public. It is a MYSTERY, truly, but only to him who is pre-

pared to reject the existence of intellectual and conscious spiritual Beings in the Universe, limiting full Consciousness to man alone, and that only as a "function of the Brain." Many are those among the Spiritual Entities, who have incarnated bodily in man, since the beginning of his appearance, and who, for all that, still exist as independently as they did before, in the infinitudes of Space.—S.D., I. 233

Ma — we are told by the author of the "Twelve Signs of the Zodiac" — is *Five*; *kara*, a hand with its five fingers, as also a five-sided sign or a *pentagon*. The *Kumara* (in this case an anagram for occult purposes) are *five* in esotericism, as Yogis — because the last two names have ever been kept secret; they are the fifth order of Brahmadevas, and the fivefold Chohans, having the soul of the five elements in them.—S.D., II. 577-78

... the sign of Makara is connected with the birth of the spiritual "microcosm," and the death or dissolution of the physical universe (its passage into the realm of the Spiritual); so the Dhyan Chohans, called in India *Kumara*, are connected with both.—S.D., II. 579

[Makara] is the *vahan* of *Varuna*, the Ocean God.—S.D., II. 577

... Kama [is] the first god in the Vedas, the Logos, from whom have sprung the Kumaras, and this connects them still more with our "fabulous" Indian Makara.—S.D., II. 579-80

Among Watery Beings I am Makara.—*Bhagavad-Gita*, X. 31

THE PRESIDING DEITIES of this season, as the Sun moves northward, are the mysterious Makaras, about whom H.P.B.'s *Secret Doctrine* gives us instruction more in the shape of hints than in detail. The nine extracts which are given above, if properly studied, will give the intuitive aspirant some insight into the mystery which is enshrined not only in the tenth sign of the Zodiac, but also in man, though, alas, in most human beings it has become entombed. If we succeed in rolling away the stone which closes the tomb we shall perceive the Radiance of the Virgin Youths, the Kumaras, with whom our human kingdom is very intimately related and whose benign influence is upon us, though we are ignorant of it and so fail to make use of it.

We owe the Light of Wisdom and the Power of Compassion which, however veiled at present, all human beings carry within themselves, to the Fifth Hierarchy referred to in the above extracts. In the present-day gloom caused by strife, competition, greed and carnage, we wonder

where that Wisdom and that Compassion are to be found. Are they not dead? Esoteric Philosophy teaches that they are not dead though they are deadened. In many human beings the war between the Living Soul and its constant enemy — *Kama* or Passion — is not taking place consciously to themselves. The materialism of modern science and the degrading influence of dogmatic religion have put to sleep the Righteous Warrior in most men and women. One of the divine missions of Theosophy is to shake men out of the jog-trot of existence and awaken them to the realization that the cause of their ignorance, superstition, mental laziness and moral waywardness is removable. Knowledge is available. The method of applying it to oneself can be learned. It is possible to gain emancipation from temptation to evil deeds, as well as to overcome irresponsible passivity.

There is an appropriate time for all activities. We work during the day; sleep is for the night. Similarly, the season most appropriate for making good resolves is this one, when Nature renews herself and her creative forces are most active. We of the modern civilization have separated ourselves from Living Nature and not only think of ourselves as independent of the Comely Mother but feel justified in exploiting her resources and obstructing her work to our own detriment. When she would renew us with health, we work for disease; when she would graciously provide, we block the ways of her bounty. How? Through self-regard and pride. And these are born not of crass ignorance but of false scientific knowledge and misleading religious beliefs.

What will help us to become Warrior-Souls? The Fire of the Makaras will help us. Their Thought-Breaths create a beneficent Fire-Mist, and we can ignite our desire-fraught minds with that force. We must arouse ourselves to recognize the truth that what we should fear is not the Third World War, not the food shortage, not the perversities of the world of Mammon or our own impoverishment. These fears are born of disregard of the truth that unless we fight our own lust, wrath, greed, vanity, pride, concupiscence, there will be international wars, class struggle and family feuds. Says *The Secret Doctrine* (II. 268):

The Third Race was pre-eminently the bright shadow, at first, of the gods, whom tradition exiles on Earth after the allegorical war in Heaven; which became still more allegorical on Earth, for it was the war between spirit and matter. This war will last till the inner and divine man adjusts his outer terrestrial self to his own spiritual nature. Till then the dark and fierce passions of the former will be at eternal feud with his master, the Divine Man.

But the *animal* will be tamed one day, because its nature will be changed, and harmony will reign once more between the two as before the "Fall," when even mortal man was *created* by the Elements and was not born.

This passage contains fundamental truths of value to the Theosophical practitioner and also to the propagandist. We must learn and we must teach the message of this passage.

How shall we adjust our outer terrestrial self to our own spiritual nature? By adequate knowledge of the terrestrial and the spiritual and by the perception that the corrupted nature of the former and the non-recognition of the latter are responsible for the disharmony between the two. If "the animal *will* be tamed one day," why not make a serious and sincere attempt now, and accomplish the task in a speedier fashion? We all want peace; we desire harmony. Why not work for these when the way is shown? Why this obstinacy, almost amounting to perversity, in going the way of the animal — if not that of the ferocious tiger, then that of the barking dog or the spitting cat, of the braying ass, the hissing serpent or the strutting cock? It is not merely the result of sensuality. It is due also to the tendency to imitate the cynic, the sophisticated, the hedonist. Evil company corrupts more than good manners.

Let us take advantage of this Season of Right Resolve. Even the man of most evil ways is to be considered righteous if he has judged aright (*Bhagavad-Gita*, IX. 30). The strength to carry forward our resolve will come with knowledge, which is to be obtained through regular study of our divine nature and its celestial parents.

The death and dissolution of the terrestrial, animal nature will naturally occur if the Christ be born in us. The gift of the Makaras, of Wisdom and Compassion, is ready at hand. Let us accept it with gratitude and pass it on to as many as we can of those who are ignorant of the priceless boon.

"WE must love a being who is in us," said Pascal, "and is not ourselves." This being in man goes by many names, serves under many metaphors. Whatever it is, its authority is huge, and one who has heard it speak will never be complacent again.

—MARK VAN DOREN

MAN : THE CROWN OF EVOLUTION

A good man in his darkest aberration
Of the right path is conscious still.

—FAUST

The Secret Doctrine (I. 181) speaks of three distinct streams of evolution — the Monadic, the Intellectual and the Physical — that mix and mingle in man. These three provide the basic formulae which, when rightly applied to life, can help man to discover the purpose of his existence as well as the direction of his goal and ultimate destiny. These formulae admit of no short cuts to success, neither do they encourage the hope that there may be easier roads by which favourites can ascend. Each human being, however vile, however blind to his higher possibilities, has within him the potentiality of so modulating and regularizing his life as to permit him conscious participation in the processes of the mighty sweep of these three evolutionary streams.

Man's destiny is not special nor separate from that of others. He is only a part of one impartite whole. When he realizes this, he desires to share in the great task on which Nature is bent. Its plan becomes his plan. His success becomes its success. He sees that the highest goal is not the attainment of an outstanding position but the acquiring of skills which will give him the facility to help Nature and work on with her. This ideal must remain nebulous in the initial stages, for the human brain can hardly be expected to learn the Soul's language overnight. What the man is expected to do is to give life and motion to the ideas that he accepts as true. He has to go steadily on, shedding motives that militate against and even deny the great Oneness. Love of wife, child and household as also attachment to family, race and nation are laudable in the eyes of the worldly wise. They become barriers to spiritual unfoldment if that same love pits one family against another, one nation against the rest. Men who seek to narrow the bounds of charity, love and mercy, and so confine them to small and smaller coteries, do not help Nature. They desire that Nature should go out of its impersonal and universal ways to help gratify their puny selfishness and their separate patriotisms. They must ultimately fail, for they try to match their little strengths against the vast momentum of the Universal Whole. The drop has got to learn to live with the Ocean.

Man, the thinker, inherits a body specially prepared for him by a whole series of intelligent and semi-intelligent forces that shape and

fashion it, making it the outcome of the right or the wrong desires and actions of his earlier lives. The body takes its birth, yet the immortal man does not occupy it for quite some time. It is only a ray that enters and familiarizes itself with the use of the physical instruments. As the child grows it attracts to itself those particular *gunas* of *Prakriti* (qualities inherent in matter) which it had attracted and absorbed during previous births. Because of the pressures of these affinities of a past existence, the child tends to be either indolent or restive, feverishly active in turbulence or contented and fixed in calmness. It is these heir-looms from a forgotten past that will be building up the child's future character and moulding its inclinations. Of such stuff are humans made.

The child during these formative years is irresponsible. Like the animal, it seeks its own felicity; but, unlike the animal, it remains dependent on its elders for several years. The twig has to be so bent as to give the correct inclination to the tree. Leaving the child to the mercy of the nanny and the baby-sitter, the creche and the governess, is a severe handicap to the child, for these are rarely qualified to tend the sapling. More often than not, they allow the growth to continue unmonitored, and where a plant should have emerged in all its luxuriance, there appears an unkempt and ungainly bush. In this civilization, the dice are heavily loaded against the child — a living entity of high promise whose desires are forced upon it and whose habits are formed and imbedded by persons of brutal and sensuous inclinations.

At the appropriate age, a transformation takes place in the child. There gets kindled in him the flame of *Manas*, mind, or intellection. The intellectual evolution represented by the *Manasa-Dhyanis* (the givers of intelligence and consciousness) is now filtering through. From this point onwards the person can think and reason. He can no longer force himself back into the matrix of *avidya* and irresponsibility. The toys of the earlier stage can no longer rule the thoughts of men. The child who has outgrown childish things has to be told that within him is enthroned the ambassador of God. He has now to make obeisance to the light that streams from that ambassador. At one with it, he becomes incapable of error. Obedient to it, he shares in the magical potency of his parent who, to use a seeming paradox, is himself, but infinitely wiser and stronger than himself. Our *Secret Doctrine* text says that our body "serves as the vehicle for the 'growth' (to use a misleading word) and the transformations through *Manas* and — owing to the accumulation of experiences — of the finite into the INFINITE, of the tran-

sient into the Eternal and Absolute." *This* is the role that Manas (or the Manasa-Dhyani within) is expected to play. If, however, the incarnated ray turns its back to the light of its Father, the latter assumes the role of the Watcher and the Silent Thinker, and becomes the victim of his lower self. But, once the presence of the higher Ego has been felt and experienced, its light can never be completely obliterated. It remains and lights up the dark spots of life.

Once the presence and purpose of Manas is known, the man cannot but reverence all life. He has now a dignity to preserve and uphold — the dignity of the Manasa-Dhyani to whom he belongs and of whom he can say: "I and my Father are One." But with this grand recognition comes the great responsibility. The body has to be prepared and then turned to effective use for the transformation of the transient into the Eternal. The duty of man, the thinker, is thus clearly outlined. He can no longer hold dalliance with the mortal aspects of man and nature save to distil from them the nectar that through the alchemical processes of thought can be prepared for the ultimate work of transmutation. The student can follow these processes by the help of analogy and correspondence.

The states after death demonstrate that that which through ignorance man cannot achieve during life is done for him by nature after death. For, what is it that happens at the approach of the final severance from the body? The life now closing is reviewed by the divine ray that had taken responsibility for that incarnation. Those sequences of images that have the potentiality of transmutation, *i.e.*, those that contain in them the promise of immortality, are in their ethereal yet tenuous matter wrapped round the departing soul which then gradually awakes to the joys of the heaven world. This *swarga*-heaven is a world of effects, not of causes. The Soul can no longer take in the food of experience deliberately sought and karmically obtained. It is now engaged in a process analogous to the chewing of the cud, and later, of digestion. As the fabric of divine thoughts and high aspirations and of acts done in loving sacrifice is distilled of its nectar, the process of transmutation gets advanced one more step. But these steps after death are automative. If during life no eternity-oriented food is gathered, then there is just no portion of the finite which can be gathered by the Soul for transmutation and the life just lived has to be classed as a failure — a struggle for so many long years that brought no solace, a garnering of chaff that burns itself out in the limbo of the non-eternal.

Can the processes of transmutation that in ordinary men start at death be made to operate during life so that in his three score years and ten man sows and harvests and assimilates and even transmutes? That all this can be achieved in life is assured to us by all scriptures when these are studied with the inner vision. Nachiketas of the *Katha Upanishad* wrested from death its great secret and Initiates of all times have in veiled language confirmed that a philosophy exists which can be used to turn base metal into gold.

The essentials of the transmutation process are: the active participation of the divinity in man and the review over which it presides. The invoking of the divine entity is a solemn event. With it will come discrimination and universality, impersonality and impartiality. If from the events of the day just closing it can pick out noble strivings, adherence to the behests of truth and deeds of brotherhood done in loving sacrifice, it can linger over them, see in each its presiding virtue and touch its vitalizing essence. Then can it carry it beyond sleep as a priceless pearl gathered from the day's efforts. Thus is a part of the transmutation process carried out on earth and in waking existence.

Waking from such a sleep, the man gets up refreshed. The influence of the effulgent divinity is still upon him. His first act on waking is the act of invocation and obeisance. In close union with the divinity, he casts his vision forth on the activities of the day that is about to open. He deliberates and plans how coming events can be moulded to yield that finite material whose aroma can later be distilled and made ready for the great alchemical process.

It is thus that man hitches his wagon to a star.

THE SUPERIOR MAN is distressed by the limitations of his ability; he is not distressed by the fact that men do not recognize the ability that he has.

—CONFUCIUS

A WORD WITH THE THEOSOPHISTS

[This correspondence was published by H.P.B. in *The Theosophist* for March 1883.—EDS.]

THE FOLLOWING letters appeared recently in the *Poona Observer*. Were it not for a few flagrant misconceptions in letter the first and which it seems almost hopeless to dispel from the minds of the average public, it would not be worth noticing. But since a *Theosophist* undertook the weary task, we republish it together with the answer.

To the Editor of the *Poona Observer*:

Sir, — The anxiety of the Theosophists to overturn all existing religions, and first of all and especially the Christian religion, makes them not overscrupulous in the means used. Nothing could be more wild and absurd than their attempts to identify Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul with the ancient adepts in Occultism. The Apostle of the Gentiles was converted to Christianity by a miraculous event, while on his way to Damascus. He was then a fierce soldier and was actively engaged in a cruel persecution of the Christians; after his conversion the whole course of his life was changed and he became an ardent propagator of the new faith. It may be said that he was an occultist when he wrote his epistles, and that when caught up in Heaven and was shown things that it was not lawful for men to mention, that he was simply in a state of self-induced mesmeric sleep and had released his soul from his body, to roam for a time in the realms of the spirit world; but if so he manifestly saw and heard such things which established his belief in doctrines which are rejected by the Tibetan occultists, *viz.*, a belief in a personal deity and the divinity of Christ, etc. The attempt to prove Christ an adept is absurd equally. Christ gave up his life and took it again, raised the dead, and cured every description of malignant diseases by touch or word of mouth, and did other great miracles; great, not because they were done on a large scale, but from the nature of them. With regard to the loaves and fishes — it does not matter whether five loaves became five thousand or five loaves became six, miraculous power was still required; similarly, if a wineglass of water could be converted into wine, it is equally the same as if a large quantity of water had been changed and a large company supplied with the wine. To support the theory that Christ and Saint Paul were adepts, the facts of their lives must be ignored as well as the doctrines they are reported to have taught.

Some Theosophists have probably recognized these difficulties, and seem to think the easiest way of disposing them is to deny that any such persons as Saint Paul and Christ ever existed. Sensible people should ask themselves this question: Are such Philosophers safe guides?

ZERO.

* * We think "Zero" has rather mistaken the Theosophical idea regarding Christ. The Theosophists do not, as far as we are aware, deny the possibility of the divinity of Christ; they only assert that he was so perfect a man as to have attained the highest possible form of earthly existence; in other words, something so akin to the godhead, as to be indistinguishable from it. Again, "Zero" may have heard the fundamental belief of the Theosophists is *nothing is impossible*. Thus, to deny the divinity of the Saviour would be to impeach their own watchword.

—Editor, *Poona Observer*

A WORD WITH "ZERO"

(*Reply by a Theosophist*)

IN the *Poona Observer* of January 26, one "Zero," rushing to the defence of Christ and Paul against *the* "Theosophists," who neither individually nor collectively had ever thought of attacking either, brings against that body several charges. Whether the pseudonym means an empty cipher, as defined in dictionaries, or the point at which water congeals, as shown by the Celsius and Réaumur thermometers, since it is a question left to the option and intuitions of the reader, I incline toward the first hypothesis as being more suggestive of, and in harmony with, this Christian Don Quixote fighting windmills. A Theosophist permits himself to correct some of the very wild assertions of the *Poona Observer's* correspondent.

He charges the Theosophists with the following *misdeeds*:

- (a) With a desire of overturning "all existing religions . . . especially the Christian," and being, therefore, "not over-scrupulous in the means used";
- (b) With wildness and absurdity in "*their* attempts to identify Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul with the ancient adepts in Occultism";

(c) With denying, "as *some* Theosophists do, that any such persons as Saint Paul and Christ ever existed."

The rest of the letter, and especially his arguments in refutation of the above, being a tissue of unwarrantable and *unhistorical* assumptions, based on a personal and blind belief in his own special religion — hence no proof at all to any man but a Christian — are not a matter for the serious consideration of one who rejects, *a priori*, "miracles" — something entirely outside of the laws of nature. Let "Zero" remember that between a phenomenon, however extraordinary, yet based on such laws, and a *miracle* of the kind of those he mentions as a proof against the assumptions of the Theosophists, there is an impassable abyss, guarded on one hand by experimental physical science and on the other by simple common sense. A few words will explain our attitude. No Theosophist-Occultist will ever deny the *possibility* of "five loaves becoming six loaves" and even "five thousand." In the first case the phenomenon may be produced by what is known among practical Kabalists as *exosmosis*, in the second, by throwing a mesmeric *maya*, a glamour, over the crowds. But no Theosophist, save a beginner or a greenhorn (of those who take things on blind faith and against the dictates of reason and thus show themselves unfit for Occultism) will ever accept as a *fact* either the resurrection of a *really* dead body, or the incarnation of God in a pigeon or dove — for why should Christians, in such case, laugh at the Siamese white elephant? — or "an immaculate conception"; or again the miracle of the "ascension," *i.e.*, the actual elevation to, and disappearance in, heaven, of a solid human body. With this short explanation I will proceed to demolish the three specified charges — the only points deserving a certain attention as calculated to lead the profane reader into very erroneous ideas about our Society in general.

(1) What right has "Zero" to accuse so sweepingly "the Theosophists" of "unscrupulous means"? The first Theosophist he meets with might answer the charge by simply reminding the accuser that in his "Father's house are many mansions"; in other words, that in the Parent Theosophical Society there are fifty-three Branches in India alone. Hence that the Society being composed of thousands of members of nearly every known nationality and creed, whose respective religious beliefs are never interfered with; and there being in the ranks a number of as good Christians as "Zero" ever was (aye, even Clergymen), this "Zero's" charge against *the* Theosophists as a body, is proved ab-

surd and falls to the ground. But even admitting that there are *some* Theosophists, who in their desire of seeing their cause triumphant and seeking to establish Theosophy, *i.e.*, a Universal Brotherhood, on a firm basis, with a unanimous belief in that which they believe to be the *one* Truth, should seek “to overturn all existing dogmatic religions”; and even should deny the very existence of Christ and Paul (which is not the case as I will prove); why should such a policy be viewed, even in such a case, as more unscrupulous than the identical one used, with a vengeance, by the great body of bigoted Christians in general and the Missionaries especially? Is “Zero” prepared to affirm that there is one *padri* in India who would scruple to “overturn every existing religion” but his own; or would feel reluctant to deny the existence of the Hindu gods; or, to denounce in word and print every other divine *Avatara* but that of Christ as a “myth”; or show himself shy to treat publicly, as well as in private, Zoroaster and Krishna, Buddha and Mahomet, with the long string of “heathen” miracle-working Saviours and Rishis, Prophets and Yogis — as “world impostors” and jugglers? When a dominant religion produces an Inquisition, and with its power on the wane, such writers as the Rev. Mr. Hastie of Calcutta who, taking advantage of the natural timidity of a nation, of its lack of unity and solidarity of thought and action, insults it in its most sacred beliefs; spits on its religion, and throws mud on the honour of its women — then it behoves little indeed the votaries of that religion to call those of other creeds “not overscrupulous in the means used.”

(2) We leave it to every impartial mind to judge whether Jesus is not more honoured by the Theosophists, who see in him, or the ideal he embodies, a perfect adept (the highest of his epoch), a mortal being far above uninitiated humanity, than he is by the Christians who have created out of him an imperfect solar-god, a saviour and *Avatara*, no better, and in more than one detail lower, than some of the *Avataras* who preceded him. No Theosophist, of those who ever gave a thought to Christianity — for our “heathen” members, of course, do not care one snap of their finger whether Christ and Paul lived or not — ever denied the existence of the Apostle who is an historical personage. Some of us, a few learned Christian mystics among our British Theosophists included, deny but the *Gospel* Jesus — who is *not* an historical personage — “Zero” and *padris* notwithstanding — but believe in an *ideal* Christ. Others are inclined to see the real Jesus in the adept mentioned in the oldest Talmudic as well as some Christian books, and known as Jesus

Charge the third, being logically refuted by the aforesaid proofs showing the inconsistency of the first two accusations, I might close the case and dismiss it altogether. And if perchance, "Zero" would persist in defending his Gospel Christ against those who call him a myth built on the historical Jeshu of Lydda, then I would fain ask him to explain to us the following:

(1) How is it that Philo Judaeus, the most accurate as the most learned of the historians contemporary to the Jesus of the Gospels; a man whose birth anteceded and whose death succeeded the birth and death of Jesus, respectively, by ten and fifteen years; one who visited Jerusalem from Alexandria, where he lived, several times during his long career, and who must have come to Jerusalem but a few years after the alleged crucifixion; an author, in short, who in describing the various religious sects, societies and corporations of Palestine, takes the greatest care to omit none, even of those hardly worth mentioning — how is it, I ask, that Philo Judaeus *never so much as heard* about a Jesus, a crucifixion, or any other event that would connect it with the so-called *facts* of Theological Christianity?

(2) Why are the sixteen famous lines of Josephus about Christ, lines appearing like a patch on a whole garment, and not bearing the slightest connection with either the preceding subject or the lines that follow in the text, why are these lines rejected by most of the Christian theologians themselves? The *barefaced forgery* is attributed by them to Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, that "prince of patristic liars" and "dishonest writers," as he is called by Baron Bunsen, Niebuhr, Dr. Lardner, and several others? And if these authorities are all wrong, and the lines are *not* an interpolation, as they think, how is it that Paley himself, an author so anxious that his *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* should be accepted, deploras and confesses that "evidence" (in Josephus) as being far from satisfactory, and very difficult of acceptance? The more so since Josephus — after he had by the forger thus been made virtually to recognize in Jesus "the Messiah of the Jews" and to show such a reverence for Jesus that he had hardly dared to call him a man — died at the age of eighty, a stiff-necked, orthodox Jew, disdainfully silent, if not entirely ignorant of the appearance, the crucifixion, or anything connected with that Messiah!

(3) How would "Zero" explain the fact of the total silence of the *Mishnah*, its evident ignorance of Jesus and the crucifixion? The *Mishnah*, founded by Hillel forty years B.C., edited and amplified

(till about the beginning of the third century of our era) at Tiberias, by the Sea of Galilee, the very focus of the doings of the Biblical Apostles and of Christ's miracles; the *Mishnah*, which contains an unbroken record of all the Heresiarchs and rebels against the authority of the Jewish Sanhedrim, from the year 40 B.C. to about A.D. 237; a diary, in short, of the doings of the Synagogue and the History of the Pharisees, those same men who are accused of having put Jesus to death — how is it that not one of the eminent Rabbis, authors of the *Mishnah*, seems to have ever heard of Jesus, or whispers a word in the defence of his sect charged with deicide, but is, in fact, absolutely silent as to the great event? Strange omissions of "universally recognized facts"!

Concerning the editorial remark in the *Poona Observer*, I have but a few more words to add. Those Theosophists who have studied the Christian Ecclesiastical history(?) and literature, and have read upon the subject, with the exception of a few Christians, *deny most emphatically* not only the divinity but even "the possibility of the divinity of the Biblical Christ." Quite true: "the fundamental belief of the Theosophists is that *nothing is impossible*"; but only so far as it does not clash with reason nor claim *anything miraculous*, in the theological sense of the word. Otherwise, once we admit Joshua's power over the course of the sun, Jonah's pleasure trip into the belly of the whale, or the resurrection to life of the half-decayed body of Lazarus, I do not see why we should be made to stop there. Why in such a case and under the penalty of inconsistency, we should not proclaim our firm belief in Hanuman, the monkey-god, and his strategical capacities; in the Arhat who made Mount Meru revolve on the tip of his finger; or in the actual gestation of Gautama Buddha and his subsequent birth in the shape of a white elephant. We Theosophists at least, without "impeaching our watchword," beg to be allowed to draw the line of demarcation at that point where a psychophysical phenomenon ceases to be such and becomes a monstrous absurdity — a *miracle*, of which we find so many in the Bible. And now repeating "Zero's" words we too can say: Let all "sensible people" ask themselves the question: which — the Christians or the Theosophists — are the more "philosophical" and safer "guides"?

—THEOSOPHICAL UNIT

EVERYMAN'S "BHAGAVAD-GITA"

THE *Bhagavad-Gita* is believed to have been delivered by Sri Krishna to the mentally confused Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra on the eleventh day (*Ekadasi*) of the bright half of the month of Margasirsha according to the Hindu almanac. Therefore that day is regarded as the birthday of the *Gita* — *Gita-Jayanti*.

The *Gita* is an epitome of the essentials of the whole Upanishadic teaching. It is a many-sided approach to the practical life of man, and its teaching, it is said, leads to the realization of all human aspirations. It is revered as the Song of Life, and its reciters and students are said to attain fortune, victory, prosperity and righteousness. That its doctrines can emancipate the human Soul and enlighten it with Wisdom and Peace is a well-recognized fact.

The question that interests some lovers of India is — Can its message be utilized in the service of the country as a whole, as a unit? Has the *Gita* the power to emancipate the Indian people, to elevate them to a status of enlightenment and prosperity? Are its teachings such that men and women who are not Hindus by birth, and who belong to and follow their own religious creeds, can use them without doing any violence to their own consciences and minds? For, if that be so, then the *Gita* is a scripture for Everyman.

The message of the *Gita* has a universal appeal. Its teachings are fundamentally psychological and practical; they are addressed to man, the thinker, from whom no blind belief in them is demanded, but whose reason is kindled into conviction. The *Gita* is a drama; its characters are human passions and principles in Nature — personified. Its historical background and martial atmosphere have misled some, but more and more is it being recognized that the *Gita* symbolizes the eternal struggle between the material and the spiritual in every human being. Any thinking individual is capable of recognizing that the story of the *Gita* is the story of life: it deals with the problems of good and evil, of delusions and illusions, of rights and duties, of the demoniac and the divine, of emancipation from falsehood and ugliness, and of the enlightenment of truth and beauty. The more one listens to the Song of Life, the more one realizes that it is the Song of his own life. Thus the *Gita* is understood by each thinking Soul in his own way, according to his own stage in evolution. To each the *Gita* offers the solution of his own problems. Thus, any deluded person of any community using the lessons taught

can become enlightened.

The *Gita* has not only a universal appeal. Its influence is universalizing. It may be regarded as the Book of Democracy: it teaches that Spirit is the seed of all, and that in the hearts of all beings it is rooted. Even those the world looks down upon, Krishna says, can tread the highest path and attain the loftiest state. Not only the virtuous and the wise can receive its aid, but the deluded and the ignoble also can cross over all sins in the bark of its spiritual knowledge.

But the pure democratic doctrines of the *Gita* do not advocate any process of levelling down all human beings to an equality in material things; they advocate the realization of an existing unity in Spirit which manifests as harmony of diversities. The socialism of the *Gita* is founded on the maxim of *noblesse oblige* and the method of attaining it is by the unfoldment of nobility at every stage and in every station of life. The social philosophy of the *Gita* recognizes the divisions and differences of the human kingdom and it does not attempt the impossible task of doing away with or ignoring them; it teaches their meaning and purpose, and reveals that they are but the result of the natural processes of evolution. Thus, for example, the *Gita* does not say that castes and classes are useless and should be destroyed; it explains *varnas* or castes from the point of view of the Soul; they are expressions of the varying qualities of the evolving human consciousness. Therefore any Muslim who is pure, learned and selfless is, according to the *Gita*, a *Brahmana*; any Parsi who has valour, resourcefulness and majesty is a *Kshatriya*; any Christian who trades is a *Vaishya*; any Jain or Jew who serves is a *Shudra*; and so on. Similarly, the wicked in any community are the untouchables; likewise there are Muslims who are *kafirs*, and Zoroastrians who are *durvands*, and Brahmanas who are *mlechchas*, and Christians who are heathens. By merit and merit alone is a man of high or low caste, of upper or lower class; birth, family, religion or wealth do not determine the Soul's station in life; its own qualities bespeak its stage of evolution. By self-control and self-effort any sinner can become pure, any untouchable attain membership in the highest caste.

The inspiration of the *Gita* produces a series of progressive awakenings, but all of them result in Reliance on the Self within, which is perceived as the Inner Ruler. No prophet, no priest, can save that Self; no king, no emperor can have power over it. It is its own saviour and holds sway over its own kingdom of the mind, its own empire of the heart. Thus the *Gita* destroys priest-made orthodoxy and sectarianism,

but does not leave the man barren and lonely, for it brings to him the companionship of the Sage and Prophet. It illuminates for the Muslim his *Koran*, for the Parsi his *Avesta*, for the Christian his Bible. These are to be regarded not as infallible books but as avenues leading to the understanding and appreciation of their great recorders. For example, the teaching about *Shraddha* will purify and deepen the faith of the Muslim; the austerities and mortifications of body, speech and mind will make the Zoroastrian more enlightened about the triad of good deeds, good words and good thoughts which he reveres; the Sikh's martial ardour, the Jain's gentleness, will become more elevated qualities; the Christian will learn why ordinarily he is not able to live up to the Sermon on the Mount, and by what stages he can reach the position where he will be able to do so; and so on. That which is the force of evil in every religion will weaken, and the unifying spirit of true religion will become more and more manifest.

The principle of democracy in which each grade of intelligence has its duties to discharge contributes substantially in the unfoldment of the quality of self-reliance. The philosophy of the *Gita* is the philosophy of responsibility to neighbour and stranger, to country and race, to the whole of Nature, visible and invisible; its practice resolves itself into the Religion of Duty. The performance of duties requires a discernment of what are *not* our duties; otherwise, like Arjuna, we shall want to run away from our real duty, thinking that it consists in giving way to the enemy within and making peace with the wrongdoer in the world. Today Indians are divided into different camps and communities because of what each class regards as its duty. The objection does not inhere in the existence of classes and communities, each of which is composed of men and women, weak and virtuous, ignorant and educated; the objection inheres in that which is conceived to be their duty by each of these classes and communities. Each assumes responsibilities through a mistaken sense of duty, and the result is that their loyalty to sect makes them disloyal to the country; their fidelity to religion makes them faithless to the human race; their acceptance of revealed books made by men blinds them to the true Revelation of Nature, and they forfeit the company of prophets by blindly following their priests. The *Gita* has a unifying force; that power can bind men and women of different religions into a single whole; for, he who practises self-control, who attempts purification of his own thoughts, words and deeds, who endeavours to live his days and years in an enlightened manner, comes in

unison and harmony, unconsciously to himself, with all others who are engaged in the same task.

We must restore the *Gita* to its original position, from which it has fallen to assume a sectarian character. It is not a religious code but a spiritual poem: its teachings, both metaphysical and ethical, have naught to do with religious rites, priests or temples; it is not other-worldly — it deals with the problems of life in this world. Its message is clear, its language is simple and no one needs an intermediary to approach it or to appreciate it. It is a book for all men. It is not fragmentary and there are no lacunae to be filled up by some expounder or by study of other texts. It is complete in itself. It grades off gently to depth after depth in the mighty ocean of Wisdom. It rises tier over tier like an awe-inspiring mountain. Any man, any woman, in the East as in the West, can find his own place in its scheme, can see the very next step to be taken by him, the way to take that step, and the way to keep on progressing.

The main difficulty in according the *Gita* its real place as a book for all humanity is raised by those Hindus who proclaim it as only a Hindu religious text. Anyone experienced in human psychology will understand that men and women of other communities are in a better position to understand the message of the *Gita* as they are more likely to bring to the book a mind and a heart free from the bias of inherited religious traditional beliefs. The right approach to the *Gita* consists in having our mind fresh to penetrate its verses. The effect is magical. The following quotation proves the point; it is from the pen of one who approached the *Gita* with a fresh mind. If an occidental of a hundred and fifty years ago could be uplifted by the power and inspiration of the *Gita*, surely it is easily possible for any oriental, though he be not a Hindu, to be benefited in a similar manner. Here are the words of A. W. von Schlegel, the German poet and critic who rendered the *Gita* into Latin in 1823:

By the Brahmins, reverence of masters is considered the most sacred of duties. Thee, therefore, first, most holy prophet, interpreter of the Deity, by whatever name thou wast called among mortals, the author of this poem, by whose oracles the mind is rapt with ineffable delight to doctrines lofty, eternal and divine — thee first, I say, I hail, and shall always worship at thy feet.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

Bestride the Bird of Life if thou would'st know. Give up thy life, if you would'st live.

The WISE ONES tarry not in pleasure-grounds of senses. The WISE ONES heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

“I ACCEPT unreservedly the views of no man, living or dead,” said Horace Greeley, the well-known American journalist. In *The Friendly Philosopher*, Robert Crosbie writes: “The foolish look for a ‘Man,’ the wise look for a Message.” The Buddhists hold that “Nothing that is contradicted by sound reason can be true.” In line with the above, Lavater is credited with saying, “The proportion of genius (in general) to the vulgar, is like one to a million; but genius without tyranny, without pretension, that judges the weak with equity, the superior with humanity, and equals with justice, is like one in ten millions.” This is a touchstone for us in evaluating the ideas offered to us.

If “the purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning,” and if, as Carlyle said, “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest,” then we need to exercise caution, calmness and discrimination, for the plane of practical action begins with the controlled mind.

Caution and calmness, when exercised, check the curiosity and impulsiveness of the feeling-nature. Discrimination is a mental discipline and implies study, analysis and diligent search for Truth.

A search for help, for the guides and criteria that the wise in the past have willed to us as their heirs, is revealing. The Code of Manu records: “Of all duties, the principal one is to acquire the knowledge of the Supreme Soul (SPIRIT); it is the first of all sciences, for it alone confers on man immortality.”

But who is the “man” who makes this claim to continuous existence, who is birthless and deathless? In the *Mahabharata* we find this verse:

O man, thou thinkest that thou art alone, and actest as thou likest. Thou dost not perceive the eternal Soul that dwells within thy breast. Whatever is done by thee, IT sees and notes it all. This Soul is its own witness and is its own refuge. It is the supreme, eternal witness of man. Do not offend It.

Shankaracharya in *The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom* further develops this

theme, enjoining us to note that

He who is single-minded, fixed on the word divine, his steadfast fulfilment of duty will make the knowing soul within him pure; to him whose soul is pure, a knowing of the Self supreme shall come; and through this knowledge of the Self supreme he shall destroy this circle of birth and death and its root together.

The usage of these great ideas reveals that a Messenger or Great Teacher works in the world for the future of humanity, attracts companions who, in helping his work, resolve to know and to purify themselves, to become better companions, so as to "live to benefit mankind."

This innate urging, or aspiration, or sublimated feeling of compassion, needs the fire of the mind, the light of the Manasaputra, to reduce it to a method, to a path of self-discipline.

A man who faces facts squarely learns to settle for less than he dreams. He realizes that he faces a lifetime of self-discipline, of self-training, to pull himself out of his past errors and mistakes. The Buddha said that he who conquers himself is greater than the conqueror of worlds.

The true Guru knows the disciple's need to set up an ideal, a goal, and shows him that "Knowledge dwells in heads replete with thoughts of other men, Wisdom in minds attentive to their own" (Cowper). In other words, he enjoins: "Man, know thyself!" The teacher does not and cannot do the thinking and learning for the disciple. He offers the further idea that "Self-dependence is happiness; other-dependence is misery." He sets the inquirer back on his own feet to work under the direction of his own enlightenment-seeking mind.

In a practical vein, he shows that:

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. (Confucius)

Many, feeling the large-hearted urge to work for others, but not being sure how or where to start, investigate many systems, turn to those who make high claims or mysterious promises. Such false claimants and self-styled "gurus" use words such as "secret" and "sacred" to blunt honest inquiry. The French have an adage: "*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse.*" (He who makes excuses, stands self-accused.) It takes all the wisdom

of the "wise" to correct the follies of the "good." The wise do not speak in confusing riddles, but offer divine ideas and practical ethics to the common man. They advise us to look for those small plain duties which are our own and are so frequently overpassed while we seek the glories and responsibilities which are the lot of "proven Souls."

If philanthropy is the reason why the teachings of Theosophy are in the world, the reason for the expenditure of enormous energy by the Masters and H.P.B., then the least we can do is to train ourselves to live for others. Our brother, our neighbour, is the one who needs help. Our Karma leads us to him. Our effort now is to fit ourselves to know how to help.

All men are our brothers if we take reincarnation into account as a fact of evolution. The "stranger" or "chance acquaintance" of this life may have been a close relation or friend of our past life, and our treatment of him today realigns this relationship for the future.

THE WORLD'S HISTORY is yet to be written, and it rests with scholars ...to furnish the alphabet in which its pages are to be traced. We must first scuttle Noah's Ark and drown those fabulous sons who have served so useful a purpose to the pious ethnographers in search of progenitors for the races of mankind, and then the ground will be cleared for the real historian to build upon. There can be no true archaeology among Christian nations until the last remnant of superstitious reliance upon Biblical chronology and history is swept away. These two have composed a mephitic theological atmosphere in which truth has been asphyxiated.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

ROBERT CROSBIE SPEAKS

II.—ABOUT IDEAS

IDEAS are IDEAS by whomsoever written or expressed; so, they can flow through anyone who is in the right condition. We find Theosophical IDEAS in every direction, in all classes of thought, speech, and writing; pieces here and there are as good as any that Theosophy gives, but there is no synthesis. Theosophy is synthetic and spells unity in diversity, the diversity being only apparent, not real.

The Soul looks directly on IDEAS; nothing comes to it but IDEAS, obtained through its various evolved sheaths. We can have no experience whatever, whether from the bodily organs, or by suggestion, unless an IDEA is presented. IDEAS may come from objects, from words written or spoken, but our only real perception of them is in "IDEA." We classify IDEAS because of an assumption of separateness, but that is not the true way, and the effort should be made to realize that the Soul is vision itself, and that it looks directly upon IDEAS.

That which in man creates IDEAS is greater than any IDEA he may at any time have held or now holds. We have, then, to get back of all IDEAS to find the true "God" — the true religion.

[If] the Self within each one . . . sees darkly, it is because the mirror into which the Self looks is covered with the dust of false IDEAS.

Let us remember that the plane of action is thought itself, that is to say — IDEAS.

The IDEAS we entertain of the Supreme, of Law, of Nature, and of our own Being govern the actions we perform. When we were children we had certain IDEAS, and we acted according to them, and so on, all through the years. Some of our IDEAS we have from time to time discarded, and others that we have collected have taken their place. We are now acting according to the IDEAS we now hold. Are they the best and highest possible to us?

If we change our IDEAS, we change our actions.

We must give up the IDEA that we are poor, weak, miserable creatures who can never do anything for ourselves; for as long as we hold that IDEA, so long will we never do anything. We must get the other IDEA — that we are Spirit, that we are immortal — and when we come to realize what that means, the power of it will flow directly in and through us, unrestricted in any direction, save by the instruments which

we ourselves caused to be imperfect. So let us get away from the IDEA that we are this poor, miserable, defective physical body over which we have so little control. . . . We are the reincarnating Egos who will continue to incarnate until the great task which we undertook is completed. That task is the raising up of the whole of humanity to the highest possible stage of perfection on an earth of this kind.

No one can stop us in our mistaken course so long as we foolishly entertain false IDEAS.

Our work lies among those whose IDEAS are in strong opposition to what we know as truth. We have to meet IDEAS as we find them, and extend them in the direction we know. This is a different case from a talk on Theosophy, where we are giving an exposition in order that others may know what *it* is.

We have to learn that we are dealing with minds which need *leading*, by presenting wider IDEAS.

A steady outpouring of the eternal IDEAS will attract and hold those who need them; others will come and go as their mood determines.

The main work is to convey IDEAS.

If basic IDEAS are not taken in, nothing can be done. If we can do no more, as humble agents, than to keep these IDEAS *alive* in the world and among Theosophists, we should be content; but we are not through, and while our life lasts we will keep on doing all we can to give others a sound basis, a better understanding of what the great IDEAS of Theosophy mean.

REFERENCES: *The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 148-49, 165, 211, 214, 246, 229, 229, 238-39, 246, 79, 113, 192, 368, 377.

How MUCH I wish you could keep quiet; I mean quiet inside. You are allowing yourself to chafe and rage inside. Outside quiet does not amount to anything unless all inside is quiet too. This has to be learned, and, good boy as you are, you have not yet learned it. Can't you? I have learned that, or else I should have gone mad, as much from myself as from others.

—W. Q. JUDGE

THE ESSENTIALS OF RELIGION

[H.P.B.'s comments on an article by Babu Rajnarain Bose of the Adi Brahma Samaj (published in THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT last month under the title "A Few Thoughts on Some Wise Words From a Wise Man") drew a reply from the well-known Brahma-Samajist. H.P.B. published this reply in *The Theosophist* for August 1883 and appended several Notes, which we reprint here. Before each of these Notes we give in brackets the statements by Babu Rajnarain Bose to which it applied.—Eds.]

[I am sorry . . . that I cannot agree with you in all the opinions broached in your article. You have expressed yourself . . . as hostile to religious proselytization and conversion. Every man who has a regard for the sanctity of truth must feel it his *duty* to propagate that which he considers to be true.]

And since few of us have identical beliefs, and every religionist of whatever faith is firmly impressed with the truth and superiority of his own creed, with no regard whatever for the truths possibly contained in that of his brother, the result is that sectarianism is kept ever alive, with no chance in it for mutual toleration—least of all, feelings of Brotherhood. There are many atheists in our Society, as deeply impressed with the correctness of their negations as our esteemed correspondent is with that of his affirmations. Would our atheists be welcome, or likely to be listened to, in the Brahma Mandirs? Then why claim for one what is refused to the other? There never was a time yet when a Brahma preacher could not have had the chance to discourse before the Theosophical Society upon Theism, nor ever one when the like courtesy has been given to Col. Olcott, or any other Theosophist speaker. For years, we lived near the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay, but its platform was ever closed for, and refused to us, even when asked for.

[Do not you, Theosophists, propagate your opinions which are of a semi-religious character and try to convert others to your views? Do you not "impose your own personal views," to use your own words, upon people who do not believe occultism to be true, and who disbelieve in the existence of spirit and a future world?]

We can assure our correspondent that we do nothing of the kind. When challenged to give out our views, we do so, adding every time that they are our own *personal* views; and as such—since we do not be-

lieve ourselves infallible — are not to be taken as final truths. Instead of preaching our own religion, we implore everyone to first study his own and remain in it, whatever it is. Besides which, theosophy is compatible with every religion, the world over. There were thaumaturgists in every creed, and mysticism has as much room in idolatrous as in monotheistic systems. Theosophy is the culmination and the practical demonstration of the *truths* underlying every creed. It requires but sincerity and a firm will in the application to the Essentials of any of them — whether they be Theism or Adwaitism or even Atheism. Theosophy is simply the informing life of creed and of every religion and goes to prove their *raison d'être*, instead of their negation.

[The opinion that God is impersonal is, I understand, your personal opinion and not that of the general body of Theosophists. Do you not try to impose this personal conviction of yours on others although it has little connection with Theosophy, or else why do you return to the subject again and again in the columns of *The Theosophist*?]

Denial of a *personal* god is no personal belief of ours, but that of all our Buddhist, Adwaitee, Jain and Freethinking members. We defend our position and welcome all others to do the same.

[Is religion a mere matter of emotion? You believe in the existence of an Eternal and All-pervading Principle, and you certainly consider its existence as a scientific truth. But science extends a little further. It includes the knowledge of that Principle as a Spirit, or in other words an Intelligent Being, and not only that but as a Perfect Spirit. . . . I can adduce the same sort of proof for the existence of a Perfect Spirit as you can do for that of an Eternal Principle.]

A “Perfect Spirit” is an abstraction, a *non-being*, and can have no *gunas* or attributes which alone make up the entity. Science has no “knowledge,” we beg leave to state, of an “intelligent Being,” a “Spirit” — not modern science at any rate. And the science of metaphysics rejects entirely the possibility of the Infinite having any conscious relation whatsoever with the finite. Moreover “Perfect Spirit” and “Eternal Principle” are synonymous and identical, and if both our esteemed correspondent and we are adducing proofs, one for the *Existence* (implying consciousness) and the other for the *Presence* (implying unconsciousness or *absolute* consciousness, which is the same thing), it becomes a question between us to be decided by other and unbiased persons as to

which of us is right and which wrong.

[You are of opinion that religion does not influence the moral conduct of mankind. A few individual atheistic philosophers, such as Hume and Huxley, may not require belief in a God and future state to influence their moral conduct, but the mass of mankind does. Consider, for instance, the frightful mischief done to Society by the prevalence of Atheism at the time of the French Revolution, and which will no doubt be done by such prevalence among Nihilists, Socialists, *et hoc genus omne*, in future, if those revolutionary classes ever gain predominance.]

It will be a sufficient answer to draw our friend's attention to the revelation contained in the statistical tables given in the article "Suggestive Comparisons" in *The Theosophist* for June 1883, page 217. They show that so far from an "irreligious belief," *i.e.*, free thinking Agnosticism or Atheism being provocative of crime, the criminal offences chargeable to this class were immeasurably less than those of the rough-going Orthodox Christians and Theists. It appears that of crimes to the 100,000 of population, 2,500 were of Catholics, 1,400 of Church of England members, 150 of Dissenters, and 5 of Infidels. *And*, to bring the thing nearer home, the recent census of Bombay shows that while among 408,680 Hindus, *idolaters* and *pantheists*, there were 18,950 criminals, there were 2,343 crimes committed among the 34,724 Christians and theists, *or 6.74 per cent of the whole criminal offences* — a much greater percentage than is shown by the class of pantheists and idolaters.

[What objection can there be to believing that repentance is expiation for sin?]

None whatever. But where is the necessity?

[I do not believe in the usual cant of the day of nature, "red with tooth and claw." Even if there were no God, there is clearly discernible a beneficent purpose running through the whole system of nature.]

A pleasant expression, but highly optimistic. It is equivalent to affirming that although the moral law in nature may be offended, yet punishment is not logically inevitable. Penitence may take the place of expiation, and prayer restore the equilibrium of nature. The repentant culprit may go scotfree, but the victim or victims of his crime suffer its consequence without recompense!

[H.P.B. closes with the following Editor's Note.]

Buddhism and Adwaitism — are as much religions as any theistic system. A “religion” does not necessarily imply the doctrine of a personal God or any kind of God in it. Religion, as every dictionary can show, comes from the Latin word *relegere*, to “bind” or collect together. Thus whether people pursue a common idea with, or without, a deity in it, if they are bound together by the same and one belief in something, that belief is a *religion*. Theology without the vital warmth of Theosophy is a corpse without life, a dry stick without sap. Theosophy blesses the world; Theology is its curse. Our whole endeavour is to test Theology by the theosophical *experimentum crucis*. The affliction of India is, that it lost theosophy when the persecuted adepts had to fly beyond the mountains. And true religious living can never be again prevalent until their help is invoked to illumine the *Shastras*. Our Brother has had many years’ experience of the hopelessness of converting India to even the benign form of theism which his *Adi Brahma Samaj* teaches. The saintly characters of Ram Mohun Roy, Debendro Nath Tagore, and a few others of his colleagues, have not won the Hindus from their exoteric worship — we think, because neither of them has had the Yogi power to prove *practically* the fact of there being a spiritual side to nature. If we hold so strongly to esoteric Buddhism and Adwaitism, it is exactly because no religion can stand save on the foundation of philosophy and science. No religion can prove by *practical*, scientific demonstration that there is such a thing as one *personal* God; while the esoteric philosophy, or rather *theosophy* of Gautama Buddha and Sankaracharya *proves* and gives means to every man to ascertain the undeniable presence of a living God in man himself — whether one believes in or calls his divine indweller Avalokiteswara, Buddha, Brahma, Krishna, Jehovah, Bhagwan, Ahura-mazda, Christ, or by whatever name — there is no such God outside of himself. The former — the one ideal outsider — *can never be demonstrated*; the latter, under whatever appellation, may always be found present if a man does not extinguish within himself the capacity to perceive this Divine presence, and hear the “voice” of that only manifested deity, the murmurings of the Eternal *Vach*, called by the Northern and Chinese Buddhist Avalokiteswara and Kwan-Shai-yin, and by the Christians — *Logos*.

THE STRAIT GATE

IN the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs his disciples:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

This advice is also a warning to us not to be glamoured by outside appearances, but always to watch for the inner significance and spiritual values behind those appearances. People usually look for an easy path to peace and happiness, so naturally a wide gate would seem much more attractive to them and they enter it without realizing that destruction awaits them at the end of the path. There are really very few who, with full understanding, prefer to enter the strait gate leading to immortality. This shows that, at the present stage of human evolution, very few care to follow the precepts of the great Teachers and to walk the way trodden by them.

Madame Blavatsky has dedicated *The Voice of the Silence* "to the Few." She realized that humanity in the mass was not ready to follow the Golden Precepts in daily life. Sri Krishna, in Chapter VII of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, states: "Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one knows me as I am." On this path no recruit can ever be refused entrance. He may succeed or fail, but each is allowed to enter at his own level. In the *Dhammapada*, Lord Buddha instructs his disciples: "You yourself must strive; Buddhas are but signposts. Those who enter the Path and discipline themselves are released from the bondage of Mara." Each one has to put forth his effort, ever remembering and revering the great "signposts" who out of their compassion renounced *Nirvana* for the sake of helping and uplifting humanity.

The gate represents an entrance to a new way of life, to a new attitude of mind and of heart. Each human soul must realize himself as a divine ray of light and life, an eternal pilgrim working under law which is the eternal motion or action of the one life, the supreme self. As he is treading the path indicated by his illustrious predecessors, he is heading for the goal of renunciation, not of liberation. This path is also known as the Paramita Path, the path of divine virtues which are necessary at every step. The great Teachers are embodiments of

virtues. They have to guide the tottering footsteps of those climbing the path to the glorious light Nirvanic. He who treads the path has left behind the irresponsible stage of childhood and of the glammers of youth. It is a great change of mind and of heart from the ordinary humdrum existence to a life of righteous and necessary actions performed after deliberate thought and understanding and dedicated to the Supreme Self, the Self of all creatures. On this path is to be acquired Self-Knowledge or Soul-Wisdom by unfolding love and compassion. One has deliberately to open his heart to the sorrows and sufferings of the world. "Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child."

The strait gate is the entrance to the realm of "Sat eternal," the one Absolute Reality and Truth. We live in the valley of "lies terrestrial." We are surrounded by illusions and delusions, but they can be conquered one by one if the eye be single, the consciousness one-pointed. The region of "Asat, the false," is left behind as we search truth at deeper levels and greater heights. Devotion to duty is another important step. Devotion to the Cause of the Great Masters, devotion to the needs of our fellow beings, devotion to our own Higher Self, working under its guidance and carrying out its behests, and lastly, devotion to mundane duties, without ever thinking of the reward or the result of actions. The way to final freedom is within oneself. It is necessary to understand the great laws of Karma-Reincarnation-Cycles, the laws of necessity, of economy, of moderation, of unity and harmony. This understanding is essential to rise above the "pairs of opposites," to help Nature and work on with her. Man is the crown of evolution, is above all other kingdoms of Nature, and therefore he has to guard and guide Nature, help its progressive evolution and be in full accord with all that lives and breathes.

As we tread the path, the invisible world within the visible and the objective opens out with its manifold powers and forces. These forces may be pure or impure, white or black. It is important to realize that as we open ourselves up from within and become focal points, we are under the influence of either the light or the dark side. Therefore absolute physical and mental purity is to be cultivated and preserved, so that we may become pure channels for the working of the divine life and law. The more one dares, the more he shall obtain. So the heart-light must ever be kept burning. That light is the only reality, all else being perishable; therefore wisdom lies in always following that light and what it reveals.

It is necessary to remember that there is a steep climb and not a clear road ahead of us. Bogs and boulders and pitfalls will be there.

therefore patience and perseverance are necessary at every turn to cope with the difficulties that assail us from within and without. The daring pilgrim has to be of good cheer all the time, fair weather or foul. There is never any need to despair, though we have taken in hand a task that is most strenuous. An adept becomes, he is not made. Veil after veil will lift, but veil upon veil will remain behind. No sooner the glorious victory appears within reach, the horizon seems to recede. Submission, not resistance, to the great Law is what is required. All the Great Teachers have left on record their instructions to guide us; it is for us to follow them in all humility and with reverential gratitude.

Those who enter the strait gate do so of their own will and volition. No one compels them. Each new recruit adds to the strength of the army of peace and goodwill representing the forces of light. He should resolve never to turn back, for to do so is to join the forces of darkness. The eye of the heart must ever be kept on the glorious light Nirvanic, and the eye of the mind on the work of the day, which includes the upliftment of humanity and amelioration of its suffering — physical, mental and moral.

A most encouraging idea is that we have not entered the strait gate alone. There are other pilgrim-souls at different stages, some ahead of us, some behind us, each with his own karmic responsibility, all bound for the same goal. Similarity of aim, purpose and teaching unites them all, and therein lies help and hope for each. In each incarnation a degree of progress can be achieved till the end of self-purification, self-discipline, self-knowledge is reached. The effort has to be continued life after life, till man becomes a super-man, a stone in the Guardian Wall that shields humanity from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

Enter the Path! There spring the healing streams
 Quenching all thirst! there bloom th' immortal flowers
 Carpeting all the way with joy! there throng
 Swiftest and sweetest hours!

THE RIDICULED and the "infidels" of one generation generally become the wise men and saints of the next.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THE PLACE OF MIRACLES

[Reprinted from *Lucifer*, February 1890.—EDS.]

ON a certain day, Rabbi Eliezer Ben Orcanaz replied to the questions proposed to him, concerning his teaching; but his arguments being found to be inferior to his pretensions, the doctors present refused to admit his conclusions. Then Rabbi Eliezer said, "My doctrine is true, and this Karoub tree, which is near us, shall demonstrate the infallibility of my teaching." Immediately the Karoub tree, obeying the voice of Eliezer, arose out of the ground and planted itself a hundred cubits farther off. But the Rabbis shook their heads, and answered, "The Karoub tree proves nothing." "What," cried Eliezer, "you resist so great a miracle? Then let this rivulet flow backwards, and attest the truth of my doctrine." Immediately the rivulet, obeying the command of Eliezer, flowed backwards towards its source. But again the Rabbis shook their heads and said, "The rivulet proves nothing. We must understand before we can believe." "Will you believe me," said Rabbi Eliezer, "if the walls of this house wherein we sit should fall down?" And the walls, obeying him, began to fall, until Rabbi Joshua exclaimed, "By what right do the walls interfere in our debates?" Then the walls stopped in their fall out of respect to Rabbi Joshua, but remained leaning out of respect for Rabbi Eliezer, and remain leaning until this day. But Eliezer, mad with rage, cried out: "Then in order to confound you, and since you compel me to it, let a voice from Heaven be heard!" And immediately the Bath-Kol or Voice from Heaven was heard at a great height in the air, and it said, "What are all the opinions of the Rabbis compared to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer? When he has spoken his opinion ought to prevail." Hereupon Rabbi Joshua rose and said, "It is written, 'The law is not in Heaven; it is in your mouth and in your heart.' It is in your reason; for again it is written, 'I have left you free to choose between life and death, and good and evil.' And it is in your conscience, for 'If ye love the Lord, and obey His voice within you, you will find happiness and truth.' Wherefore then does Rabbi Eliezer bring in a Karoub tree, a rivulet, a wall, and a voice to settle questions of doctrine? And what is the only conclusion that can be drawn from such miracles, but that they who have expounded the laws of nature have not wholly understood them, and that we must now admit that in certain cases a tree can uproot itself, a rivulet flow backwards, walls obey instructions, and voices sound in the air? But what connection is there

between these observations and the teaching of Rabbi Eliezer? No doubt these miracles were very extraordinary and they have filled us with astonishment; but to amaze is not to argue, and it is argument, not phenomena, that we require. When, therefore, Rabbi Eliezer shall have proved to us that Karoub trees, rivulets, walls, and unknown voices afford us, by unusual manifestations, reasonings equal in value and weight to that reason which God has placed within us to guide our judgment, then alone will we make use of such testimonies and estimate them as Eliezer requires.' ”

—THE TALMUD

THE HUMAN HEART is a great thing, so great that no one can fully express its greatness. It is imperishable and eternal. If we only knew all the powers of the human heart, nothing would be impossible for us. The imagination is fortified and perfected through faith, and each doubt destroys the effect of its labour. Faith must confirm the imagination, because it perfects the will. The reason why men have not a perfect imagination is because they are still uncertain about their power, but they might be perfectly certain if they only possessed true knowledge... each one may strengthen his own faith and make his soul invulnerable by believing in the supreme power of Good... He who fears, thinks of nothing but evil...

Faith stimulates and elevates the power of the spirit. A person who has a strong faith feels as if he were lifted up, and were living independent of the body. By the power of faith the apostles and patriarchs accomplished great things that were above the ordinary run of Nature, and the saints performed their miracles by the power of faith. Such miracles as were performed by them during their lifetime were performed by their own faith; other miracles that took place through their relics or near their tombs were caused by the power of faith of those who asked their help. All the wonders of Magic are performed by Imagination and Faith.

—PARACELSUS

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Following upon the move to legalize euthanasia in California, U.S.A., the question is being asked: Will the rest of the world be far behind in giving doctors the right to "mercy-kill" at the request of dying patients? In this very sensitive and highly debatable issue the medical fraternity has no unanimity. For the public, too, it is a situation compounded with moral, legal and other considerations.

K. S. Ramkumar's article "When Death Is Blessing Why Prolong Agony?" (*The Sunday Standard*, October 31), reviews the situation in India and the divergent views on the practice of euthanasia (from the Greek *eu*, "well," and *thanatos*, "death"). While some doctors consider "mercy-killing" as morally permissible in the case of a patient who is undergoing great agony and is pronounced incurable by a panel of medical experts, provided the ailing person himself and his next of kin so request it and the law of the land allows it, there are others who are totally opposed to this practice on the following grounds:

Besides being emotionally distasteful, it is likely to be taken advantage of for criminal purposes. A sinister pact between the heir of the dying man and his unscrupulous physician, for instance, cannot be ruled out. . . . What is powerful for good is also potent for evil. . . .

Opposing euthanasia are most of the doctors, including Dr. B. K. Goyal, working president of the National Forum of Doctors and former president of the Cardiological Society of India, and Dr. Girdhari Sharma, a young cardiac surgeon. They say in Indian society "we are emotionally attached and a sense of guilt will prevail in the family in the event of resort to mercy-killing." They prefer the establishment of as many old people's and convalescent homes as possible rather than extreme measures like euthanasia.

Both Dr. Goyal and Dr. Sharma opine that knowledge and know-how have always been found useful later. There have been people in coma for years together, or with cardiac disorders from birth; such cases have been cured by medical surgery. In the case of mental cases, they need to be rehabilitated, the doctors say.

The opponents of mercy-killing feel that there are recorded instances all over the world of patients, including those suffering from advanced cancer, who have recovered completely without any special treatment.

In *The Theosophist* for January 1883, an inquirer having stated, "I shall certainly affirm that an incurable invalid who finds himself powerless for good in this world has no right to exist. . .," H.P.B. commented: "And the affirmation — with a very, very few exceptions — will be as vehemently denied by every occultist, spiritualist, and *philosopher* . . ." And in another place (*The Theosophist*, November 1882) she declared:

The Occultist . . . who looks at the origin and the ultimate end of things, teaches that the individual, who affirms that any man, under whatsoever circumstances, is called to put an end to his life, is guilty of as great an offence and of as pernicious a piece of sophistry, as the nation that assumes a right to kill in war thousands of innocent people under the pretext of avenging the wrong done to one. All such reasonings are the fruits of *Avidya* mistaken for philosophy and wisdom. . . . No man, we repeat, has a right to put an end to his existence simply because it is useless. As well argue the necessity of inciting to suicide all the incurable invalids and cripples who are a constant source of misery to their families; and preach the moral beauty of that law among some of the savage tribes of the South Sea Islanders, in obedience to which they put to death, with warlike honours, their old men and women. . . . There is far more courage to live than to die in most cases.

As we have pointed out before, the whole question if viewed in the light of Karma and Reincarnation takes on a new angle which is almost completely ignored by medical and public debate on the issue. A state of chronic invalidism and pain may, in fact, be needed by the soul to learn some lesson, to discharge some debt. The experience of *natural* death and its final lesson, necessary though bitter, ought not to be denied to the reincarnating ego.

In *Psychic* for July-August, John White writes thus of the old mind-brain debate and the new turn it is taking:

In science, it [the relationship between mind and brain] has been widely disregarded because the mind apparently couldn't be studied and measured objectively. Only the brain could. Thus science came more and more to seek an understanding of our mental life in terms of properties of the nervous system and, more recently, the influence of the endocrine system upon it.

The concept of mind is central to psychology, of course. But as this relatively young and "soft" discipline attempted to make

itself respectable by emulating the "hard" sciences, with all their emphasis upon measurement, empirical data and repeatable observations, an ironic thing happened. . . . Psychology, which began as the study of the psyche, became reduced to the study of behaviour and the nervous system, especially brain mechanisms.

For psychic research, this meant hard times. Readers are probably quite familiar with the resistance, skepticism, even outright hostility that the parapsychological community encountered. Telepathy? There could be no mind-to-mind communication since "mind" didn't exist except as a subjective "epiphenomenon" of brain function. Out-of-the-body experience? Ridiculous! The brain is the source of awareness and any reports of one's centre of consciousness leaving the body can only be due to hallucination or delusion. Mediumship and life after death? The grave's the end, dust to dust, dissociated personality, and all that. Or else fraud.

In the last few years, however, there have been some important statements signalling a reversal of the materialistic-reductionistic approach to the psyche by the scientific community. This revised view holds that the mind is real but cannot be fully explained by what is known about the physical properties of the brain and nervous system, now or ever. The psyche cannot be reduced to body-stuff. . . .

The first sign of this reversal comes from the eminent Canadian neurosurgeon, Dr. Wilder Penfield. . . . After a long career in brain research, Dr. Penfield stated in his recent book *The Mystery of the Mind* that in his opinion, the mind will always be quite impossible to explain on the basis of electrochemical action in the brain and nervous system. ". . . the mind is peculiar," he wrote. "It has energy. The form of that energy is different from that of neuronal potentials that travel the axone pathways. . . . I am forced to choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements." Those elements, of course, are mind and matter.

Support for this view came recently from another renowned brain scientist, Dr. Roger W. Sperry of the California Institute of Technology: ". . . Today's modified concept of brain function allows for mind-matter interaction within the brain. . . . It idealizes ideas and ideals over physico-chemical interactions, and recognizes conscious mental forces as the crowning achievement of evolution. . . ."

Dr. Charles Musès, former editor of the *Journal for the Study of Consciousness*, recently stated a salient fact of modern brain

research: "The brain is not the source of its own primary motivational impulses." Dr. Musès points out that even in the hypothalamus, often described in neuroscience literature as a prime "centre" for motivation, what has been found is not a source but only a concentrated bundle of nerve fibres. . . .

Dr. Keith Floyd, a psychologist in the Speech-Pathology Audiology Clinic at Glenrose Hospital in Edmonton, Canada, gave this brief summary of the scientists' search for a physical basis of mind in his article "Of Time and Mind," collected in my own *Frontiers of Consciousness* (Avon Books, 1975): "It now seems highly plausible that the 'seat of consciousness' will never be found by a neurosurgeon because it appears to involve not so much an organ, or organs, but the interaction of energy fields within the brain. These patterns of energy would be disrupted by surgical intervention, and have long since disappeared in cadavers. Neurophysiologists will not likely find what they are looking for outside their own consciousness, for that which they are looking for is that which is looking." . . .

At the frontiers of science, things are in a ferment. It appears that a revolution is in the making as the reality of a nonphysical realm — as maintained for millennia by various nonscientific traditions — is being demonstrated. . . . Certain esoteric, occult and spiritual traditions claimed to have solved the mind-brain problem long ago, and parapsychology has rightly investigated them. If the rest of science will seriously investigate their general position, then their further indications for research should contain useful guidelines to the nature of the cosmic interface — the meeting ground of inner and outer reality. With a new perspective, and with an acknowledgement by science that much of value to it can be learned from metaphysical domains, neuroscientists would probably learn in rapid fashion the details of how mind and brain are related. Then that very old question would be a question no longer.

The mind-brain question was touched upon in "In the Light of Theosophy" for June 1976, where it was stated that "the brain's function cannot be fully understood without recognizing that the mind in incarnation is dual." As stated by an *avant-garde* thinker of the last century, Professor George T. Ladd, whom H.P.B. quotes in "Psychic and Noetic Action":

The phenomena of human consciousness must be regarded as activities of some other form of Real Being than the moving

molecules of the brain. They require a subject or ground which is in its nature unlike the phosphorized fats of the central masses, the aggregated nerve-fibres of nerve-cells of the cerebral cortex. This Real Being thus manifested immediately to itself in the phenomena of consciousness, and indirectly to others through the bodily changes, is the *Mind (manas)*. To it the mental phenomena are to be attributed as showing what it *is* by what it *does*. . . .

A report says there is a surge in the production and use of industrial robots — computer-programmed machines which are capable of doing a variety of skilled jobs with precision and speed. In the United States alone there are some 100 firms turning out more than 200 different types of robots. In Japan there are 75 such companies. According to one estimate, as many as 6,000 robots are at present put to work throughout the world. (*The Times of India*, November 6)

These machines (they certainly are not more than machines) can run themselves and have “arms” and “hands” which are remotely controlled by the central computer. They use tools and do more than a thousand types of jobs, all of them with uncanny accuracy.

All very well, but do these enthusiastic robot-manufacturers and users consider that it is important for a human being to find a job and also some job satisfaction? The socio-economic problems will be so devastatingly complex if this growth of robots goes on at the current rate that it is becoming more and more necessary to see the meaninglessness of going to such extremes in automation.

On his prerogatives of self-consciousness, freedom of choice and the higher powers of the mind, however, man need fear no encroachment by computers. Terms such as “intelligent robots,” “thinking machines,” “artificial intelligence,” need to be seen as inappropriate and misleading.

An editorial in *The Economic Times* for October 7 deals with one of the more deplorable features of present-day life — the low quality of some of the goods and services available, more especially those required for day-to-day living:

Examples may be superfluous as most people have some experience of the unsatisfactory and disappointing nature of many household necessities, which one cannot do without in one's daily life. . . . The buyer does not get the full value for the money he pays out. If we turn to the realm of services the picture can often

be just as depressing. Indeed in some ways it is even more typical of a psychology, an attitude of mind, ubiquitous, pervasive, where the guiding principle is not fair exchange, of give and take, but one which at best can be described as "more for less" and at worst as "something for nothing"...

We have here a situation, certainly in the bigger cities, in which there are classes of people — the self-employed technician or craftsman doing little odd jobs is only a symbol — whose services one cannot do without, and who are looking for and will not miss even the smallest opportunity for exploitation. This is something relatively new in Indian experience, a phenomenon despicable in every respect, which just came into prominence sometime in the Second World War when considerations of material gain, pure and simple, began to overshadow one's better instincts in the conditions created by an economic boom. When money accrues without effort a man's sense of obligation to society can sink to a low level. Almost everyone found some work or other to do in those days. It was easy to get a living without exerting oneself overmuch. The habits and attitudes acquired during the war and the early years of independence took firm root, and became one's working principle in the conduct of one's professional life.

The era which preceded this state of affairs was totally different in its complexion. The economy was permanently below par, unemployment was high, individual earnings were low — low even in relation to the then price levels. Yet the mass of the people worked hard, conscientiously, with a high sense of duty and social obligation, and with no thought of material reward, of which there was in any case very little. The point is that men can show a high sense of duty, despite the fact that there is no great material gain. Men can show a low sense of social obligation even when there is no real ground for complaint about personal incomes. Sociologists would have to address themselves to the problem of human motivation, of attitudes to work and moral duty, the efficacy of monetary incentives.

The values which the modern world gives to work have become topsy-turvy. "Work" is the act of using or guiding energy towards the achievement of a desired object. He who works merely to earn a living, to make the maximum of profit with the minimum of effort, remains a "labourer" in his mentality. The man of purpose who exerts to give his best, transforms that work and makes it meaningful in a different sense. He who sees the selfsame worldly duties as reflections of archetypal realities, of the great duties of Universal Life, transmutes the mundane

into the divine. That "tincture" ("for Thy sake"), of which the 17th-century George Herbert wrote—

A servant with this clause
 Makes drudgerie divine:
 Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
 Makes that and th' action fine

—refers to the transforming power of will and the creative element in action. Through such performance of small plain duties the world is served and saved.

The recent report of a plant which gobbles up mosquito larvae is one more instance of nature's unique checks and balances. Only when predatory man intervenes aggressively is the balance upset, leading to numerous problems. Commenting on nature's "inventiveness," *The Times of India* for October 29 states editorially:

Note the optimum economy in the workings of nature: nothing is ever wasted; recycling, a relatively new concept for industrial man, has been in use in the plant world for millions of years. Also note how adaptable nature is; in fact, this adaptation has been called the mother of invention. If we look closely enough we shall find countless new and astonishing ideas which can yield useful inventions. Organisms use the power of light, mechanics, thermodynamics, transportation and architecture. They can flourish in incredibly hostile conditions of extreme heat, cold, sudden changes of temperature, prolonged drought; they may be found thriving in hot, acidic, volcanic springs, extremely salty marshes and in total darkness (in the depths of the oceans where the pressures are tremendous). The principle behind the lenses that automatically darken in bright light, a recent invention, has been used by most green plants since they evolved. The fruit of a tree called burdock has a better hook-fastener than the plastic ones recently marketed. Some trees release gyroplane seeds which excel the best aircraft propellers. Tailless gliders have been designed after the shape of some other seeds. Even the principles of ferroconcrete were copied from the support structure of plants. Such marvels of efficiency may be seen anywhere and only egocentric man thinks he is a great inventor. But of course nature has been at it longer. The fundamental secret of nature seems to be that it has consistently adopted, retained and encouraged to grow what is most efficient. This is what man must do too.
