

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION	73
“CHILDREN ARE OUR SALVATION”	79
REBIRTH—A LOGICAL NECESSITY—I	83
THE PRINCIPLES IN MAN	86
THE TREE OF UNIVERSAL GNOSIS	92
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	97
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	102

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THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION

There is but ONE Eternal Truth, one universal, infinite and changeless Spirit of Love, Truth and Wisdom, impersonal, therefore bearing a different name with every nation, one Light for all, in which the whole Humanity lives and moves, and has its being. Like the spectrum in optics, giving multicoloured and various rays, which are yet caused by one and the same sun, so theologies and sacerdotal systems are many. But the Universal religion *can only be one*, if we accept the real, primitive meaning of the root of that word. We, Theosophists, so accept it; and therefore say, “We are all brothers—by the laws of Nature, of birth, and death, as also by the laws of our utter helplessness from birth to death in this world of sorrow and deceptive illusions. Let us, then, love, help, and mutually defend each other against this spirit of deception; and while holding to that which each of us accepts as his ideal of truth and reality—*i.e.*, to the religion which suits each of us best—let us unite ourselves to form a practical nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF RACE, CREED, OR COLOUR.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY (*Lucifer*, April 1888)

WHAT is the function of religion? Most People think that “religion” prepares an individual for some future existence. Some religions are considered to have arisen as the result of reform to the existing religious system by a prophet-reformer, while some are claimed to be revelations of a Supreme Being. There are many religions and

people of each religion have *their own* God and *their own* ideas of God. Crusades have been fought in the name of religion—often between two groups of people belonging to the same religion—each praying to the same God to vanquish the other.

Religion, as it is generally understood, is opposed to the spirit of science—which is one of inquiry and investigation. However, scientific method is empirical while that of religion is dogmatic. Science does not depend on external authority such as a Pope or *Pundit*, but appeals to some reasonable evidence that an intelligent mind can understand. A true scientist does not take refuge in dogmatism.

Each religion claims that its scriptures are unique because they are the utterances of God and hence infallible. Nowadays, literal infallibility is not so much insisted upon except by a few fundamentalists. To divest religion of dogmas, tradition and myths is to make it empty. Hence religious authorities condemn all attempts that undermine their belief in scriptures. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan points out the failure of the religions to perform their real function, thus:

The inadequacy of religion is evident from the disparity between outward allegiance and inward betrayal. Religion is confused with the mechanical participation in the rites or passive acquiescence in the dogmas. Many of those who observe the forms of religion...do not model their lives on the precepts they profess....We must live religion in truth and deed and not merely profess it in words.

Unfortunately religions tend to keep people apart. Humanity is broken up into a number of separate worlds each with its particular religious tradition. To sustain a world community, we need unity, if not identity of spiritual outlook and aspiration. The root meaning of the word “religion” suggests that it should be a binding force. (*Recovery of Faith*, pp. 21-22 and 30)

Every creed discourages its followers from inquiring into the rationality of the belief they hold sacred. Many eminent scientists blindly follow their creed. When it comes to religion they forfeit the use of their minds, which is the prerogative of man.

When a person, who has the power to inquire, to think, to investigate and analyze, believes in sectarian and religious beliefs and dogmas, he actually forfeits his faculty of thinking. It is his duty to find out whether the belief is universal, impersonal and eternal or not. If not, never accept it. One should have a scientific mind and readiness to accept the truth from whichever quarter it may come. H.P.B. writes:

He who believes his own religion on faith, will regard that of every other man as a lie, and hate it on that same faith. Moreover, unless it fetters reason and entirely blinds our perceptions of anything outside our own particular faith, the latter is no faith at all, but a temporary belief, the delusion we labour under, at some particular time of life. Moreover, “faith without principles is but a flattering phrase for willful positiveness or fanatical bodily sensations,” in Coleridge’s clever definition....(*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 1*, p. 2)

People following different creeds have their beliefs that are not logical. Most people feel that religion is determined by birth in a particular family or the community to which one belongs. It is the duty of man to understand the meaning of life, of religious beliefs and customs, and if they appeal to his mind, learn to apply them in life.

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

Religious differences arise because of ignorance and become dangerous to human society and its peace when blind belief energizes them. While we may quarrel with the outward forms, mechanical rites, and social superstitions, which unfortunately have acquired the sanctity of religion, through many centuries—and which have really hindered the growth of the true spirit of religion—

the fundamental principles of religion, *viz.*, an ever deepening awareness of the divine presence and compassion for humanity, are never forgotten or superseded. This is the true spirit of religion. The worth of any religious tradition depends upon its teachings about God, Nature and Man. H.P.B. writes:

Theosophy is not *a* Religion, we say, but RELIGION itself, the one bond of unity, which is so universal and all-embracing that no man, as no speck—from gods and mortals down to animals, the blade of grass and atom—can be outside of its light. Therefore, any organization or body of that name must necessarily be a UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No.1*, p. 5)

John Bunyan said, “Religion is the best armour that man can have, but it is the worst cloak.” Religion awakens and unfolds in us humility, piety, and unselfishness, but unfortunately it also breeds hypocrisy, humbug, cant, credulity and fanaticism. Religion enables and leads the earnest seeker to the path of light and Truth, through inquiry and honest search for truth. Thus:

The...function of religion is dual: first, to give to man knowledge about his own Soul and Spirit by which he can ennoble his mind and elevate his feelings; secondly, to give to man strength born of perception to be a good neighbour to his fellow-men, to be a helper of the needy and to be an...efficient servant of humanity. (*The Brotherhood of Religions*, Introduction)

Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee. (*Gita*, IV)

This shows that religion, in its true sense, tends towards unity and wholeness; on the other hand, religions based on a set of dogmas and beliefs tend towards separateness, dividing man from man. Those who follow them can never know what true religion is, until they learn to think for themselves. Each one of us should try to look for that spark of Tathagata light within, and knowledge will arise spontaneously in the course of time. As the definition of

religion indicates, the binding power is the very essence of “true religion” and it always tends towards greater harmony. When such harmony is established, various distinctions and barriers, which are man-made, fall away before one integrating and uniting force.

The religious instinct is one of the most forceful of human instincts. By the aid of right knowledge man can press that instinct into his own service and so can secure for himself the peace of enlightenment; and more, become instrumental in bringing that inner peace of conviction and of faith to his fellow-men. On the other hand, allowing his mind to be corrupted by false knowledge and sordid notions man becomes the slave of that instinct and soon learns to feel hatred and jealousy which are potent causes of riots and of wars....India suffers from the evil effects of religious fanaticism: communal riots, rooted in credal superstitions, have blackened the fair name of the Motherland. (*The Brotherhood of Religions*, Introduction)

Unfortunately, religious fanaticism and religious riots are not peculiar to India but have become a universal phenomenon.

Down the ages, Great Instructors of humanity have taught certain truths from which human ignorance and credulity have time and again drawn away our minds and hearts. Sri Krishna, in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, speaks of efforts made, periodically, to teach mankind the same old Truths that enable us to destroy unrighteousness and to take the path of righteousness. The message given out by H.P.B. in 1875 is but the resuscitation of the same old *Brahma Vidya* to which she gave the name Theosophy.

The motto of the Theosophical Society [and of the United Lodge of Theosophists today] has been “There is no religion higher than Truth.” Theosophy defines religion as *Dharma*. *Dharma* has been defined in *Karnaparva* of the *Mahabharata* as “that which supports, that which holds together the people.”

Let us take to heart these inspiring words from the pen of Henri-Frederic Amiel:

Religion is not a method, it is a life, a higher and supernatural life, mystical in its root and practical in its fruits, a communion

with God, a calm and deep enthusiasm, a love which radiates, a force which acts, a happiness which overflows. *Religion*, in short, is a *state of the soul*....I feel so little interest in these ecclesiastical struggles...for dogma, criticism, the Church, are not religion; and it is religion, the sense of a divine life, which matters. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." *The most holy is the most Christian; this will always be the criterion which is least deceptive. "By this ye shall know my disciples, if they have love one to another."* [Italics ours.]

GOODNESS is the heart of man. All that the word Goodness means is "getting access to one's real heart." In its true and original state the heart did not experience pleasure, anger, grief or delight. But once a man begins to pursue his own private ends, harassed by rage and desire, he ceases to be in any proper sense a man. If on the other hand, he can overcome the personal cravings of his human heart and return to the impersonal state that belongs to the heart of Tao, then he will regard others just as he regards himself, will regard things just as he regards men, and the true original state of this man's nature will be manifested. Henceforward he will be seen to treat his parents as parents should be treated, to show consideration to his inferiors and affection towards all creatures, all of which will follow spontaneously from workings of his real, unspoiled heart....If a man can for a single day return to the original state, go back to the always-so, then the ten thousand things will be for him all of like form and condition, and wherever he goes there will be Goodness. That is why the Master said, "If for a single day a man can overcome his personal self and return to *li* [the natural], everything under Heaven for that man turns into Goodness."

—*The Analects of CONFUCIUS*

“CHILDREN ARE OUR SALVATION”

THE question repeatedly asked in our society characterized by strained parent-child relationships, is: "How should we, adults, raise our children, so that they become self-reliant, without becoming self-willed, selfish or overly liberated?" The answer involves not only the art of bringing up children, and moral issues like self-reliance and liberation, but revolves mainly around making a healthful and *satisfying relationship* in a family—less stressful and more rewarding.

For this objective, two principles are to be kept in view:

(1) Each child is an old soul in a new body, having its own destiny to fulfil in the midst of his family, with which he is karmically linked. Therefore, every child must be respected as an equal, recognizing our karmic responsibility for its spiritual growth and the unfoldment of its latent powers and faculties. Each child has its unique "soul-background," character and temperament from its past lives lived on earth. Each life, therefore, is an educative interaction between these characteristics (*skandhas*) and the surrounding. Like gardeners, we as guardians should preserve a balance between "nurture" and "nature," the soul (seed) and the soil, for the normal development of the tender plant called a "child."

(2) There is an ancient and honourable tradition regarding human interrelationship, *i.e.*, rules of behaviour between elders, equals, and youngsters. The *elders* are looked up to and relied on for their power to guide, protect, and nurture with patience and loving care, all those under them, including servants, the under-privileged, and also creatures belonging to lower kingdoms. With *equals*, a pleasant intervention of warmth, respect and co-operation should promote mutual growth and well-being. The younger ones, being physically and emotionally dependent, naturally look up to the adults, expecting an assured dependability, love and care, and in return respond with affection and gratitude, trust and respect, toward parents, teachers, and even elder siblings. Once this principle of hierarchical relationship is promoted, not by strict regimentation but by mutuality and cultured environment, and especially by being

a “role model,” most issues in a normal family can be sorted out sympathetically, intelligently and skilfully.

It is not a matter of doing a *particular* thing, but basically, it is a way of living together with mutual love, trust and respect. One negative rule is certain: Elders should never ignore or deny the emotional needs of those of tender age, nor should they rush to moralize condescendingly, or lose self-control in the presence of impressionable kids. Adults are always considered as “role models” for youngsters to emulate. A response with “empathy,” *i.e.*, understanding plus acknowledging the fragile feelings of immaturity, will go a long way to a smooth and rewarding relationship from the start. In a pleasant atmosphere, the management of children of any age becomes a less difficult charge, and inculcation of “values” and grace without bumps becomes possible.

Before considering the need for generating “self-reliance” but ending in self-willed behaviour of the modern “liberated” youngsters, certain rules are in order. The most important key to sharpen the skills of parenting is: *Communication* and *Accessibility*. Children must be able to count on us and feel safe to share with us, if we desire to be the “ethical negotiators” in a collaborative atmosphere.

Communication skills mainly consist of sympathetic listening and responding. It means putting one’s self in the back seat, and preserving objectivity and empathy, in order to elicit smooth co-operation. There is, for instance, a tactful art of saying “no”—in a roundabout way sometimes—and yet getting things done our way!

Now the main question remains: How to inculcate self-reliance and yet draw a line before the “self-liberated” youngster chooses to behave in an unacceptable way? For instance, to set a reasonable limit to his unreasonable demands, we first need sensitivity, tolerance and understanding of the needs of the new generation of “modern” youngsters. Verbally, too, we may acknowledge these emotional needs, as this is acceptable to the child and presents us as “reasonable adults.” Once the youngster, however self-willed

by habit or nature, feels secure that his feelings and emotions behind his demands are understood—“I know how you feel!”—he becomes *willing to listen* to the other side. When a person loves and trusts someone, he strives to understand that person’s point of view, and to be helpful.

Love and endearing language create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect which are an absolute pre-requisite for any negotiation. To this, if we add sympathy, the persuasion and adjustment are not so difficult.

This is easier said than done, and needs sincere efforts, amidst occasional failures and long practice! And failures should not dishearten us; we must patiently keep trying. It is our duty.

Does it mean being a soft, “permissive parent” who is yielding before the heat of youthful demands—tantrums? Silent permission to express feelings, even if it hurts, can reduce tension. Then the young blood may be ready to consider other options that may be suggested to channelize activities into permissible directions. Yet there should be no hesitation in setting an acceptable limit to youthful zest which otherwise may carry it away into uncontrolled revelry! A firm request to “mind the language” is in order.

As for self-reliance, self-confidence, self-esteem, etc., to be encouraged in our children, the first rule is enthusiastic appreciation of whatever progress the child has made. Praise and even “thanks” must be expressed whenever it is due. This motivates further effort.

Children instinctively know their dependence on elders and yet resent to be always treated as “kids” and being supervised or frequently told how to do things. Children also hate invasion on their personal space. For instance, when we insist on a hair-cut according to our notion of what is proper. The child may be led to choose from among activities which are mutually acceptable.

Children want to be independent “grown-ups” and at the same time remain children! To become an “independent” person means less “dependent relationships” with others. This is a process that cannot be enhanced by demanding obedience all the time or by

external controls or inhibitions. Nor should independence be construed as permission to indulge in unrestrained freedom. A judicious *balance* is a rule in all life's endeavours. The function of the adult is not to offer readymade solutions and instant advice to the young learner of skills. The child should know that we are always available and helpful whenever required. The child should be allowed to wrestle with his own problem. He can be stimulated to think positively and constructively by himself. He should be made to see that learning means the process of successes and failures. But the policy is to "try, and try again, till you succeed."

When H.P.B. said "children are our salvation," she meant that they represent the future destiny of humanity. The way we nurture now, psychologically and morally, the young generation, will condemn or salvage all of us with the season of ripening and when the fruits will have to be harvested.

AND a woman....said, Speak to us of Children.
 And he said:
 Your children are not your children.
 They are the sons and daughters of Life's
 longing for itself.
 They come through you but not from you.
 And though they are with you yet they belong
 not to you.
 You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
 For they have their own thoughts.
 You may house their bodies but not their souls,
 For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
 which you cannot visit, nor even in your dreams.
 You may strive to be like them but seek not
 to make them like you.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

REBIRTH—A LOGICAL NECESSITY

I

A flower blossoms; then withers and dies. It leaves a fragrance behind, which, long after its delicate petals are but a little dust, still lingers in the air....Let a note be struck on an instrument, and the faintest sound produces an eternal echo. A disturbance is created on the invisible waves of the shoreless ocean of space, and the vibration is never wholly lost....And man, we are asked to believe, man, the living, thinking, reasoning entity, the indwelling deity of our nature's crowning masterpiece, will evacuate his casket and be no more! Would the principle of continuity, which exists even for the so-called *inorganic* matter, for a floating atom, be denied to the spirit, whose attributes are consciousness, memory, mind, LOVE! Really, the very idea is preposterous.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

ARE we born again? We can divide humanity into two major groups—believers and non-believers in rebirth. The third minority is indifferent to the whole issue. What makes people believe or not believe, accept or reject the doctrine of rebirth? We find that the majority do not do their own thinking but accept the ideas formulated by Science or Religion.

Some non-believers argue: If we have lived before, why do we not remember our past lives? Why have we not made progress? Then there are those—weighed down by the misery of the present life—who are frightened by the idea of *one more* life of misery and would rather believe in the bliss of eternal heaven. However, the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of rebirth does not depend upon human sentiments or beliefs.

Dr. J. Paul Williams observes in his essay, "Belief in a Future Life," that the arguments regarding rebirth revolve around the fundamental question: What is man? There are three possibilities. (1) Is man just a body? (2) Is he a body that has a soul? (3) Is he a soul that has [or uses] a body? Our everyday experience shows that man is not just a body. If we accept that man *is* a soul, then

what is the relation between the soul and the body? William James pointed out that we can say that body *produces* life [soul], *or*, that the body *reflects* life. He gives an analogy. Light is produced by a candle; if the candle is put out, its light disappears. But light is reflected by a mirror; if the mirror is taken away the light still continues. So also we may suppose that the body reflects the soul, therefore it is rational to believe that soul can exist apart from the body. We may argue that we do not have a *direct* experience of the soul existing independent of the body. So also, we have no *direct* experience of electrons and protons in an atom.

Yet, there are innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-the-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing the body from a distance and re-entering it—showing that soul can exist independent of the body. We must distinguish between the possessor and the possessed, *i.e.*, Individuality and Personality. Just like a person throws away old, worn-out garments and puts on new ones, so also the soul takes up a new body at every birth, teaches the *Gita*. There is an immortal “I” which is the possessor of body, mind, feelings, etc., but cannot be equated with them. Mr. Judge writes, “Unless we deny the immortality of man and the existence of soul, there are no sound arguments against the doctrine of preexistence and rebirth.” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 84)

The doctrine of rebirth is one of the most ancient doctrines. The ancients have tried to convey it through the language of symbols and myths. For ages, the symbol of symbols for rebirth has been the phoenix. It is a mythical bird of great beauty which is fabled to live for 500 to 600 years, then to burn itself on a funeral pile and rise from the ashes to live through another cycle of years. It is said that when it burns itself to ashes, one glowing spark, signifying the immortal spirit, remains, and from it new life is evolved. The immortal spark undergoes pilgrimage in the drama of evolution. A Kabalistic aphorism describes this pilgrimage thus: “A stone becomes a plant, a plant an animal, an animal a man, and man a god.”

We can see that such a great sweep of evolution must necessarily involve not just many years but many lives. We are a long way off from becoming a Buddha. It takes up many years to master even one branch of knowledge, be it music or art or mathematics or computer science. Then again it is no easy task to improve our nature. To overcome a single defect in our character or develop a single virtue takes enormous effort and time. The Buddha said: “Far hath he gone whose foot treads down one fond offence.” This partly answers the objection that if we have lived many lives, how is it that we have not advanced? Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that “Mere death confers no advance.” The mere act of dying will not produce elimination of wrong tendencies and development of virtues, powers and faculties. We must not equate reincarnation with progress. Rebirth only provides an opportunity for progress. The same idea is beautifully conveyed in the book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. The seagull, Jonathan, who is trying to achieve perfection in flying and to rise above the ordinary flock, is told about the difficulty of the task in these words:

You are pretty well a one-in-a-million bird. Most of us came along ever so slowly. We went from one world into another...forgetting right away where we had come from, not caring where we were headed, living for the moment. Do you have any idea how many lives we must have gone through before we even got the first idea that there is more to life than eating, or fighting, or power in the flock? A thousand lives, Jon, ten thousand! And then another hundred lives until we begin to learn that there is such a thing as perfection, and another hundred again to get the idea that our purpose for living is to find that perfection and show it forth...Learn nothing [in this world] and the next world is the same as this one, all the same limitations and lead weights to overcome. (pp. 53-54)

(To be concluded)

THE PRINCIPLES IN MAN

IT is very difficult to understand one's fellow men in a real way, and most difficult of all to know oneself. At all times man has felt the dual forces at work within himself, conflicting tendencies in his inner nature, which St. Paul expressed in the words: "...the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." (*Romans*, VII, 19)

Can the theosophical teaching about the constitution of man and his inner nature help us to decipher the varied aspects of ourselves and of all those around us, and so understand better the motives that drive men to action? Let us try to answer this question in the light of Theosophy.

It is impossible to study Man without keeping in mind the place he occupies in the scheme of cosmic manifestation as a whole.

"The universe evolves from the Unknown, into which no man or mind, however high, can inquire, on seven planes or in seven ways or methods in all worlds, and this sevenfold differentiation causes all the worlds of the Universe and the beings thereon to have a septenary constitution" (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 15). Every single atom of all that surrounds us is a duality of spirit and matter, the spiritual aspect being the life-giving energy and the basis of consciousness, whereas the material aspect or substance is the basis of all the forms through which Spirit manifests. Spirit is for ever striving to manifest through better, more perfected forms; but the real Man is not the form of flesh, blood and bones; he is the inner divine Monad or higher Ego with its manifold principles or aspects. This Ego has used all the forms of the various kingdoms of Nature, finally to have at his disposal his present perfected instrument. The form used by man was always adapted to the circumstances of his surroundings, and so the Ego or real Man has gone through experience in countless conditions of matter, and the various powers which are now in his possession were gradually evolved.

Theosophy teaches that the evolution of the world in which we

live and the evolution of man proceeded on parallel lines. The Earth reached very gradually her present condition of dense matter, and this was also the case with man. The Earth and the universe itself developed in a sevenfold manner, and each of the seven principles of man is derived from one of the seven primary divisions; each relates to a planet or scene of evolution, and to a race in which that evolution was carried out. Therefore there is a close relationship not only between Man and the Earth, but also between the Earth and the universe as a whole. The first sevenfold differentiation is the basis of all that follows, and so the evolution of man, planets and solar systems is septenary. All nature is before us and within us; we must take and use what we can, and wisely!

What is a principle? "A principle is a basis for thought and action in connection with a specific plane of substance. To be conscious on any plane of being implies that one is acting in, and with, that principle *in himself* which corresponds to that particular plane of being." (*Answers to Questions on The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 65)

What are the seven principles in Man? Starting with the highest, we have:

(1) *Atma* or the Higher Self, the light of the One Universal Life, which shines on all of us but can shine *through* only a very few at our present stage of evolution, because we are imprisoned in gross matter.

(2) *Buddhi*, the Spiritual Soul, which is the vehicle and direct emanation of Atma. It receives its light of Wisdom from Atma and gets its rational qualities from:

(3) *Manas*, or Mind. This is the principle which makes man different from the higher animal species. In the latter, Manas is latent; in man it is awakened, active. Theosophy teaches that it is Manas or Mind which uses the brain as its instrument, and that thought is not just the result of the activity of the brain, as explained by science. The mind in man is derived from Cosmic Mind, which contains the plan of Cosmic manifestation. It is necessary to remember how Cosmos and Man are interwoven, because the understanding of our place within the enormous scope of

manifestation makes us see more clearly our task and our responsibility, and also shows us that there is no such thing as separateness.

These three principles, Atma-Buddhi-Manas, together form the higher Triad, the Individuality or the immortal aspect of Man. Manas, the Thinker, is the immortal reincarnating Ego and the custodian of the enduring values of the experiences gathered throughout the lives lived on earth. When Manas is active through a physical instrument, *i.e.*, during incarnation on Earth, its nature becomes dual. Its higher aspect aspires towards union with Buddhi or the spiritual part of the soul; its lower aspect forms the bridge to the lower mortal principles.

The mortal principles in man, which form the lower Quaternary, are: the Passions and Desires, the Astral Body, the Life-Principle, and the Physical Body. These four form the mortal aspect of man called in Theosophy the *Personality*.

The personality is composed of a visible and an invisible aspect. The former comprises the physical body with all its component parts, while the latter is formed of the three remaining principles, *i.e.*, the Passions and Desires, the Astral Body and the Life-Principle. These three are part of our transitory nature which, although invisible to the physical eye, is nevertheless material and subject to decay.

We are inclined to think that the Passions and Desires, or *Kama*, represent an inferior aspect of human nature, which is so frequently the case when they are allowed to run wild, uncontrolled, and without direction from the mind. But, in its essence, *Kama* is “the first conscious, *all-embracing desire* for universal good, love, and for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness, the first feeling of infinite tender compassion and mercy that arose in the consciousness of the creative ONE FORCE, as soon as it came into life and being as a ray from the ABSOLUTE...*Kama* is pre-eminently the divine desire of creating happiness and love; and it is only ages later, as mankind began to materialize by anthropomorphization its grandest ideals into cut-and-dried dogmas, that *Kama* became

the power that gratifies desire on the animal plane.” It is also the power which gives direction to the Will.

The *Astral Body* is the model around which the physical body is built and is the vehicle of the principle of Life or *Prana*.

Life is a universally pervasive principle. “It is not the result of the operation of the organs, nor is it gone when the body dissolves...It is the ocean in which the earth floats; it permeates the globe and every being and object on it...It cannot be said that one has a definite amount of Life Energy which will fly back to its source should the body be burned, but rather that it works with whatever be the mass of matter in it” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 40-41). In *The Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. says that *Prana* or life “is, strictly speaking, the radiating force or Energy of Atma—as the Universal Life and the ONE SELF—ITS lower or rather (in its effects) more physical, because manifesting, aspect.”

To recapitulate, septenary man is composed of a higher, immortal Triad or Individuality, which uses during incarnation the lower, mortal Quaternary or Personality.

The duality mentioned above, which man feels within himself, is the result of the conflict between these two aspects of human nature: the immortal and the mortal, the spiritual and the material; in short, between the good and the evil within us.

It must, of course, be understood that the principles in man are not segregated, each in its own compartment, with its own exclusive sphere of action. They interpenetrate and influence one another, just as is the case with the seven globes of the Earth Chain. In one person one principle may be more pronounced in its action than another, whereas in another person it may be another principle that plays a more important part. And so human nature has innumerable facets; no two human beings are alike in character—and what is character but the result of the use made by the Ego, in the course of many incarnations, of its instruments or principles, by means of which it accumulates and assimilates impressions and experiences?

What can be the practical value of a knowledge of the sevenfold

constitution of Man?

In showing us the similarity between the constitution of the Cosmos and of Man, Theosophy makes us realize the unity of all life in Nature and provides the basis of Universal Brotherhood. The divine, permanent, unchangeable One Life which permeates every atom is also in Man at the very base of his *true* nature. It is of the nature of light and can illuminate our whole being if we can make our material constituents receptive enough to transmit that light. How can this be attained? By using the knowledge of our sevenfold constitution as a guide to Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge comes gradually when we try to analyse with sincerity and courage our incentives to action. That is not easy to accomplish, because there is no one we deceive more than ourselves! But finding out what motivates us is undoubtedly the first step to be taken in trying to lead our life consciously and deliberately. Theosophy teaches that it is by self-devised and self-imposed efforts that we can hasten our evolution, and since we are not miserable sinners but potential gods, it is our duty to use the visible and invisible material components of our nature in such a manner as to make of them a temple worthy of the Inner God.

How to go about this work of many incarnations? By remembering always that that which we are used to calling "I" is neither our body, nor our feelings, nor our thoughts. For many, this implies closing up old grooves of thought and thinking along new lines, but if we impose this discipline of thought upon ourselves, the first result will be the discovery that we have much more inner strength at our disposal than we knew of. We shall realize that we need no longer be at the mercy of our feelings, and that there is an aspect of our Soul—the Mind—that can canalize, control and ennoble our feelings, our passions, our desires and ambitions; that can transform, for instance, an ambition for power and wealth into an aspiration towards service and compassion. This needs will-power. Theosophy teaches that Will is a Universal Force and defines it as the force of Spirit in action. It therefore operates in all living beings. In itself Will is absolutely colourless and varies in moral

quality in accordance with the desire behind it. It is our task to guide the Will with pure desire and aspiration.

To summarize the aforesaid in another way: the eternal, immutable Spirit or Atma in man uses six vehicles to attain to Self-knowledge and knowledge of the surrounding world by means of experience. Self-knowledge is attained more or less quickly according to the use we make of the instruments or vehicles at our disposal. The awakening of Manas has raised us from the animal stage to the status of human beings, and as such it is our task to build the bridge between the mortal aspects of our nature and the divine essence within us in order to become ultimately one with it. To do this we must always use our common sense. As W. Q. Judge says: "All the truths of Theosophy are the apotheosis of common sense."

THE intuition of the moral sentiment is an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul. These laws execute themselves. They are out of time, out of space, and not subject to circumstance. Thus, in the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire. He who does a good deed, is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed, is by the action itself contracted. He who puts off impurity, thereby puts on purity. If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice. If a man dissemble, deceive, he deceives himself, and goes out of acquaintance with his own being. A man in the view of absolute goodness, adores with total humility....The man who renounces himself, comes to himself.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

THE TREE OF UNIVERSAL GNOSIS

H.P.B. wrote in the article “Le Phare de l’Inconnu” (*The Theosophist*, July, August, September and October 1889; reprinted in *She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*):

Theosophy is a descendant in direct line of the great tree of universal GNOSIS, a tree the luxuriant branches of which, spreading over the whole earth like a great canopy, gave shelter at one epoch—which biblical chronology is pleased to call “antediluvian”—to all the temples and to all the nations of the earth. That gnosis represents the aggregate of all the sciences, the accumulated wisdom (*savoir*) of all the gods and demi-gods incarnated in former times upon the earth.

She further stated that “Theosophy is synonymous with *Gnana-Vidya* and with the *Brahma-Vidya* of the Hindus, and again with the *Dzyan* of the trans-Himalayan adepts, the science of the *true Raj-Yogis*, who are much more accessible than one thinks.” She reminds us that there are many schools of this science in the East and the off-shoots of it are numerous. These offshoots have ended by separating from the parent stem, the “true Archaic Wisdom,” and vary in form, but we must remember that

while these forms varied, departing further with each generation from the light of truth, the basis of initiatory truths remained always the same. The symbols used to express the same idea may differ, but in their hidden sense they always do express the same idea....There exists a sacerdotal language, the “mystery language,” and unless one knows it well, he cannot go far in the occult sciences.

She quotes Professor Alexander Wilder as saying that “the names of...different divinities seem often to have been invented with little or no regard to their etymological meaning, but chiefly on account of some particular mystical signification attached to the numerical value of the letters employed in their orthography.” And H.P.B. adds that “this *numerical* signification is one of the branches of the *mystery language*, or the ancient sacerdotal language.” This

was taught in the olden days in the “Lesser Mysteries,” but the language itself was taught only to the high Initiates.

H.P.B. gives us an example of how different symbols have been used to convey the same truth:

According to Ragon “to build or found a town” meant the same thing as to “found a religion”; therefore, that phrase when it occurs in Homer is equivalent to the expression of the Brahmins, to distribute the “Soma juice.” It means, “to found an esoteric school,” not “a religion” as Ragon pretends. Was he mistaken? We do not think so....It is certain that he had made at least an elementary study of “THE MYSTERY LANGUAGE.”

H.P.B. refers to the spread of this Ancient Wisdom, its “direct continuation.” From ancient India it was transmitted to Egypt, from Egypt to the Philaletheans and the Neo-Platonists. “The Christian Quietists, the Musulman Soufis, the Rosicrucians of all countries, drink the waters of that inexhaustible fountain.”

Authenticity for the idea that Egypt owed its knowledge to India is given by Homer and Herodotus, for they “tell us, in fact, that the ancient Egyptians were ‘Ethiopians of the East,’ *who came from Lanka or Ceylon*.” H.P.B. adds that they were “a colony of very dark-skinned Aryans, the Dravidians of Southern India, who took an already existing civilization with them to Egypt...during the prehistoric ages...(before Menes).” She further states that “pre-Assyrian Babylonia was the home of Brahmanism, and of the Sanskrit as a sacerdotal language.”

H.P.B. refers to Ammonius Saccas, the precursor of our own embodiment of this Truth:

Encouraged in the Church by Clement of Alexandria and by Athenagoras, protected by the learned men of the synagogue and of the academy, and adored by the Gentiles, “he learned the *language of the mysteries* by teaching the common origin of all religions and a common religion.” To do this, he had only to teach according to the ancient canons of Hermes which Plato and Pythagoras had studied so well, and from which they drew their respective philosophies. Can we be surprised if, finding

in the first verses of the gospel according to St. John the same doctrines that are contained in the three systems of philosophy above mentioned, he concluded with every show of reason that the intention of the great Nazarene was to restore the sublime science of ancient wisdom in all its primitive integrity?

What, then, is this ancient wisdom? How shall we reach it?

The Beacon-light upon which the eyes of all real Theosophists are fixed is the same towards which in all ages the imprisoned human soul has struggled. This Beacon, whose light shines upon no earthly seas, but which has mirrored itself in the sombre depths of the primordial waters of infinite space, is called by us, as by the earliest Theosophists, “Divine Wisdom.” That is the last word of the esoteric doctrine; and, in antiquity, where was the country, having the right to call itself civilized, that did not possess a double system of *Wisdom*, of which one part was for the masses, and the other for the few, the exoteric and the esoteric? This name, *Wisdom*, or, as we say sometimes, the “Wisdom Religion” or Theosophy, is as old as the human mind.

The end and aim is “the union of the divine spark which animates man with the parent-flame, which is the Divine *All*.” This can come about for those “who devote themselves entirely to the service of humanity.” But there are others “who are not yet ready to sacrifice everything.” These “may occupy themselves with the transcendental sciences....”

The INFINITE cannot be known to our reason—which can only distinguish and define—but it can be conceived as an abstract idea, thanks to our intuition, or the spiritual instinct. But there is much that can be gained by a study of the metaphysical philosophy.

Theosophy being the way that leads to truth, in every religion as in every science, occultism is, so to say, the touchstone and universal solvent. It is the thread of Ariadne given by the master to the disciple who ventures into the labyrinth of the mysteries of being; the torch that lights him through the dangerous maze of life, for ever the enigma of the Sphinx. But the light thrown by this torch can be discerned only by the eye of the awakened

soul—by our spiritual senses; it blinds the eye of the materialist as the sun blinds that of the owl....

Theosophy...examines the reverse side of every apparent truth. It tests and analyses every fact put forward by physical science, looking only for the essence and the ultimate and occult constitution in every cosmical or physical manifestation, whether in the domain of ethics, intellect or matter. In a word, Theosophy begins its researches where materialists finish theirs.

It is because of this that “each person who enters the Theosophical Society can find therein a science and an occupation to his taste.”

An astronomer could make more scientific discoveries by studying the allegories and symbols relating to each star, in the old Sanskrit books, than he could ever make by the aid only of Academies. A doctor who had intuition would learn more from the works of Charaka, translated into Arabic in the eighth century, or in the dusty manuscripts to be found in the Adyar Library—not understood like all the rest—than in modern works on physiology. Theosophists interested in medicine, or *the art of healing*, might do worse than consult the legends and symbols revealed and explained through Asclepios or Aesculapius. For, just as Hippocrates consulted the votive tablets at the temple of Epidaurus (surnamed the Tholos) at Cos, so could they find therein prescriptions for compounding remedies unknown to the modern pharmacopoeia. From thenceforth they might perhaps cure, instead of killing.

Finally, “the Beacon-light of Truth is Nature without the veil of the senses.” We can see why “the investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man” was one of the objects of the Theosophical Society.

Every one of us possesses the faculty, the interior sense, that is known by the name of *intuition*, but how rare are those who know how to develop it! It is, however, only by the aid of this faculty that men can ever see things in their true colours. It is an *instinct of the soul*, which grows in us in proportion to the employment we give it, and which helps us to perceive and

understand the realities of things with far more certainty than can the simple use of our senses and exercise of our reason....“We begin with *instinct*, we end with omniscience,” says Professor A. Wilder.

FREEDOM is the only worthy goal in life. It is won by disregarding things that lie beyond our control. We cannot have a light heart if our minds are a woeful cauldron of fear and ambition.

Do you wish to be invincible? Then don't enter into combat with what you have no real control over. Your happiness depends on three things, all of which are within your power: your will, your ideas concerning the events in which you are involved, and the use you make of your ideas.

Authentic happiness is always independent of external conditions. Vigilantly practice indifference to external conditions. Your happiness can only be found within.

How easily dazzled and deceived we are by eloquence, job title, degrees, high honours, fancy possessions, expensive clothing, or a suave demeanour. Don't make the mistake of assuming that celebrities, public figures, political leaders, the wealthy, or people with great intellectual or artistic gifts are necessarily happy. To do so is to be bewildered by appearances and will only make you doubt yourself....

Stop aspiring to be anyone other than your own best self: for that does fall within your control.

—EPICETUS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: People sometimes take advantage of us—unjustly use us, intimidate us, cheat us—if we do not speak out or defend ourselves. Should we, student-seekers, allow others to take us for granted?

Answer: The psychology of the above situation is lucidly expressed by the psychoanalyst, Dr. Erich Fromm, in his book, *Man for Himself*, by describing character traits of four “personality types.” These are: Receptive (dependent and yielding); Exploitative; Hoarding (greedy and possessive) and Marketing (looking upon oneself as a commodity). All these traits are used to manipulate others to one's own advantage! The oppressor as well as the one who “does not speak out” may both have some internal need arising from one of the above character traits.

At a purely worldly level, a few positive steps recommended are: To adopt persuasive means (*Sama*); offer a compromise or alternative devices or compensation to end rivalry (*Dama*); to adopt cunning but legitimate strategy (*Bheda*); and as a last resort, use strong or authoritative but harmless damage-control measures, without loss of balance (*Danda*).

However, there are a few people in the world—the pure “pacifist”—who can overcome the temperamental weakness, mentioned above; have a strong moral stamina, and are wedded to spiritual discipline. They sincerely believe in the adage: “Blessed are the meek,” and *heroically* prefer to suffer silently than use aggressive or other means of offence and defence against “enemies” who have no scruples.

Generally, we seek to resolve the conflicts by the traditional

“rules of the game,” worldly wisdom, or through “fight or flight” instinctual response. None of these responses really end the conflict. As the Buddha suggests:

Victory breeds hatred; the vanquished dwell in suffering;
but the tranquil man disregarding both victory and defeat lives
happily. (*Dhammapada*, verse 201)

Although, on the surface, the issue may appear to be one of claims, rights, justice, cheating, exploitation, etc., largely, beneath it all lurks the “prestige-issue” or egotism! In such a case the student-seeker should subordinate his so-called prestige, his hidden pride, and instead, intelligently seek to resolve the dispute, to the best of his ability. To “give-in” in an argument is not a mark of weakness, as one is doing it to improve human relationships.

On the moral ground, the answer is simple and straightforward, if we accept that as student-seekers, we have chosen to live the life of probity, devotion and service, and sincerely wish to preserve peace in the world—beginning with our own consciousness. Peace or *Kshanti* is a transcendental virtue and naturally calls for a certain amount of sacrifice.

The ideal response is one recommended by the great heroic soul, Mr. Judge: “To forgive, forgive and largely forget”; to “let go” in order to preserve peace even at a cost of personal sacrifice; firmly “holding the reins” and allowing the divine will to take charge. The course of action enunciated by Mr. Judge is worth emulating, although it may appear cowardly to modern man. Mr. Judge advises:

If some offend, then let us ask what is to be done, but only when the offence is against the whole. When an offence is against us, then let it go. This is thought by some to be “goody-goody,” but I tell you the heart, the soul, and the bowels of compassion are of more consequence than intellectuality....Be sure of this and try as much as you can to spread the true spirit in all directions....(*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 117)

Not all of us may be ready yet to put it into practice, but all can keep it at the back of the mind and inwardly allow one’s actions to

be guided by it, to the extent possible. *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* mentions “the gentle but fierce Krishna.” Traditions speak of merciful but terrible Durga when confronting real hostile “asuric” powers. If Karma draws us into the battlefield, like Arjuna, in defence of Truth (honour), and not just for personal advantage or pride, let us be considerate but brave warriors.

Question: Is it possible for man to achieve liberation in his present physical life? What are man’s limitations to shed the fetters of lower worlds?

Answer: Theosophy teaches that Liberation or *Moksha* is not the highest goal of spiritual life. Our motive must be to achieve liberation from the chain of births and deaths, reach perfection, and renounce the peace and bliss of Nirvana in order to help other suffering beings. This is described as the Path of Renunciation. In this sense, is it possible to achieve liberation? Yes, certainly. What a man has done, others too can do. We have shining examples of Buddha, Shankaracharya, Jesus, Mahavira and many more. Perfectibility is inherent in man, teaches Theosophy. Man is not born in sin. We are like a king asleep, and dreaming that he is a beggar. He only has to wake up to re-become the king that he is, in reality.

To become liberated is to become karmaless. As the *Bhagavad-Gita* says, we are all the time acting. And every action must bring its result, good, bad or indifferent, depending on the nature of action, the motive behind the action and the inner state of the man. All our actions have a motive and a sense of “doership.” “All actions performed other than as sacrifice unto God make the actor bound by action” (*Gita*, III). Naturally, then, results must come back to us—the centre of action. It is just like a stone thrown into a pond which causes ripples that reach out to the shores and return back to the centre of disturbance, going back and forth, again and again, till equilibrium is established. To become liberated is to so act as to offer no individual focus to which results can come back. As Shri Krishna advises:

Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Firmly persisting in Yoga, perform thy duty, O Dhananjaya, and laying aside all desires for any benefit to thyself from action, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga. (*Gita*, II)

This discipline is the line of life's meditation. It is said that even Buddha, before he was born as Prince Siddhartha, in one of his prior lives was only a sweeper. But when as a sweeper he saw a *Tathagata*—Buddha Deepankara—he was impressed by his calm and compassionate appearance and decided to emulate the *Tathagata*. After that it took him the effort of many lifetimes to become a Buddha. *The Voice of the Silence* explains that in one's spiritual development, after reaching a stage called *Srotapatti*, it takes seven lifetimes to reach Nirvana. Thus:

Srotapatti or "he who enters in the stream" of Nirvana, unless he reaches the goal owing to some exceptional reasons, can rarely attain Nirvana in one birth. Usually a Chela is said to begin the ascending effort in one life and end or reach it only in his seventh succeeding birth. (p. 40 fn.)

What we call "fetters of the lower world" are the chains of gold [to us] which we have with our own hands placed on our feet and are now unwilling and unable to throw off. We are like the foetus, cozy, content and happy to be in the mother's womb, not wanting to emerge from this world to some unknown "real world" outside. But let us take courage that there are far fewer still-borns as compared to living, kicking millions in the world. There is that stuff in us that encourages us to march on.

"A lay chela is but a man of the world who affirms his desire to become wise in spiritual things," says H.P.B. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). But he does not become one, overnight. There is a vast store of unexpended karma or past actions that need to be liquidated. It may take us one, seven or several lifetimes, and that depends on our Karmic stamina. As Mr. Judge explains:

Perhaps you see more clearly now how Karma operates. If one directs himself to eliminating all old Karma, the struggle very often becomes tremendous, for the whole load of ancient sin rushes to the front on a man and the events succeed each other rapidly; the strain is terrific, and the whole life fabric groans and rocks. As is said in the East, you may go through the appointed course in 700 births, in seven years or in seven minutes....

Patience is needed in order that the passage of time required for the bodily instrument to be altered or controlled is complete. Violent control is not so good as gentle control, continuous and firmly unrelaxed. Gentleness is better because an opposition current is always provoked, and of course, if that which produces it is gentle, it will also be the same. This gives the unaccustomed student more time and gradual strength. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Thus the disciple moves on, passing test after test, meeting many trials, now failing and now victorious, but never giving up until the final goal is reached.

MAN must save himself; no one, however high in intelligence and spiritual power, can do it for him. He must learn and exercise his Spiritual perceptions and powers and make the material expression of them conform to that Spiritual nature. In fact, he will have to learn even if through untold lives he brings upon himself inexpressible suffering; for when he has suffered enough he will see the error of his ways, and then, perhaps through many lives, make restitution for wrongs done, or duties left undone.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Recent discovery of a partial skeleton of a half-size *Homo* species—supposedly a female, three feet, three inches tall—in a cave on the eastern Indonesian island of Flores, has provided new evolutionary insights. It is believed to have lived there, side by side with *Homo sapiens*. Many differing views have been expressed. A research team led by Peter Brown of the University of New England in Armidale, Australia, concluded that “aside from its small stature and brain, the specimen closely resembles *Homo erectus* fossils.” Some researchers maintain that the new species, dubbed *Homo floresiensis*, reached this island at least 38,000 years ago and then died out near the end of the Stone Age, *i.e.*, roughly 20,000 years later. Brown’s team explains it in terms of dwarfing—evolution of smaller creatures from larger ones. The remains of dwarf elephants and small Komodo dragons have been unearthed on Flores. “Brown’s team proposes that *Homo erectus* reached Flores by 800,000 years ago and evolved into the smaller species as a result of living on an island with limited food sources,” writes B. Bower (*Science News*, October 30). Brown considers it unlikely that *Homo floresiensis* evolved as pygmy versions of *Homo sapiens*. Marta M. Lahr and Robert Foley, both of the University of Cambridge in England, say, “The new find strengthens the view that many ancient *Homo* species evolved throughout the world.”

Theosophy teaches that in the course of evolution, there have been instances of giants existing side by side with dwarfs. “The *Nyam-Nyam* of Africa are regular dwarfs, while their next neighbours (several tribes of comparatively fair-complexioned Africans) are giants when confronted with the *Nyam-Nyams*, and very tall even among Europeans, for their women are all above 6 1/2 feet high.” (*S.D.*, II, 74)

H.P.B. mentions that there is an enormous overlapping of one race over the race that succeeds it. For instance, the Third or Lemurian race overlapped the Atlanteans and the fourth or Atlantean race overlapped with our Aryan race. The old race slowly changes

with the succeeding race, in stature, general physique and mentality. The old race survives only in small groups on islands, where they vegetate, degenerate and die out, as the Aztecs have, as the *Nyam-Nyam* and the dwarfish Moola Koorumba of the Nilgiri Hills are dying (*S.D.*, II, 444-45). Regarding the Atlantean race, H.P.B. writes:

The term “Atlantean” must not mislead the reader to regard these as one race only, or even a nation. It is as though one said “Asiatics.” Many multityped, and various were the Atlanteans, who represented several *humanities*, and almost a countless number of races and nations.... There were brown, red, yellow, white and black Atlanteans; giants and dwarfs (as some African tribes comparatively are, even now). (*S.D.*, II, 433 fn.)

Though giant Atlanteans perished some 850,000 years ago, the last remnants of the Atlanteans—the Aryo-Atlanteans—were destroyed only some 11,000 years ago.

Further, H.P.B. shows that there is a connection between sexual licentiousness and physical stature and strength.

In such countries as the Punjab, for instance, where the lethal influence of Mussalman, and later on of European, licentiousness, has hardly touched the orthodox Aryan castes, one still finds the finest men—so far as stature and physical strength go—on the whole globe; whereas the mighty men of old have found themselves replaced in the Deccan, and especially in Bengal, by men whose generation becomes with every century (and almost with every year) dwarfed and weakened. (*S.D.*, II, 411 fn.)

Who were the Phoenicians? Generally described as vigorous traders and sailors, relatively little is known about them. Historians refer to them as Canaanites. “The Greeks called them *phoinikes*, which means ‘red people’—a name that became Phoenicians—after their word for a prized reddish purple cloth the Phoenicians

exported,” writes Rick Gore (*National Geographic*, October 2004). They are supposed to have been citizens of walled cities such as Byblos, Sidon and Tyre. Thus:

The culture later known as Phoenician was flourishing as early as the third millennium B.C. in the Levant, a coastal region now divided primarily between Lebanon, Syria and Israel....

From the ninth to sixth centuries B.C. they dominated the Mediterranean Sea, establishing emporiums and colonies from Cyprus in the east to the Aegean Sea, Italy, North Africa, and Spain in the west....

Acting as cultural middlemen, the Phoenicians disseminated ideas, myths, and knowledge from the powerful Assyrian and Babylonian worlds in what is now Syria and Iraq to their contacts in the Aegean. Those ideas helped spark a cultural revival in Greece, one which led to the Greeks’ Golden Age and hence the birth of Western civilization. The Phoenicians imported so much papyrus from Egypt that the Greeks used their name for the first great Phoenician port, Byblos, to refer to the ancient paper. The name Bible, or “the book,” also derives from Byblos.

H.P.B. points out that the achievements of the Phoenicians are comparable to those of the mighty Egyptians. Thus:

The writer in the *National Quarterly Review*...says that the Phoenicians were the earliest navigators of the world, founded most of the colonies of the Mediterranean, and voyaged to whatever other regions were inhabited. They visited the Arctic regions, whence they brought accounts of eternal days without a night, which Homer has preserved for us in the *Odyssey*. From the British Isles they imported tin into Africa, and Spain was a favourite site for their colonies....Their explorations, it seems, extended in every direction, their sails whitening the Indian Ocean, as well as the Norwegian fiords....A large portion of the African territory is asserted to have been peopled by the races expelled by Joshua and the children of Israel. At the time when Procopius wrote, columns stood in Mauritania Tingitana, which bore the inscription, in Phoenician characters, “We are

those who fled before the brigand Joshua, the son of Nun or Nave.” (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 545)

Many historians claim—with good reason—that the Jews were identical with the ancient Phoenicians, but, H.P.B. observes that the “Phoenicians were beyond any doubt an Aethiopian race” (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 566-67). Further:

Carthage was a Phoenician city, hence its name; for Tyre was equally *Kartha*....Their tutelary god was styled *Mel-Kartha* (Mel, Baal), or tutelary lord of the city....Moreover all the Cyclopean races were Phoenicians. In the *Odyssey* the *Kyklopes* (Cyclops) are the Libyan shepherds; and Herodotus describes them as miners and great builders. They are the ancient Titans or giants, who in Hesiod forge bolts for Zeus. They are the biblical *Zamzummim* from the land of the giants, the *Anakim*. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 567)

As for the Phoenicians being Canaanites, H.P.B. has this to say:

The name Phoenician affords its own proof. They are called...*Ph Anakes*, which shows that the *Anakes* or *Anakim* of Canaan, with whom the people of Israel, if not identical in race, had, by intermarriage, become entirely absorbed, were the Phoenicians. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 569)

Are coincidences meaningful? What rules our lives, chance or law? “Is there a deeper order, an overarching purpose to the universe? Or are we the lucky accidents of evolution, living our precious but brief lives in a fundamentally random world that has only the meaning we choose to give it?” asks Jill Neimark (*Psychology Today*, July-August 2004). Josh Tenenbaum, MIT cognitive scientist, points out that there is a double atmosphere about coincidences. On the one hand they seem irrational, without any causal connections, and on the other hand we owe some of the greatest scientific discoveries to them. It is felt that the information-rich environment of modern life—with a plethora of names, birth

dates, e-mails, addresses, etc.—is itself a source of many coincidences. “Even ‘prophetic’ dreams can be explained by probability....This country [U.S.A.] dreams a half billion hours each night (250 million people dreaming two hours a night). Some of those dreams are bound to coincide with real events.” The spotting of the comet across the sky, at different periods in history, has been usually accompanied by disasters. Were these mere coincidences—or are comets portents of divine intent? Neimark writes:

For those with a highly empirical bent, a coincidence is happenstance, a simultaneous collision of two events that has no special significance and obeys the laws of probability....

To the mystically inclined, however, coincidence is a synchronicity, the purposeful occurrence of two seemingly unrelated events. The argument is not likely to be resolved anytime soon.

“There is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doing in this or in another life,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 644). It is an orderly universe of Law where the Law of Karma, described as the *ultimate law* of the universe, governs supreme. There is no place for chance or randomness. The universe comes into existence and goes out of existence under the law of Periodicity or Cycles. Our present universe is one in the series of universes and is the result of the karma engendered on the previous universe. Cycles are the clocks of Karma. Similarly, everything in the universe is governed by the law of cycles. Law of Reincarnation is a special aspect of the law of cycles. Esoteric philosophy teaches that evolution proceeds first by natural impulse and then by self-induced, and self-devised efforts, checked by Karma. The Ego reaches self-conscious godhood, “through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations.” Everything in the manifested universe is linked to, affects and is affected by, other factors. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy,

and there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man.” (*Mahatma Letters*, No. 45)

Regarding chance, H.P.B. has this to say:

Most certainly chance is “*impossible*.” There is no “chance” in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. “Chance,” says Coleridge, “is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature), for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual.” Replace the word “God” by that of *Karma* and it will become an Eastern axiom. (*S.D.*, I, 653)

People who profess to be happy, seem to be dissatisfied, deep down, with the modern way of life. The cultural pressure and changing lifestyles appear to be responsible for the wide gap between “what I believe in” and “how I live.” There is search for meaning expressed in religion, New Age mysticism, moral reflection, or love and friendship. Many Americans are upset about their way of life and “people from all walks of life share similar concerns about a culture of materialism and excess, and the consequences for future generations.” Such common concern indicates that the possibility of change can become a reality. Recent studies by U.S. researchers Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson reveal that a quarter of Americans and Europeans are *cultural creatives*, “people who have made a comprehensive shift in their world view, values and way of life.” Ray and Anderson note:

“They are disenchanted with ‘owning more stuff,’ materialism, greed, me-firstism, status display, glaring social inequalities of race and class, society’s failure to care adequately for elders, women and children, and the hedonism and cynicism that pass for realism in modern society.” Instead, they are placing emphasis in their lives on relationships, communities, spirituality, nature and the environment, and real ecological sustainability.

A new moral autonomy seems to be emerging. “We humans have the opportunity, however small, of becoming truly moral beings, perhaps for the first time in history. That is, each of us has the opportunity to exercise genuine moral choice and to take responsibility for the consequences of those choices, rather than accepting moral edicts based on some grand, universal creed and handed down from on high by its apostles,” says Richard Eckersley of Australian National University, Canberra (*The Futurist*, September-October 2004). However, it is realized that these choices need to be made within some socio-moral framework. It is envisaged that in future, “both science and spiritual faith will play a part—not, as in the past, as institutions of moral authority, but as sources of knowledge and guidance.”

Theosophy teaches that at the present point of man’s evolution, passions and desires reign supreme. It is evident from the undue attention given, in every country, to sensuous art, to struggle for power, to accumulation of wealth and all kinds of sense gratification. However, we are in a “transition period,” when the mind is being evolved more and more. As a result, we observe, in all countries, “the beginning of the transition from the animal possessed of the germ of real mind to the man of mind complete.” Mr. Judge writes:

Believing in his teacher, the theosophist sees all around him the evidence that the race mind is changing by enlargement, that the old days of dogmatism are gone and the “age of inquiry” has come, that the inquiries will grow louder year by year and the answers be required to satisfy the mind as it grows more and more, until at last, all dogmatism being ended, the race will be ready to face all problems, each man for himself, all working for the good of the whole, and that the end will be the perfecting of those who struggle to overcome the brute. For these reasons the old doctrines are given out again, and Theosophy asks every one to reflect whether to give way to the animal below or look up to and be governed by the God within. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 55)
