

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



THE THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 141 NO. 9 JUNE 2020

CONTENTS

Corona Messages <i>Tim Boyd</i>	5
The Incredible Power of Silence <i>Deepa Padhi</i>	7
“Prayer Is Not Enough” – Disarming Coronavirus with Compassion <i>His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama</i>	13
On Pandemics <i>Gabriel Burgos</i>	15
Covid-19: Where Does It Come From? <i>Clemice Petter</i>	19
Corona Virus: We Do Not Control Nature <i>Carlos Pérez Menéndez</i>	23
Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom	28
Thomas Paine – Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century <i>James Tepfer</i>	30
Unity in the Christian Tradition <i>Gaspar Torres</i>	37
International Directory	40

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NOTE: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: <editorialoffice@gmail.com>

Cover: Sacred art mandala, using photography and multimedia, inspired by the Daihannya-kyo (Mahāprajñāpāramitā sutra). Visual artist: David Orr, <david-orr.com>. Permission from the artist is required to reproduce this image in any form. (More about his art on p. 14 of this issue.)

This journal is the official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky on 1.Oct.1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

Corona Messages

TIM BOYD

PANDEMIC Lokdowns

(Webcast on 16 March 2020)

As the world passes through this trying moment, I want to share a few words about our Adyar International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS) and our response to the coronavirus. Thankfully, at this point, we have no known cases of infection with respect to our Adyar residents or staff. However, we are keenly aware that although the numbers have not yet spiked in India, in all likelihood they soon will. In order to do our part to limit the transmission of the virus we have taken a number of measures:

- * Suspended all meetings of TS and allied groups at our campus.
- * Suspended the hours during which the campus is open for local visitors.
- * Closed the Social Welfare Centre until further notice.
- * Closed the Vocational Training Centre until further notice.
- * Will also be suspending all major project activities in the campus shortly.
- * Will not be providing accommodations for visitors to Adyar for the time being.
- * In accordance with government actions, the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School and the Adyar Theo-

sophical Academy have been closed until further notice.

* Our clinic on campus will continue to monitor and provide care at no cost for staff and residents.

* Any employees who are found to have the virus will receive paid leave during their recovery.

This is an unprecedented moment in human history, one for which there is no script or previous example. From moment to moment we will navigate our way through. This will end. And when it does we will also navigate our way through the uncharted waters into which this virus is leading us. We can be sure that it will be a different world on the other side of this pandemic.

In the confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety of this moment, one thing is certain — we are all in this together. Our interconnection, interdependence, in a word, our Oneness, has moved beyond the realm of theosophical speculation to become an undeniable fact. Although many feel paralyzed by the enormity of the situation, this is a time of great opportunity for anyone who sincerely embraces the theosophical teachings and the life. Who we are speaks so loudly people cannot hear a word we are saying.

Corona Messages

The possibility of peace in the face of fear needs demonstration. Our continued cultivation of a center of peace within, and the conscious radiating of that peace into our shared mental and emotional stream, though unseen, has an enormous effect. Whether we find ourselves in isolation or in the midst of the turmoil, there is a work for us to do. One for which we have prepared.

I close with the words of Martin Luther King, Jr: “The ultimate measure of a human being is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy.”

May we all find the inner reserves to meet the present and coming challenge — together.

Coming Together to Heal Our World in Silence

(Part of a live webcast on 16 April 2020)

Thanks to all of the people who are tuning into this event and also to all the speakers who have agreed to share with us all. This is a difficult moment for all of us, no matter where we find ourselves in the world. One of the beauties of this moment, as all moments are, is that a crisis such as this has its own gifts. One of the great gifts that we have *all* witnessed out of this particular moment has been the awareness of a fact — that we are all

interconnected. Unity, interdependence, all of this has been made very clear by this viral moment.

But more than the physical aspect of it, there is something beyond just illness and cure. All of us participate at deeper levels, we all share in a global consciousness, just like fish in water. So with that said, what is it that we can do as these seemingly limited individuals we think ourselves to be. Obviously, social distancing and the medical and scientific advice we receive, that is a must. Thought is powerful. We have to become much more aware and creative in our use of positive, uplifting thought — monitor ourselves.

But beyond thought, the reason for this moment is that there is a power that exceeds thought — silence. Silence provides an unobstructed access to a power, to a presence, to a Love that exceeds our personal will. The focus of this moment is on healing and on the virus. But I think we all know that *this* moment will pass. In our commitment to stillness and to silence, we prepare ourselves to shape something together, to shape a world that is yet to come —the world that lies on the other side of this pandemic. It is a world of our hopes and our dreams, if we recognize it and utilize this moment properly. Let us use this moment well, because it does not last. ✧

Enlightenment is not a fixed end; it is a timeless movement in love.

J. Krishnamurti, New Delhi Public Talk, 11.1972

The Incredible Power of Silence

DEEPA PADHI

AT present we are living in a loud world which is becoming increasingly noisy with the sounds of traffic, cell phones, TVs, electronic home appliances, and so on, making life quite uneasy. Today, noise pollution has become a serious problem for both physical and mental human health. Noise beyond a limit produces many diseases such as hypertension, stress, forgetfulness, depression, and insomnia. In addition to the outward noise, there is mental noise — the constant chatter of the mind. It is a kind of inner monologue that goes on constantly in the mind. Too often these are negative thoughts about others that intensify worries, anger, frustration, hatred, and jealousy.

This is a manifestation of the habit of human beings spending maximum time with anything — friends, relatives, colleagues, pets, TVs, computers, or mobile phones to achieve some kind of happiness. We mostly try to avoid being with ourselves. That is because most of us are ignorant of the fact that there is true happiness and peace in the silence within.

Beneath the noise, outer and inner, there is a vast ocean of silence where one

can feel relaxed, calm, and peaceful. Noise is only the periphery, silence is the centre, all-pervading. All sounds and noise arise from silence.

Some years ago I had an inexplicable experience of silence. One fine morning our next door neighbour on the right side decided to demolish their old house, build a multistory apartment complex, and start the work without delay. During the same time, our left-side neighbor felt like renovating his house by adding two more rooms. The family living opposite our house started celebrating a religious function lasting ten days, with chanting played through a loudspeaker without any break. With noise from all around I felt very uncomfortable. In addition, my negative emotions like irritation, anger, and restlessness became quite bothersome.

Leaving my work unfinished, I went into my room and locked the door. I sat down with the intention of getting rid of the noise outside and quietening the mind. I was, in fact, fighting the noise outside and the thoughts within. But it was of no use. The noise still haunted me from all sides. With much determination and patience, I continued to sit there with my

Dr Deepa Padhi is international Vice-President of the Adyar TS and President of the TOS, Odisha Region, India. Based on a presentation to the annual Convention of the New Zealand Section in January 2020.

The Incredible Power of Silence

eyes closed and tried to go beyond the noise. After some time I felt the outside noise fading away and inner emotions calming down. I could feel a gentle flow of energy throughout my body. Then a moment came when there was absolutely no noise, either from outside or inside. There was no irritation, no impatience. I experienced silence with its vastness, which was extremely rejuvenating and peaceful. It was a joyful experience, difficult to express in words.

Silence can be categorized into five types: of speech, of the eyes, ears, mind, and Self. Let us understand the different modes of silence:

Silence of Speech - Mahatma Gandhi used to say, and I also believe, that by abstaining from speaking one can become a better listener. When we are forced to be silent, we are forced to listen. Most of us do not know how to listen, as there is always something going on in the back of our mind, some judgment or thoughts relating to ourselves or to others. We almost never fully listen and take in what another person is trying to say. But when we remain in silence, we can really listen: we can hear the cry of an abandoned baby lying outside the closed door of a home; we can hear the helpless cry of a molested teenager; we can hear the groans of the hungry for days on end.

Unless we are in silence, we cannot be a better listener. Unless we are a better listener, how can we reach out to people who need our help? According to Saint Haridas of India, we talk only by exhala-

tion. The more we talk, the more we have to exhale and the more life energy we lose. He says: "A day's silence means an additional week of life, and a day's speech means one fewer week of life. When we talk we use tremendous energy, which can be preserved for meditation." Swami Nirmalananda, who remained in silence for eleven years, said: "Wisdom to me is not an asset of words, but freshness and emptiness of mind." Mahatma Gandhi used to observe silence every Monday, communicating on that day only through writing notes.

In Japan people value silence as an essential form of non-verbal communication and believe that "it is better to keep many things unsaid". Silence in speech conveys emotions, respect, and personal distance. In silence of speech we can find what we are looking for — whether it is a misplaced car key or a challenging mathematical problem.

Silence of the eyes - Our physical eyes are the main doors to the outer world. There are sometimes disturbing sights in the outer world which are avoidable by silencing the physical eyes. But one can open them to the beauty and goodness around us. Silencing the physical eyes may mean remaining in silence with eyes closed. On the other hand, some Buddhists believe in sitting in silence with eyes open so that one would not feel dull or sleepy, and that the vision "itself becomes more expansive, there being more peace and compassion in one's gaze". By keeping the eyes open, we can see, with practice, everything with its vastness and

The Incredible Power of Silence

the beauty of Nature all around, experiencing the “present”, being fully awake. The banks of rivers and streams, gardens with flowers and foliage, and hilltops are some of the best places where one can practise silence with eyes open.

Usually when we sit in silence, automatically the eyes get closed. We can visualize with our mental eyes Nature’s beauty like the rising sun over the horizon, the full moon, the lovely sight of the waterfall, and so on, and get absorbed in any of them. Those visions are soothing and in harmony with our inner self. One can be seated with both physical and mental eyes closed to be in deeper silence, where there are no longer any images — physical or mental. This is what is really meant by “silence of the eyes”.

Silence of the ears - Silence of the ears can be observed by keeping away from outer noise. Sound is reverberation of energy and noise is unwanted, undesirable energy. One should try to avoid noise as much as one can. Nature makes sound, not noise. Early in the morning one can hear the birds chirp, the wind blowing when taking a stroll. Standing on the beach one can hear the waves crashing on the shore. The sounds of Nature are very soothing, as they are in tune with our inner peace and therefore help us to transcend more deeply into the silence.

It reminds me of Mahatma Gandhi, who used to keep an idol of three monkeys on his table — one covering the eyes, another covering the ears, and the third covering the mouth. This depicts silencing the eyes, ears, and speech.

However, all these three are based on silencing thoughts in the mind. Outer silence is simply a means to help us find the inner silence.

Silence of the mind - As food is required for the physical body, silence is needed for the nourishment of the mind. Mind is the source of all noise, all turbulence. Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) describes the mind as the “slayer of the Real”. The mind distorts facts by its projections, which have their roots in unconscious motives or desires. Therefore, she says “slay the slayer”. All the voices of the mind must be silenced so that the seeker can hear the inner voice. And when one comes to experience such a state, one can be united with all.

Though it appears to be passive, silence is dynamic because it is powerful. Everything good comes out of silence. J. Krishnamurti speaks of the dynamic silence of the mind, which is at the level of psychospiritual experience. To him, “an active mind is silent, aware, and choiceless.” Krishnamurti says: “There is the silence of the mind which is never touched by any noise, by any thought, or by the passing wind of experience. It is the silence that is innocent and therefore endless. When there is this silence of the mind, action springs from it, and this action does not cause any confusion or misery.”

Silencing the mind means becoming witness of the thoughts that go through our mind, and trying to find out the source of these thoughts. This is where silence becomes meditation. Silence can

The Incredible Power of Silence

also be said to be a unified state of existence where all questions, minor or major, are answered, all doubts are dissolved, all creative solutions are found, all decisions are made. It is my personal experience that, in silence, one can let go one's painful experiences of the past and release repressed emotions. It gives strength to deal with difficult challenges in life and shows the way out of them as well. It is the place where you can forgive those who hurt you the most. It helps to control emotions such as anger, greed, worry, stress, and so forth, and fills the heart with abundant joy. Scientific researches show that experiencing at least two hours of silence every day increases the production of brain cells, which reduce the risk of dementia and insomnia. They say that silence strengthens the hippocampus, a part of the brain responsible for short- and long-term memory.

Silence of the Self - Most of the major religions of the world consider silence as a place to experience the Ultimate Reality, Truth. The word *mauna* in Sanskrit means "silence" and is derived from the word "*muni*", which refers to the enlightened one who is intensely silent, calm, and awakened. The Buddha is considered a great "*muni*". Buddhists believe that enlightenment can be achieved only through silence, and teachings can be understood with silent meditation and contemplation.

Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavaditā* (X.38): "Of all things secret, I am Silence." The knowledge of the Self is described in Indian scriptures as "the

secret of all secrets", which is experienced only in the deep inner silence. In Hindu philosophy, including the teachings of Advaita Vedānta and the many paths of Yoga, silence is given much importance for integral spiritual growth and transformation. In Jainism speech is considered great but silence is greater still. "Silence is the holy temple of our divine thoughts." Lord Mahavira observed silence for twelve-and-a-half years before he became a *kevalin* (enlightened).

The Jewish sages claim that "a safety fence for wisdom is silence". In Christianity it is said: "For God alone my soul waits in silence." (Psalms 62:1) "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalms 46:10) Mother Theresa says: "We need to find God, and He cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how Nature — trees, flowers, grass — grow in silence. See the stars, the moon, and the sun — how they move in silence. We need silence to be able to touch souls."

The Sufi saint Rumi teaches: "Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation." Silence in Islam is simply Salvation. For them, wisdom consists in keeping silent, and those who practise it are few. The Baha'i religion believes that "the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at a time — he cannot both speak and meditate."

For more sincere spiritual seekers, practice of meditation is necessary to go

The Incredible Power of Silence

deeper into silence and for a longer period. “The deeper one goes into silence, the closer one becomes part of the All. There is no “other” in silence. Silence is oneness, all pervasive. Beneath the loud and noisy world, there is stillness and peace that can be directly experienced. All the techniques of meditation are meant to bring us to the deepest state of inner silence. In the words of HPB: “He who would hear the voice of *nāda*, ‘the soundless Sound’, and comprehend it, has to learn the nature of *dhāranā*, or the ability to focus steadfastly.”

Sound and silence are not two opposite concepts. It is said that both sound and silence represent two forms of sound: audible, which is sound of the Known, and silence that represents non-audible sound, which is sound of the Unknown. When we meditate trying to immerse ourselves in silence, we try to listen to a unique sound — the vibrating sound of the Universe, which is that of our inner soul. It is that which HPB refers to as *nāda*, the soundless, non-audible sound. This is a voice inside all of us and out in the whole cosmos that is hidden and subtle. Our purpose on Earth is “to reconnect ourselves with that Voice — which is the voice of our inner self”, says HPB. That is the voice of the silence. No ears are required for the voice of the silence.

In the Nāsadiya Sukta of the *RigVeda*, it is mentioned that before creation of the Universe, there was no time, no space, no being, no non-being. There was total silence, pure consciousness, or Absolute Consciousness, which is called Nirguna

Brahman in Vedantic terminology. This Pure Consciousness was manifested as Universal Consciousness, or Saguna Brahman, along with the resonating vibrational *nāda*, the sound of “Om”. It is the primordial sound of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

In this context I would like to mention the experience of Eben Alexander, an American neurologist. He narrated in an interview about his near-death experience that when he was clinically declared dead and was out of the body, he heard an unusual sound — “Om”. Earlier, he had no idea of either this word or the sound. This sound can be heard when there is no body-consciousness but only consciousness.

Silence is awareness. The *Mundaka Upanishad* mentions that “Silence is Atman (the Self)”. In fact, silence is the genuine teaching about the ultimate Reality because the Absolute is beyond the scope of speech and thought. Ramana Maharshi used to teach his followers through silence. To him, silence in the absolute sense is the culmination of *jñāna* — self-realization.

In one of the Upanishads, the disciple says to the teacher, “Master, tell me the nature of the Self, or Atman.” The teacher remained silent. Again the question was asked and again the answer was silence. By his silence, the teacher indicated that as the nature of Self, or Atman, is indescribable in words, Self is Silence. It is directly experienced through consciousness. Silence is both a journey and the destination.

The Incredible Power of Silence

Today life has become more chaotic and loud because we have lost the art of being silent, which is so essential and powerful for our peaceful existence. If children over six years of age could be taught to meditate or remain in silence for twenty minutes every day, they would be transformed into highly developed and flourishing human beings. Silence has incredible power.

Now people are prepared to pay

heavily to go to retreat centres for the joyful experience of silence. In fact, this is not needed, as silence is ever within us. What we really need is a simple, holistic lifestyle that requires healthy food for the body, mental silence for reflection, and deeper silence (meditation) for the transformation of the self. Let us enrich and transform our life by increasing the role of silence in our day-to-day existence. ✧

HPB said that there is no such thing as "your mind" and "my mind"; there is only mind. To regard earnestly the hearts of men and also one's own heart is to see the illusions into which one is led by the long-existing habit of describing, naming, and drawing conclusions upon the nature of oneself and of others.

Radha Burnier

The Way of Self-knowledge, p. 11

OFFICIAL NOTICE

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2020

According to the Rules and Regulations of the Theosophical Society, the 145th International Convention will be held online, hosted by the International Headquarters at Adyar, Chennai, India, from 27 to 30 December 2020. The Convention theme is "Cycles of Awareness".

Marja Artamaa

International Secretary

“Prayer Is Not Enough” — Disarming Coronavirus with Compassion

HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA

SOMETIMES friends ask me to help with some problem in the world, using some “magical powers”. I always tell them that the Dalai Lama has no magical powers. If I did, I would not feel pain in my legs or a sore throat. We are all the same as human beings, and we experience the same fears, the same hopes, the same uncertainties.

From the Buddhist perspective, every sentient being is acquainted with suffering and the truths of sickness, old age and death. But as human beings, we have the capacity to use our minds to conquer anger and panic and greed. In recent years I have been stressing “emotional disarmament”: to try to see things realistically and clearly, without the confusion of fear or rage. If a problem has a solution, we must work to find it; if it does not, we need not waste time thinking about it.

We Buddhists believe that the entire world is interdependent. That is why I often speak about universal responsibility. The outbreak of this terrible corona-

navirus has shown that what happens to one person can soon affect every other being. But it also reminds us that a compassionate or constructive act — whether working in hospitals or just observing social distancing — has the potential to help many.

Ever since news emerged about the coronavirus in Wuhan, I have been praying for my brothers and sisters in China and everywhere else. Now we can see that nobody is immune to this virus. We are all worried about loved ones and the future — of both the global economy and our own individual homes. But prayer is not enough.

This crisis shows that we must all take responsibility where we can. We must combine the courage doctors and nurses are showing with empirical science to begin to turn this situation around and protect our future from more of such threats. In this time of great fear, it is important that we think of the long-term challenges — and possibilities — of the

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists and a Nobel laureate. From an article published by *Time* magazine, 14 April 2020. See: <<https://time.com/5820613/dalai-lama-coronavirus-compassion/>>.

“Prayer Is Not Enough” — Disarming Coronavirus with Compassion

entire globe. Photographs of our world from space clearly show that there are no real boundaries on our blue planet. Therefore, all of us must take care of it and work to prevent climate change and other destructive forces. This pandemic serves as a warning that only by coming together with a coordinated, global response will we meet the unprecedented magnitude of the challenges we face.

We must also remember that nobody is free of suffering, and extend our hands to others who lack homes, resources or family to protect them. This crisis shows us that we are not separate from one

another — even when we are living apart. Therefore, we all have a responsibility to exercise compassion and help.

As a Buddhist, I believe in the principle of impermanence. Eventually, this virus will pass, as I have seen wars and other terrible threats pass in my lifetime, and we will have the opportunity to rebuild our global community as we have done many times before. I sincerely hope that everyone can stay safe and calm. At this time of uncertainty, it is important that we do not lose hope and confidence in the constructive efforts so many are making. ✧

*** Multimedia visual artist David Orr was provided access to a manuscript page from the Daihannya-kyo (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra) from the Philosophical Research Society’s Library, Los Angeles, whilst artist in residence there for several years. His kaleidoscopic images — which refract words and shapes from sages like Pythagoras, Plato, Francis Bacon, the Buddha, Confucius, Aristotle, Jesus, and Muhammad — are dye-infused onto 30-inch black aluminum discs, transforming pages of timeless wisdom into mind-bending shapes. This is done by multiplying the photograph of the text by a number symbolically associated with the particular spiritual tradition, constructing a compelling visual, “a whole greater than the sum of its parts”, hopefully leading to a symbol of contemplation and wonder.**

* This note corresponds to the artist of the cover image of this issue (also see cover caption on p. 3 of this issue.

About Pandemics

GABRIEL BURGOS

(Response to a concerned member of the Spinoza Lodge, Theosophical Society in Bogotá, Colombia, requesting a Theosophical approach to pandemics.)

IN Theosophy there are no absolute answers for anything in particular, like “why a pandemic?” With our own and theosophical lights we must try to deduce the teaching through the various events that present themselves day to day. Each event, action, and situation is different, motives are different, but the inevitable results operate wisely according to the Law. It is the Law of cause and effect, the law of karma. Nothing happens by chance. The causes are many and also very different, and we must try to see in the result, in what is happening, in the effect, in the pandemic, the lesson that karma wants to teach us.

But we are not able to see the lesson in an event because usually we assume as a cause what is actually the result of previous actions, which, in turn, had as their cause something possibly more important and more remote. If we do not see the lesson in an event, there will be other experiences that will lead us to open our eyes and see, what once understood,

will be obvious. We do not know how to cooperate with the eternal natural laws that govern everything with infinite wisdom.

If we feel ill, we go to the doctor who checks our symptoms and examines us. He interprets the symptoms with his knowledge and experience that lead him to find the cause and to prescribe a remedy for the illness. The doctor does not seek to eliminate the symptoms, but to know them to find the cause, tackle it, and eliminate it.

At the moment we are not sure what is causing the coronavirus pandemic; there are only hypotheses. One of them, which some consider viable and to which I adhere, without ruling out others that are also possible, is the transmission of the virus through an animal that carries it.

Theosophy teaches that all matter and all forms in all concrete or subtle states are permeated with life. Our planet Earth is a living organism as Theosophy shows us and as some scientists recognize it through ‘the Gaia theory’. If some organisms that inhabit the Earth become

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About Pandemics

massively ill, the planet also falls ill, and one of the symptoms may be a pandemic, as is currently the case, which affects us all. It is a warning that something serious is happening. We can no longer continue to think that if one belongs to a developed country one is safe from catastrophes or can get out of them alright, or that if one belongs to a developing country “I should manage as I can”.

The virus does not distinguish between economic, social, or religious classes, nor does it take into account race or skin color. With our own lights we are already seeing that the pandemic, beyond fear and confinement, is giving us lessons in unity, service, generosity, and brotherhood. Although these lessons are not always well understood, especially by political leaders, banks, and economic multi-nationals of the world that see everything in terms of money and power, at least we see that if we go on as we are, we will all be seriously affected. The world cannot be the same after the pandemic.

On almost all occasions, the main propagator of the pandemic has been ignorance of its cause. On some occasions, in ancient times, the lack of hygiene made people live in crowded conditions with rats carrying the virus. Rats were ridden with fleas, which, when biting individuals, contaminated them. The latter, in turn, contaminated other human beings, and so on, leading to the pandemic. Later, with improvements in hygiene, the advancement of medicine, and the production of vaccines, diseases which appeared

as recurrent epidemics have practically disappeared, such as the bubonic plague, cholera, and smallpox.

With the widespread establishment of single-family homes, potable water, and sewage services, rats and fleas disappear from the environment and hygiene becomes a habit in almost all homes and workplaces. Certainly, there is much that remains undone, and, while there is poverty, there will be danger of new outbreaks of apparently extinct viruses.

In the current coronavirus pandemic, according to the hypothesis that we are examining, the cause seems to be different, and for the time being, while it takes thousands of lives, the world is primarily concerned with controlling and eliminating it. But once it is over, we will have to look for its cause and origin, and once known, a resurgence can be avoided.

As in the case of rats and fleas, in which pandemics occurred, passed, and reappeared until hygiene was established as a habit, as long as we do not recognize that the corona virus is caused by carrier animals that contaminate those who consume them as exotic dishes, we will forget to look for the cause and the virus will reappear. These animals coexist with viruses that infect humans, but do not affect them.

Theosophical teachings emphasize the principle of “ahimsa”, or harmlessness, which naturally includes the animal kingdom. Bats, for example, may seem disgusting to our eyes, but they can be attractive to palates looking for novelties, as is the case in some regions of China.

About Pandemics

The divine life is everywhere and has a purpose in the evolutionary path. Naturally, it has a purpose in the bat, which, not having developed self-consciousness, which is only possible for the human kingdom, does not ever seek to hurt, but to advance driven by the instinct of its group in the animal kingdom. It also plays an important role in the ecological balance of Nature.

Human beings have committed countless acts of cruelty against the animal kingdom throughout millennia. Apparently, through the bat (or through whatever animal may be transmitting the virus) the animal kingdom is justly retaliating against us. Our attitude towards animals must fundamentally change. For this, Theosophy, through its study, shows us the role of the different kingdoms of Nature — one of them the animal kingdom — their purpose, their growth and development, always towards higher heights of spiritual consciousness.

Theosophy goes much further when it shows us that Great Beings, who are far ahead of us in evolutionary development, see at a distance the goodness of permanent results of painful events at a given moment that most of us are not able to see. We do not see that the tragedy of the moment can be a transition to a better world.

Let us look at some examples, not the same, but similar to pandemics. The abuses of the wealthy and upper classes of the monarchical, despotic, and absolutist dynasties in France for several centuries, led people desperate from poverty

to a revolution, where atrocities, beheadings, and terrifying disorders were committed. The Great Beings make the best of even the worst events to benefit the world. The mobs and revolutionary leaders sought revenge for the abuses — and to a great extent they did — but the Great Beings, who always seek the welfare and spiritual elevation of humanity, inspired some among the victors to establish the ideals of “freedom, equality, and fraternity in a new world order. Despotic monarchy disappeared forever in France, and those ideals reached the hearts of many individuals and nations in the world, although we are still far from fully achieving them.

Later in Russia something like this happened, but some great writers like Chekhov, Gorky, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and others wrote their novels where they showed the abuses of the Tsars and the landowners of the nobility. This was carried in newspapers in instalments, within reach of the public that did not have money to buy books.

These idealistic writings led to the revolution, after which things were never the same again. Count Leon Tolstoy, for example, endorsed the ideal of an American philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, of “civil disobedience” when laws are unfair. These kinds of ideas are inspired from high levels of consciousness that we do not see, but they work through minds prepared to receive and spread them.

Later, Gandhi learnt about Thoreau’s thinking, put it into practice, inspired

About Pandemics

millions of Indians, achieving the unimaginable: India's freedom from British rule — by following the “non-violence” policy based on Thoreau's essay on “civil disobedience”.

In the case of pandemics, there are deaths and tragedies, but the Great Beings continue to inspire us, through people and organizations, to come out of them, like the present one, strengthened, more united, with the sense of a single humanity in which individuals are an integral part. What happens to one

affects us all for better or for worse. My best wishes for a better world from the painful lessons of the pandemic.

These are personal ideas of a theosophist who in no way claims that what has been said is the only reality on the matter. Surely there are other illuminating approaches to it. These reasonings have been very useful to me personally, but they are not the only ones. As they can serve other fellow students, I will share them with members of the Theosophical Society. ✧

Annex as Conclusion: The Real Cause of Pandemics according to Theosophy

I concluded my article about pandemics above, saying that it is the result of my personal reflections, but that there are other points of view on the matter that we should examine and consider. Returning then one more time to my usual study of H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *The Secret Doctrine*, I found in the first volume, in her commentaries on the third Stanza, many useful notes for the student, such as the importance of the concept of the “Astral Light, or Akāsa, or universal Soul”, that, among other things, shows us, upon consulting the *Theosophical Glossary*, the following:

. . . the Astral Light gives out nothing but what it has received; . . . it is the great terrestrial crucible, in which the vile emanations of the Earth (moral and physical) upon which the Astral Light is fed, are all converted into their subtlest essence, and radiated back intensified, thus becoming epidemics — moral, psychic, and physical.

According to this definition, the apparent cause, the viruses, are just the expression in the world of the real cause: “the bad emanations of the Earth” produced by us human beings. We well know how much greed, selfishness, anger, corruption, deception, injustice, abuse of all types, ambition, and so on, are our daily bread everywhere. They are the cause that, accumulated over long ages, has to explode and produce the corresponding result; it is karma, put into action by humanity as a whole. Each one of us, to a greater or lesser extent, has contributed to the current tragedy. It is, as a result, a collective karma of humanity that we all have to suffer through, face, and resolve. We have made mistakes, placed the obstacles and established the conditions in which we find ourselves. It is we, and only we, who have to change things for the good of all, and to build a better world.

GABRIEL BURGOS

Covid-19: Where Does It Come From?

CLEMICE PETTER

THE new year started like any other, but soon 2020 revealed itself to be a year that will stand out in human history. A new virus started its journey in China and soon it was felt in Europe, America, and Africa faster than any other virus ever known; it reached the whole world. Practically no country has been able to hide from the novel coronavirus outbreak. It is a situation without precedents in human history. Even though we had pandemics before, what makes this outbreak so different is the speed of contamination and the silent, asymptomatic carriers — people who carry the virus but do not develop symptoms.

The world is at war with this silent and invisible enemy. Is it an enemy? We tend to think it is, because we have defined that what is killing human beings is an enemy. If we go with this definition we will soon discover that the real enemy is ourselves. We are killing indiscriminately, we kill human beings in wars, through poverty and starvation, through the denial of medical assistance, and also through pollution of the air, water, and the poisoning of plants. We kill animals for food and sport. We still use animals

in laboratories for medical experiments. All of this we are doing without asking ourselves “who is the enemy?” If killing defines an enemy, then the human race is the greatest enemy of them all.

We know that Nature knows no evil, because evil is the creation of the human mind, and that Nature, being the ruler of life on this planet, is always working to balance and bring harmony to the whole. When we look at the amount of suffering brought into being by human activity, we can easily see why humanity has to face the byproduct of its cruel behavior. We can easily see that diseases are the children of human ignorance, not the ignorance of science. The only ignorance that exists, is that of who we are. This ignorance affects the literate as well as the illiterate. The knowledge that we need to live a human life free from disease is self-knowledge.

We are capable of cruelty due to ignorance of the simple fact that whatever we do, we do to ourselves. Being ignorant of Unity we feel free to go to war, to kill animals for food or for sport. We think that the “other” is separate from “me” because we have separate bodies,

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Covid-19: Where Does It Come From?

separate bank accounts, and so on. But in spite of what we believe or think, the Truth is Unity. Whatever we do opens doors that cannot be seen or measured; because we cannot see them, we believe they do not exist, but life goes on and soon those doors make way for people and situations to enter into our lives.

The crisis that we feel is so difficult to cope with has been developing because of our thinking process in our day-to-day life — our aggressive way of life, the competition that goes on in one way or another. The truth is that we are not peaceful beings; we are ready to fight and defend our vested interests, the interest of the family, the group, the organization we are associated with, the country, and so on. It is this energy that we release into the environment in which we live. We may talk about love and compassion, but in our relationships there is very little, or none of it. And finally what counts is not what we talk about, but what we do. Our actions release an enormous amount of energy of which most of us are unaware.

The present state of affairs in the world is the outcome of our individual attitude in life, the way we behave. We may be very talented in hiding our intentions from others and even from ourselves, but whatever moves us will reverberate around us and create the world we live in.

Viruses are invisible to the human eye, but the result of their activities are felt and feared by us. In fact, science has shown us that the most powerful things

in Nature cannot be seen by the human eye, and such is the case with viruses, fungi, and bacteria. History has proven that the more we know about those tiny living entities, the better we can prevent and treat the diseases created by them. We know that a hygienic environment is important to prevent and to stop their effects. Similarly, we now have to learn about another important sphere of hygiene — the clean life — not in a dogmatic way, setting rules and regulations, after all, this has been done for ages. All religions have done it, but somehow it has not worked, as people repeat those set of rules verbally, but continue with their daily life in the same old way.

When we talk about a clean life, we are referring to a way of life in which every action is complete, therefore does not leave behind residues that are so common when there is incomplete attention and understanding at the moment of action. In fact, what we call action is really reaction, hence it is inattention and automatic behavior. A complete action leaves no regrets or hopes, it is finished and over at the very moment it takes place. Therefore each moment is new and fresh as one moves completely free from psychological residue.

What is needed is to feel the urge for change, to see that we cannot continue to live as we have been. We will change only when we are able to see the destructiveness of competition, ambition, hate, and all the self-centered activities that go on in this world, built brick by brick with a selfish approach to life; when we see

Covid-19: Where Does It Come From?

that what really creates this world is our own way of life, the beliefs we hold, and the endless craving for more. Human beings are barbarians wishing to live in a civilized world. What we do not realize is that being of barbaric nature, wherever we go, we will carry with us the barbarism that shows when we speak and act. To live in a civilized world we have to be civilized and behave in a civilized manner. This is so simple and basic, but somehow we have been unable to understand it.

Human beings around the world have been searching for some meaning in life. The hope to find such meaning has always been in the future, to become someone different from what we are right now. But we do not see what we are now, and, because we are scared of what we may see, we dream about a beautiful, perfect world that will be in the future. The fact is that without looking at the problem — which is ourselves — the situation will not change and we will remain as we have been for millions of years. The focus has to change from the future or past to what we are now, because it is in the present moment that life exists in its fullness.

We are struggling to find a way to remain barbarians and at the same time enjoy the peace of a civilized world. We live under the illusion that science will fix this unbalanced condition, but the fact is that whatever science does, will never enable us to deceive Nature. What will happen is that we are going to create more and more pain and suffering for

ourselves, this is because we tend to ignore that we are just one tiny part of Nature's creation on this planet.

Everything in Nature works in balance and harmony; it is only human activity that is creating imbalance. Being disharmonious and unbalanced in ourselves we project this imbalance in our relationships in daily life, and this projection is creating our unbelievably crazy world. To harmonize ourselves we need to understand our thinking process and its effect in the world. Human beings are the only species which are able to see itself, to know itself. The capacity to see and know ourselves is a unique gift that humanity is ignoring and trying to avoid. As long as we do not understand what we are doing and how Unity works, we may do what we will, but the result will always be imbalance and disharmony.

Everyone is wishing for a vaccine and an efficient medicine to stop the spread of coronavirus. Of course, it is important to find the cure, but it is equally important to do so going to the core of the problem, to find the doors and windows through which viruses find their way into the human body. It is important that we close those doors and windows forever. For this we need to go deep into ourselves in a journey that has no end, and what we are going to find is a mystery, a pain, and a joy. It cannot be described or foreseen, the way reveals itself at each step, and it is a unique walk for each one of us. Therefore, no one can set rules for others to follow in the holy land of our own being.

Covid-19: Where Does It Come From?

It is important to understand that when we talk about closing the window through which viruses come into the human body, we are not saying that the body will be free from viruses, but that they will not find the proper connections to turn into threats to life. Maybe when human life on this planet is no longer a threat to *any* form of life, we may also release ourselves from the threats that we, as humanity, struggle in vain to overcome. It is very difficult to find the door out of a house when we are not familiar with it.

This crisis will pass and humanity will continue its journey. Those who are able to take these days of forced seclusion as an opportunity to look at life with dif-

ferent eyes, with the urge to understand, to find out what are the causes of suffering, and if it can come to an end. These are the people who will be able to help humanity to change its ways. These are the ones who can open the door to love and compassion to come into being.

To hope for a different society and remain the same as we are is child's play. To sit and meditate for peace in the world when we ourselves are in endless conflict within, at war with those who do not think or behave as we would like them to, and with those who do not follow our set of rules or regulations, is sheer blindness. This is not a time for wishful thinking or hoping, but for awakening intelligence — a time to change and be. ✧

“God’s justice is perfect” — . . . because Hindus believe that everything that happens in life is a result, a reaping of thoughts and deeds of long ago. Whether you can accept such a thought or not, one thing is very essential in your thinking, if you are to find even a little peace and happiness in your present painful situation. You must put aside every idea of any injustice done to you by others. God watches everything, and if He has permitted misery to come to you, it is because in some way you deserve it. You must believe that, even in your present life of unhappiness, you are being treated justly, because God does not permit injustice.

After removing from your mind all idea of injustice, the next thing is how to find a little peace of heart and mind while you are forced to live inside the prison. This depends on yourself.

It is not the place we are in, nor what surrounds us, that is the cause of misery or happiness. It is ourselves. Certainly just now, you have to live within a prison; you look forward to the time when you will be free. But will you be really free, when you leave the prison? That will depend on your heart and mind.

C. Jinarājadāsa
(16.12.1875 – 18.6.1953)
“A Talk to Prisoners”

Coronavirus: We Do Not Control Nature

CARLOS PÉREZ MENÉNDEZ

THE worldwide emergency that we are living in these days because of the CORONA VIRUS DISEASE-2019 (Covid-19) has surprised humanity. At the moment of writing this article the lockdown has a third part of humanity confined to our homes, as a measure to slow down the infection propagation until we can have an antiviral treatment or vaccine. Lockdown prevents us from having physical contact with our family and friends and doing our normal activities as usual. However, lockdown also brings us the opportunity to calm down and meditate on what is happening with this pandemic.

Our civilization faces the most important challenge in its history. We suffer from overpopulation, pollution of the planet, climate change due to human activity, destruction of large extents of forests, cruel exploitation of animals, accumulation of wealth in a few hands while many people fight against misery, extinction of many species because of human ambition, and so on. All these

calamities originate from a selfish, non-sustainable way of life. Scientists and thinkers have been warning us for several decades of the self-destructing danger of our current way of development. But we have been ignoring them — until now.

Just six months ago the 25th UN Climate Change Conference, also known as COP25, was held in Spain in December 2019. It was attended by about 25,000 representatives of 200 countries. They failed in reaching an agreement about urgent measures that countries must take to decrease the still growing emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main cause of climate change. This conference was held in a large venue in Madrid, IFEMA, where many exhibitions, congresses, and trade shows are conducted throughout the year.

Today, with the coronavirus emergency, IFEMA has been transformed into a big temporary hospital with a capacity of 3,000 beds to relieve over saturated hospitals in the region. These days there

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Coronavirus: We Do Not Control Nature

are more than 1,000 patients in this coronavirus hospital. What an irony that the place, where just a few months ago humanity had refused to vigorously combat climate change due to fear of the effects on the economy, is today a place where health personnel care for patients of the pandemic whose economic effects are devastating.

But this pandemic is not the first one that humanity has suffered and it will not be the last. Between 1918 and 1920 the erroneously called “Spanish flu” killed 50 million persons, adding greater sorrow to the 16 million deaths already caused during this epoch by World War I. Between 1855 and 1860 the bubonic plague caused more than 12 million deaths, mainly in China and India. And humanity has suffered many more plagues and epidemics in its history.¹ Therefore it is not true that this pandemic is an “unprecedented” event as some people have asserted. What is new in this coronavirus pandemic is the quick global outbreak caused by modern transport facilities and the long period of incubation in which an asymptomatic infected person can transmit the virus to others. Now it is more evident than ever before that we are all connected and interdependent.

The coronavirus, an insignificant piece of genetic code wrapped in a protein shell, having a size of about 100 nanometers, has made humans stop, something that governments were unable to agree on to any extent in the Climate Conference. Now the coronavirus has forced a big portion of humanity

into lockdown to protect from infection.

There are several conspiracy theories on social networks telling us that this coronavirus, named SARS-CoV-2, was made by humans, either as a biological weapon or as a virus for research that accidentally was released out of a laboratory. But researchers of several institutes sequenced the SARS-CoV-2 genome and found that it could not be an artificial construction because its genome is quite different from other coronaviruses that jumped before from animals to humans.²

The most likely origin of SARS-CoV-2 is a successful mutation of a bat coronavirus jumping to humans before or after mutation and likely using an intermediate animal to reach humans. The illegal trade of wild animals and the lack of hygiene in the Wuhan market in China may have been the trigger for the infection. What can we learn from the origin of this virus? The lack of compassion towards animals, and exploiting them as if they were inanimate objects, ignoring their suffering, have caused something harmful for humans to be transmitted from them. It is pure law of karma, in this case, humanity’s collective karma.

It is curious to see how many people do not accept the fact that Nature produces its own changes. They believe that everything is under human control. The fact is that we, humans, are not in control of Nature. We use pesticides to protect crops, we monoculture a few variants of some fruit or of a cereal that interests us, we try to mould Nature to maximize our profit. But this is an illusion.

Coronavirus: We Do Not Control Nature

A bacterium or fungus that propagates in a given crop can cause the harvest of that single variant to fail for a season or more, producing shortages of a product and sinking the economy of many people. And now we find it hard to believe that an insignificant virus that has caused a pandemic and the following economic breakdown was not created by man. What a lesson in humility! We do not control Nature but we are an integral part of it. The pandemic shows us again the strong interdependence in Nature. James Lovelock, the creator of the Theory of Gaia wrote:

“In truth, neither faith in God nor trust in business as usual, nor even commitment to sustainable development, acknowledges our true dependence; if we fail to take care of the Earth, it surely will take care of itself by making us no longer welcome.³

Buddhism and other philosophies teach that everything in the world is impermanent. All things in the manifested world are subject to change. Change is unavoidable. We need to accept it; otherwise, we will suffer because we are losing things and situations we have been used to.

These days the sky looks clear in the big cities under lockdown. Satellite images show how the contamination has been cleaned in most areas. There are few people using transportation, so emissions of CO₂ and NO_x are drastically reduced. The Earth is breathing. What we feel as bad can become good if we leverage the opportunity to learn.

The lockdown and the fear of the emergency has caused the worst and best to emerge from human beings. Internet and social networks are flooded with fake news and hoaxes that propagate fear and uncertainty. Some people have become greedy accumulating food, masks, alcoholic gel, and so on. But many are helping others, even at the risk of becoming infected themselves, to provide health, food, cleaning, and basic services to others and they are appreciated for this effort. Many volunteers are shopping for essential goods for elderly neighbors who are at risk if they go out. These are nice examples of solidarity and compassion.

With normal activities in standstill, we now can appreciate the value of simple things, like our beloved relationships, a kiss, a hug, a face-to-face meeting, and many things in our relationships that we consider for granted. Perhaps we may learn the lesson and from now on if we are with a friend or a beloved one, we may set aside the social network activities with our smartphone. Now we can appreciate the value of simple things, the value of physical contact. The lockdown is causing a huge crisis in the global economy, but at the same time, it is a big opportunity for humanity.

How will humanity recover from lockdown and the upcoming economic crisis? Many jobs and companies will be lost. Governments are printing a lot of money and generating a big amount of debt to provide facilities for recovery. But the question is how will we recover? Social distancing may continue to be the normal

Coronavirus: We Do Not Control Nature

practice for a long time until most people become immune to the infection. So this condition is a change imposed by the coronavirus, a temporary change, we hope, but a change anyway. Therefore it seems that “business as usual” is not an option.

We fear changes because they force us to jump out of our comfort zone. But we need to accept changes even if it is a temporary condition. Some people, including political leaders, ask if we must choose between health and poverty or hunger. But this is a false choice. Without health, there is no possible wealth. The economy is at the service of people, and not the opposite. The economy is not a being, it is a concept that represents the wealth of people. But if an abnormally large number of people are ill or die, it is obvious that the economy will be affected.

Humanity may try to salvage the economy by restoring the production of goods and services to its previous state. There are many people interested in going back to the previous condition, continuing with their activity, even if it is harmful to the planet or not in harmony with Nature. Humanity was reluctant to make the urgent changes needed to face the climate emergency and other big global problems because of the fear of change. Our selfish nature tries to stick to the current condition because we fear that if we introduce a change we can lose something we have now. But this is a short-sighted vision. Now Nature has forced us to make a change. Therefore we have the opportunity to recover and start walking in the right direction, not going to

the past, but creating a better future.

We have the opportunity to dedicate money and effort for coronavirus recovery and to restart activities in such a way that helps to solve the real civilization challenges. The word “crisis” means “decisive, or turning point” changes, and now is the right time to do it. If we have lost our job, we can consider if it was the right job for us and useful to others. Perhaps we can improve our life with a new job in a different area where we can feel the fresh air of life again and contribute to the planet’s welfare. If we own a company fighting a lot of problems, maybe we need to reinvent the company’s role in the new scenario. It is time for thinking out of the box, making creative and wiser decisions.

One example of the change we can see these days is the increase in online meetings and videoconferencing. They cannot replace physical meetings, but it is a solution to cut travels and now it is mandatory not to travel during the lockdown. The technology is not new, but most companies have ignored it and preferred the traditional visit requiring people to travel, generating greenhouse gases. Now they can review that policy.

Working from home is another example. Many companies have been wary of this practice, forcing their employees to commute every day even though their jobs are done with computers and with information that can be used from home in the same way as in the office. We can save much commuting, with its emissions, if companies evaluate employees

Coronavirus: We Do Not Control Nature

not for the hours they spend in the office but for the jobs well done. It is a big opportunity also to change our energy production model. If oil companies do not reinvent themselves as energy companies, sustainably generating clean energy, humanity will lose the coronavirus opportunity.

Many things depend on governments but others depend directly on us. We can rethink our lifestyle to one more healthy and oriented to the real values of life, in harmony with Nature, instead of trying to reproduce exactly what we were doing before the emergency, making business as usual. The change starts with us. Now, with a quieter mind, we can discover the real values of life instead of all the artificial goals that civilization has imposed on us. We build our circumstances and environment with our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Each one of us is responsible to

some extent for the destiny of humanity.

As Blavatsky said in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance. And she will open wide before thee the portals of her secret chambers, lay bare before thy gaze the treasures hidden in the very depths of her pure virgin bosom. Unsullied by the hand of matter she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit — the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms. (I.66–7)

A new civilization, more awake, more responsible, more compassionate, based on a holistic vision, less selfish, understanding that everything is connected, is trying to emerge from the debris of an old civilization. Let us leverage this opportunity. Let us go with the flow of life. ✧

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**Neither good nor evil can last forever, and it follows that
as evil has lasted a long time, good must now be close at hand.**

Take away the cause, and the effect ceases.

Miguel de Cervantes
Don Quixote de la Mancha

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Coronavirus from a Buddhist Perspective

D: Master, it is so difficult for me to understand why the Father has sent us such an aggressive virus. What is the purpose?

T: The Father has not sent it. The Father allows it, which is different. The pandemic was generated by human beings through their constant violation of universal Laws.

D: But something so bad is going to cause a lot of destruction.

T: Coronavirus is not bad. It is not good either. It is necessary, it is different. There is nothing bad for the Universe. If the coronavirus is present it is because it is allowed by Divinity, or it could not exist.

The idea of good and evil is generated in your mind which judges from your ignorance an event that in itself is neutral.

D: But so many people are being infected in the world, or are going to be left without having anything to eat — so many children, the elderly, men and women. It is very unfair.

T: Injustice does not exist within universal Love. “Unjust” exists only in your mind which does not understand the deeper purpose.

What does exist is the just, the precise, the exact, the corresponding. There is a necessary evolutionary process that consists of a constant recording of information.

You have to understand that nobody attracts an experience which does not correspond to him. And if it corresponds to him, he will live it, even when he struggles or resists. Coronavirus is not bad. It is very good, since many people are learning from it. The level of consciousness of the planet is rising, seeing us in the need to develop great tools of love such as acceptance, appreciation, and adaptation; patience, tolerance, and respect.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

It may be a difficult test, but it is not bad. You are growing thanks to this experience. The decision rests with you because life gave you a free will.

You were given the ability to make decisions and you can see this from love. The choice is yours. It's in you!

If you chose fear, you will destroy your peace, your vital energy, your relationships and your health.

If you chose love you will pass the test that life is presenting to you, and you will no longer need to suffer again.

Opt for love. The way is always love.

Disciple: And what is opting for love?

Teacher:

* Become a serene and tranquil being. Invulnerable. Work on yourself so that your peace and happiness do not depend on the external.

* Stop seeing problems and start recognizing opportunities that you can take advantage of for inner growth.

* Develop acceptance. "Everything that happens is perfect, and if it exists and happens it is because it has a purpose." "Father, may your will be done and not mine. Show me how I may serve you better."

* Learn to flow and adapt. Act wisely instead of reacting from fear.

* Watch your thought so that it only vibrates in the frequency of love. This will lead you to clarity of mind.

* Do not share your fears with others; share only your enthusiasm and joy.

* Watch your word.

* May your word create harmony and make others feel confident and secure.

* Difficulties are not solved by fighting against them.

* Befriend the coronavirus. Do not see it as something bad, but as something necessary.

* And talk to him: "What are you teaching me? You are valuable to me and I am willing to learn what you can teach me. As soon as I learn you can leave because I will no longer need you."

* Take advantage of the opportunity that life is presenting to you right now — to do an internal job.

Anonymous

Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

JAMES TEPFER

IT is a privilege as well as a pleasure to speak to you this evening about that courageous and magnanimous harbinger of a “Republic of Conscience”, Thomas Paine. Before setting out the life and thought of Paine, let me say from the start that I am deeply indebted to Professor Raghavan Iyer, a profound theosophical teacher, Oxford don and political philosopher, who first introduced me to Paine many decades ago at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Paine’s sparkling political insights were often cited in Prof. Iyer’s legendary classes on “The Dialectic from Plato to Mao”, “Anarchist Thought”, and, most especially, “American Radicalism”. More significantly, Prof. Iyer’s seminal book, *Parapolitics: Toward the City of Man*, includes a brief but telling account of Paine’s prescient contributions to the emerging cosmopolis of the 21st century.

I am also indebted to that noble and exemplary servant of the sages, William Q. Judge, whose article, “The Adepts in America in 1776”, helped me to appreciate the wholesome and illuminating influences that seemingly bolted into the

pellucid mind of Paine. Turning to Paine, himself, we might say with great conviction that America was thrice blessed during its tumultuous revolutionary period to have in its midst a noble visionary who saw the America-to-be as potentially embodying “a new order of the ages”, as a living experiment in democratic principles, as a potential pointer to an emerging “universal civilization”.

Let us begin with the simple question, “Who was Thomas Paine?” That is, how might we characterize this 18th-century, enlightened radical who appeared to be *sui generis* — a spontaneous phenomenon, an original? Paine was, first and foremost, a Theophilanthropist, an ardent lover of God and man, and, most importantly, a lover of God in man and in Nature. Paine was born in Thetford, England in 1737 and died in New York City in 1809 — some seventy-two years later. He migrated to the American colonies in 1774 at the age of 37. Within a few short years after landing in Philadelphia, Paine became the most forward-looking visionary of the American revolutionary period and one of the foremost advocates of the democratic

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Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

spirit of individual liberty, social justice, and limited government. He embodied the most admirable qualities of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, and with few of their foibles. He was daringly original, truly brilliant, supremely articulate in debate and in writing, indomitable in his service to the cause of political independence and refreshingly free of the major vices of his age: slave ownership, monetary greed, and political ambition. He was (and is) the gold standard of the true revolutionary: high-principled, clear-thinking, fearless, magnanimous to his enemies and genuinely inclusive in both thought and conduct.

If this is true about Paine, the man, then what about his accomplishments and influence over the entire arc of his long and fruitful life? Paine's contributions to his epoch — and beyond — were manifold. He was principally an enlightened revolutionary agent not only in America, but in France, and, to a lesser degree, in England. Paine may be seen as a luminous revolutionary because he consciously entertained an expansive vision of individual potential and social possibilities; he was, in fact, wholeheartedly committed to what Prof. Iyer called "the fundamental revolution from elitism to equality". Paine's radical political agenda became a Herculean task because, at its core, it was really a revolution in ideas — a challenge to the known frontiers of consciousness. Paine, as we shall see, proved to be worthy of his evolving Promethean vision as he repeatedly

initiated timely acts on behalf of a clearly self-apprehended "new order of the ages".

Paine's first important act in America was to write a book called *Common Sense*. This fiery, innovative think-piece became the catalyst that catapulted the thirteen colonies into the quest for political independence. *Common Sense* dispelled the inherited political myths about monarchy and hereditary aristocracy by using common sense reasoning and by exposing their inherent institutional contradictions. More significantly, Paine deglamorized government in general by characterizing it as simply a necessary restraint on human vices. In contrast, he heralded society as a positive good because it cultivated human virtues and nourished social affections. Furthermore, Paine made the intriguing observation that since wisdom is clearly not hereditary, but spontaneously springs up like a seedless plant in all social classes, the only rational and morally acceptable form of government is representative democracy with its emphasis on individual liberty, human equality, and personal merit.

A fortuitous spin-off of Paine's immensely popular *Common Sense*, was that it laid the theoretical groundwork for that marvelous "document of propositions" called "The Declaration of Independence". After the signing of that forever inspirational manuscript, the American Revolutionary War began in earnest and Paine was an integral part of it. In the early stages of the war, when the American troops were in continual retreat and were in fact deserting by the

Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

thousands, General Washington appealed to Paine to write something that might raise the spirits of his beleaguered soldiers. Paine responded and penned an essay called “The American Crisis”. He then sped to Philadelphia, had the article quickly printed and returned to battlefield headquarters. Washington read “The Crisis” with evident eagerness and was elated by its inspiring tone. He immediately ordered his officers to summon all remaining troops. The ragged soldiers soon huddled around campfires on the snow-covered plains in the dead of a winter’s night and listened with increasingly rapt attention to Paine’s rousing summons of their warrior spirit.

Let me read out some selected passages from Paine’s “Crisis”. These mantra-like sentences are penned in the cadences of unconditional commitment to the sacred cause of American freedom — a cause which Paine implicitly connects to the “wider cause of all mankind”.

Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but “show your faith by your works”, that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or

rejoice alike. . . I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. ’Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

(“The American Crisis”, p. 10)

The effect of Paine’s spoken words on the Revolutionary Army was electric. Like Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā*, Paine invoked the Arjuna-like spirit of the journeyman soldiers. He appealed not to their fears or their self-interests but to their deeper sense of honor. He challenged them to think beyond themselves to the justice of their cause and to the potential benefits of victory for future generations. Not surprisingly, Paine’s eloquent plea played a vital role in Washington’s first military victory at the battle of Trenton on Christmas Day 1776 — a few days after the “Crisis” paper was read out to his troops.

It is interesting to note that in 1926, some one hundred and fifty years later, so luminous a world figure as Mahatma Gandhi also read Paine’s rousing essay. Gandhi was struck by the convergence of the moral qualities needed by soldiers of war and by soldiers of peaceful resistance. Indeed, Gandhi was moved to make the following observations in his weekly periodical:

It is remarkable how similar are the qualities required of soldiers of peace and soldiers of war. Thomas Paine’s speech could be addressed almost word for word

Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

and with complete appropriateness to the (Indian) Congress volunteers of 1921 . . . Whether you secure freedom by the use of physical force or spiritual force, that is, through self-suffering, the price to be paid must be heavy, if it is to be a valuable article. (“Price of Freedom”, *Young India*, 9 December 1926)

It is important to pause and note here that Paine once stated: “I never put pen to paper without my soul being present.” The implication of this self-revealing comment is of great theosophical significance; namely, that the mind-current that suffuses the words of one who is “great of soul” invariably has an uplifting effect on the ready and the receptive. Clearly, Paine’s numinous mind was the source of his healing magic. Time and again Paine came to the rescue of the American war effort by virtue of the seminal, iridescent quality of his writings that tended to clarify the mind, refocus issues and regenerate the lost enthusiasms of the heart.

Soon after the defeat of Great Britain, Paine left for France and then on to England to promote his original design of an iron bridge. While in Paris and later in London he personally conversed with many of the most eminent political leaders of his generation. Most significantly, he spent considerable time with the great British parliamentarian, Edmund Burke, an admirer of Paine but, at heart, a political conservative. Shortly after the French Revolution began in 1789, Burke wrote a scathing attack on the principles of the revolution which he saw as a threat to

Britain and its revered institutions. Paine responded to Burke with a powerful rebuttal called *Rights of Man*. The latter created a sensation in Britain and America — especially among the working classes.

In *Rights of Man*, Paine took the British monarchy to task and argued that the only rational form of government which can bind its citizens is a representative democracy based on some form of universal suffrage and recognition of the natural rights of man. Paine’s fertile mind — ever the servant of his compassionate heart — then set forth an array of politically heretical proposals such as universal public education, pensions for the aged, state relief for the unemployed and a graduated annual income. This was a quantum shift in Paine’s thinking about the role of government in society. Paine moved from regarding government as merely providing security and ensuring political liberty to its being a primary contributor to positive social uplift. In addition to his radical political proposals, Paine also called for a “Congress of Nations” to settle international disputes. Predictably, *Rights of Man* was eventually deemed to be “seditious libel” by the British government. Paine was subsequently tried in absentia, found guilty, and then hung in effigy.

Having escaped across the English Channel with the help of his poet friend, William Blake, Paine was hailed as a hero by avid citizens of the “new France”. In fact, Paine became one of only two non-French citizens to be elected to the French National Convention. Initially, Paine was

Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

well received and treated with great respect. However, as the Revolution began to deteriorate into collective madness, Paine eventually fell into disfavor with the Jacobins in the National Assembly. He was finally arrested in 1793 and taken to the Luxembourg prison to be guillotined. He remained in prison for a year before he was finally released.

The reason for Paine's "fall from grace" in the French Assembly is worthy of pause. Paine was that rare revolutionary in whom moral courage and magnanimous feelings were easy companions. He was never bitter, self-righteous or vindictive. He was unfailingly magnanimous with those in need — including capital punishment. Therefore, when the French National Assembly called for the execution of King Louis XVI, Paine fearlessly rose to his defense. In his fervent appeal for the life of the King, Paine openly admitted that Louis XVI had committed treason and should be held accountable. However, argued Paine, the King had also been an ally of the American Revolution and contributed funds at a critical point during the battle with Great Britain. He was therefore entitled to mercy, not retribution. It was just to kill monarchy, thundered Paine, but not right or civilized to execute the monarch. As we know, Paine lost the argument and, in so doing, forfeited his own liberty as well.

Shortly after being released from prison in Paris, Paine completed his most controversial work, *The Age of Reason* — a blistering critique of Christianity and of all institutionalized religions. As you

might imagine, the public's reaction to Paine's trenchant criticism of formal religion led to the relentless vilification of his character — especially in America. When he returned in 1802 to the country of his second birth he was no longer seen as the trusted protector of Everyman but as an unscrupulous agent of the devil. He died almost friendless in 1809 in New York City, but his vision and optimism remained undiminished to the very end of his life.

In light of Paine's unconquerable soul, it is no wonder that W. Q. Judge feelingly salutes Paine as one who "could be trusted to stand almost alone with the lamp of truth in his hand amidst others who in 'times that tried men's souls' quaked with fear" ("The Adepts in America in 1776", *The Theosophist*, October 1883)

Before we consider Paine's deeper historical legacy, it is important to briefly turn to his *The Age of Reason*. While Paine does not set out any systematic philosophical system, there are nonetheless gems of spiritual insight scattered throughout his work. In fact, his basic religious philosophy echoes the august and profound teachings of the Wisdom-Religion (Theosophy).

Let me illustrate. Paine tells us that nothing we perceive in the whole of Creation creates itself. This can only be explained by an Uncreated First Cause. We call this Uncreated First Cause, "God". However, God is not a material cause, but a spiritual one. It is an ever-present, endlessly fertile, cosmic intelligence working through material form.

Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

If this characterizes God, what then is Nature? Nature is *not* just patterned sense phenomena. It is composed of the *intelligible principles* that infuse sense phenomena with significance. Nature is, essentially, a vast set of immutable laws that reveal the layered structure of reality. These laws are the iridescent focal points of Divine intelligence. They reveal profound, guiding truths for moral conduct as well as yield knowledge for practical, material purposes. Nature is thus the instructor, par excellence, of the human family.

If all this is true about God and Nature, then, what is man? Man is an immortal soul. He is also the rational hyphen between God and Nature. In fact, impersonal reason is the Hermetic interpreter of Nature's code language. In addition to the cognitive potential of reason, Paine acknowledges a para-rational faculty that fosters higher-order thoughts and inspirational visions:

There are two distinct classes of . . . thought; those that we produce in ourselves by reflection and the act of thinking, and those that bolt into the mind of their own accord. I have always made it a rule to treat those voluntary visitors with civility, . . . and it is from them I have acquired almost all the knowledge that I have." (*The Age of Reason*, p. 83, Citadel Press)

As Theosophists, we might call these "voluntary visitors", ideational emanations from *buddhi-manas* — the immortal mind. From Paine's perspective, the rational observation of Nature combined with a higher-order intuitive openness can

yield profound spiritual insights. As a case in point, let me share with you Paine's brilliant, intuitive argument for the immortality of the human soul. Immortality, states Paine, is continuity of consciousness maintained throughout variations in form and material. Analogical evidence for immortality can be found mirrored in physical Nature. To illustrate this, Paine describes the gradual transformation of the torpid caterpillar into a delicate, buoyant butterfly:

The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of today passes in a few days into a torpid figure and into a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; everything is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before. (*The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine, p. 178)

By analogy and correspondence, human consciousness — like God-consciousness — must be continuous despite changes in mind, matter, or form.

Now, if we look back at Paine's incredible life through the enriching, wide-angle lens of the Theosophical Movement, it is not difficult to understand that when Paine declared in *The Age of Reason*, "My own mind is my own church", he was, unknown to himself, preparing the way for H. P. Blavatsky. It was she, of course, who — at some fundamental level — slew

Thomas Paine: Theophilanthropist and Forerunner of the 21st Century

the invidious Minotaur of materialism that was devouring both religion and science. Nonetheless, Paine's attempt to democratize religion and to fight for a "universal republic of conscience" was a heroic preamble to the coming of the powerful principle of universal brotherhood set forth so tellingly by her.

You will be happy to know that in the past seventy years Paine has been gradually accepted by some historians as a major creative force in the American Revolution. This is good. But, it is not sufficient. Why? Because, beyond all of Paine's marvelous achievements, there is a deeper truth about him. He was not simply a benevolent revolutionary, an incisive political thinker, a gifted pamphleteer, a serious student of science, a committed deist, or a brilliant visionary; he was certainly all this. But, more than that, he was a forerunner of the world citizen of the future. He was a paradigm of the "man of tomorrow" because he wove together in his very standpoint and actions the golden threads of impersonal spirituality, universal responsibility, and intellectual originality. Paine was always more than an 18th-century enlightened figure. He was, like Lincoln, meant "for

the Ages". The resurgent interest in Paine is because the thinking of the world has finally moved in his direction.

Clearly, modern consciousness is becoming more global and increasingly concerned with the needs and rights of all members of the human family. The ubiquity of human suffering has increasingly forced us out of our sectarian and ideological shells and made us appreciate the importance of human interdependence and international cooperation. Perhaps we see less through a "glass darkly" than at any other time in the last two-thousand years. We now realize that the "City of Man" is the true focus of the pioneers of the future. This is precisely why we can turn to Paine for instruction and inspiration. He was always forward-looking and able to make eternal principles contemporary. It is no wonder that Paine's most oft-quoted phrase is: "My country is the world and my religion is to do good." He was a "prophet of the future" as well as a luminous figure of the American and French Revolutions. To honor him is to salute the best in ourselves and all men and women who dedicate their lives and their fortunes to the civilizations of tomorrow. ✧

It is not mere information which is going to change us. If we had a hundred times as much information as we have at present, about all sorts of recondite things, about various planetary and solar beings, for instance, we would still be the same.

N. Sri Ram

Theosophy: the Divine Wisdom, p. 35

Unity in the Christian Tradition

*(From a Mass held at Our Lady of All Angels Liberal Catholic Church,
Ojai, California, on Sunday, 19 April 2020)*

GASPAR TORRES

WE are celebrating in the Occidental Christian Church the Quasimodo¹ Sunday Mass, the eighth day from Resurrection Sunday, or Easter. But today our brothers of the Oriental Christianity celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, due to the differences in calendars² that we know exist, and of some traditions which have strayed, separating institutions.

These separations are unfortunate, because we do not know how to be united, and we do not know how to respect our differences of beliefs. This has led to the division of the Christian movement and of so many other religious traditions in the world. But true religion is never divided, nor does it have a name. Religion is how to bind every human being to the reality of the Unity of all that lives and breathes.

As a result, we should consider these differences as transitory while the illusion of our opinions are so strong that they divide us, but, in the background, we can always continue searching and

finding the Truth. This happens with all the scriptures of each one of those branches, of each one of those variants of the universal religion, of the Wisdom of the One religion, of the One spirit, and of the One teaching — the first true religion which at the beginning of each cycle of human manifestation re-exposes itself through the Instructors of humanity.

These instructors are called by different names, but also, the teachings are the same. They are the divine instructions that repeat themselves so that each human being identifies his or her Unity, not so that they will separate themselves from the other members of the human family, because that is impossible.

What is a “Unity” cannot be separated. We can see this if we analyze deeply, and not just the mere letter that also separates and divides, as an instrument that is of the mind, in which the Epistle and Gospel of this Quasimodo Sunday (as it has been called since the remotest antiquity) is based. Quasimodo was also the first

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Unity in the Christian Tradition

word in the Introit, or first hymn, of the ancient Mass, when these ceremonials began to gestate, which unfortunately substituted the true philosophy of our Lord and of all the great Instructors of the world, which is the same one, the teaching of Unity. But, nevertheless, it arises indirectly if we analyze with our personal soul first, but above all with our spiritual soul (if we can ascend from the personal soul to the spiritual soul), we can realize that both scriptures chosen for today, as well as those chosen for other Easter Sundays, have an extremely profound inner meaning.

The words attributed to Peter in the fragment of the *Acts of the Apostles* chosen for the Epistle today, begin with the use of a word, “respector”, that is no longer in use today, and has been misinterpreted. When Peter says “that God is no ‘respector’ of persons”, it really means that God has no favorites. God does not distinguish human beings as more or less pleasant, or more or less learned intellectually. Favoritism, bias, or prejudice, preferring some beings more than others, only causes separateness; that is why God does not have favorites.

God only appreciates honesty, uprightness, the internal dedication of our being to the spirit. It is only in the personality that we are apparently different. But in our spiritual souls Unity is already appreciated through the Love to which our spirit points. There is where full Unity is found, and that is why the rest of the Epistle, when it is not interpreted dogmatically, speaks, above all, about justice, because

true love is always just, and real internal love never betrays justice.

That is why Christ personifies Justice, not in the sense of condemning, but in the sense of uniting all life in the One Reality. That is our true Lord. That is also our true Lady, because the reality of masculine and feminine expressions of the Divinity is the unity of the All. Therefore, Love leads to justice when it is practiced well, and then there is no need for a judge.

The judge is that reality of the spirit in All which reconciles it with the Unity, and it leads us to the realization of that Unity. This is also revealed in the narration of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, near Jerusalem, that we will come to later in our Liturgy, before the Salutation of Peace, in a most beautiful way, and that will inspire us, for the Salutation of Peace, before we prepare to take Communion.

Today many of you are sorry that you cannot take communion physically — this is another effect of illusion. The communion that we receive in our ceremonies, as stated in the Liturgy, after we finish distributing it, is under the veil of earthly things. The energy aspect of the transubstantiation of that unleavened bread, as emphasized in the special Easter Gradual, is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.³ And that union, that communion, when it is mystical, as it was with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, leads them to the Unity. This is why many people are surprised — the two disciples had not recognized the

Unity in the Christian Tradition

Lord, and at the moment that they recognize Him, He disappears, because the true recognition of the Christ is entering into the state of Unity.

That is why Christ's external figure had to disappear from the physical state, because He was not in that state. He was no longer an individual in the physical body of Jesus. When he resuscitated, the Lord entered into the greatest depth of *all* beings. These two disciples, through the real communion they received when He gave it to them with the material appearance of the bread, see that He disappears from their sight because of the fact that they entered into spiritual unity with Christ.

This same process continued taking

place with the other disciples, one by one, and that is why they receive, fifty days after the Lord's resurrection, the reality of the fire of the Holy Spirit, the fire that arises from that Unity, the fire that built the whole Universe. It is the fire that has to take us all to be able, after we realize our Unity, to be agents of that divine life in everything that can manifest and in any manifestation that we may attain; to decide, as the disciples did, to continue helping humanity as a whole, this orphan humanity, which requires the help of each and every being who truly loves, who is truly sincere, and who is truly determined to rise above the deficiencies and limitations that today still separate us from the One Life. ✧

Endnotes

¹ From the Latin "malformed", "almost formed", or "new-born".

² The Oriental Churches continue to use the Julian calendar while the Roman and other Occidental Branches use the Gregorian one.

³ See the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, ch. 5, v. 7-8 (which are used in the special Easter Gradual: "not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.") Leavening appears both in the Old as well as in the New Testaments, but, above all, it is St. Paul who gives it a definite allegorical sense in the phrase just quoted. This confirms H. P. Blavatsky's opinion when she affirms that Paul was an Initiate in the Ancient Mysteries.

Life is forcing us, driving us to learn certain lessons; and one of the great lessons is that of the One Life, a Unity. . . Each individual is bound by invisible bonds to all his fellowmen; they rise or fall with one another. Only as he helps the whole of which he is a part does he truly help himself. Love of one's fellowmen and altruism in the highest form are, therefore, the essentials of growth.

C. Jinarājadāsa
(16.12.1875 – 18.6.1953)
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Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 'Olcott Bungalow', The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (TS),

Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, 'Arundale House', TS, and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan, 'Chit Sabha', TS, at the Vasanta Press, TS, Besant Garden, Besant Avenue, Adyar, Chennai (Madras) 600 020, India, on behalf of the President, The Theosophical Society.

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