VEDANTA
and the West

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Teachings of the Disciples of Ramakrishna

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RAMAKRISHNA AND THE FUTURE

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

THIS BOOK requires little introduction. The need for its appearance is self-evident. Until now, there has been no comprehensive history of what is, certainly, the most significant religious movement of our times.

The Ramakrishna Movement is unique because its Founder was unique. Even those who do not wish to believe that Sri Ramakrishna was a Son of God, like Jesus of Nazareth, must surely admit that he is incomparably the greatest spiritual leader produced by mankind in the past two centuries. (This claim is almost absurdly modest!) And who, in the world's recent history, can stand beside Ramakrishna's disciples, Vivekananda and Brahmananda?

Spiritual truth is eternal, but it has to be restated and redemonstrated in a human life in order that it may solve the varying problems of each succeeding epoch. Ramakrishna's teaching is our modern gospel. He lived and taught for us, not for the men of two thousand years ago; and the Ramakrishna Movement is responsible for the spreading of his gospel among us, here and now. For this reason alone, the Movement must be regarded as the most important of all existing religious movements, no matter how large or influential or venerable the others may be. This statement may sound startling, as of today. It is always hard to recognize the power and magnitude of a new spiritual force; and the Ramakrishna Movement is *very* new, historically speaking.

The growth of such a force can only be traced in retrospect, after centuries have passed. By the time the historians have become aware of a great spiritual revolution, that revolution has already completed itself and spent its energy, and a new revolution is about to take place!

So much for the spiritual role which is being played by the Ramakrishna Movement. Its social role is almost equally significant. One of the basic facts of our epoch is a profound change in relations between East and West, as colonialism is forced to yield to the claims of emergent nationalism. Much blood has been shed in the process, and much bitterness created. There are, however, forces at work to bring East and West together on a new basis of equality, respect and understanding. One of these forces is the Ramakrishna Movement, and it is peculiarly well fitted for the task because its Founders intended, from the beginning, that it should serve East and West impartially.

Sri Ramakrishna is the first great teacher to deliver a dual message, consciously addressed to the East and to the West as two separate though interrelated cultures. Vivekananda carried that message to America and Europe, telling his listeners both what Ramakrishna's teachings had to say to oriental Hindus and also what they had to say to occidental Christians. He made no attempt to convert the Western peoples away from Christianity to a cult of Ramakrishna; and this wise policy has been followed by the centers he founded in the West. Thus the Christians' mistake in the Orient has been avoided. Conversion, in the old-fashioned sense, was anyhow often short-lived and skin-deep, and, in many cases, a disguised function of colonialism.

The Ramakrishna Movement has also avoided the much more deadly mistake of trying to create a cult of itself. It has never become, in this sense, a "Church" or claimed to be

Ramakrishna's "Body" or viceregent on earth. The sane, humble and frequently humorous tone of this book, with its frank admission of weaknesses, errors in judgment and clashes of personality, should convince every reader that the men who are now carrying on Ramakrishna's mission are incapable of thus perverting it to further their own ambition and increase their prestige. May the Movement always have such leaders!

When a religious movement becomes a "Church," it must inevitably become involved in politics. Since the Church is of such paramount importance—say its adherents—it must be sustained and defended by any means, fair or foul. It must be protected by a foreign policy and by the making of alliances, even if its allies are men whose hands are dirty with gold and blood. The Ramakrishna Movement has, to its enormous credit, always refused to become politically involved—even in such a relatively noble and worthy cause as that of Indian independence; and this despite the fact that nearly all of its members must have had a strong sympathy for the nationalists. Some of these members, indeed, ended by feeling that it was their duty to take part in the struggle; but they very properly left the Movement before doing so, and thus avoided compromising it by their later actions.

When a religious movement claims the right to stand outside politics, it may earn unpopularity for itself in time of crisis; but this unpopularity will turn into respect, later. For no one, however much of a political fanatic he may be, really respects the man of God who joins him in abetting acts of violence. The professional soldier suspects and secretly despises the militant priest.

If the Ramakrishna Movement had consisted only of contemplatives, leading lives of meditation in retirement from the world, its abstention from politics would not have

been so difficult. But the Movement has always preserved a dual character—contemplative Math and socially active Mission. The Mission, with all its hospitals, schools and relief projects, is necessarily involved in the affairs of the world. It has had to learn how to accept help and cooperation in these projects while refusing to be governed by the worldly policies of its helpers. The reader of this book will be able to judge for himself how great are the difficulties of walking along the edge of this exquisitely narrow razor!

JEWISH MYSTICISM AND VEDANTA

RABBI ASHER BLOCK

VEDANTA teaches three basic truths: man is potentially divine; the aim of our life is to actualize this potentiality; and all the great faiths are paths to the realization of God. I should like to point out this morning how Judaism is fundamentally in agreement with these principles.

That man is inherently divine is stated clearly in Genesis: "God created man in His own image. . . . The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life, and man became a living soul."

That the goal of life is to call forth this Divinity within is expressed in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to revere Him, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him: to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

And, as for universalism in the Bible, Malachi (the last of the Old Testament prophets, who preached at about 450 B.C.) declared: "From the rising of the sun unto its going down, the Lord's name is great among the nations. In every place offerings are presented unto His name—pure gift-offerings. . . . Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why, then, do we deal faithlessly a man against his brother?"

Of course, the Bible is not *all* of Judaism. It is the Holy Writ, the Scripture. In addition, there is the vast "Oral Teaching" of the Talmud and Midrash, and also an ex-

tensive body of liturgy and prayer. In these classic sources of Judaism, the Vedantic principles become even more explicit and pronounced.

There is, for instance, this meditation in the morning service of the *Daily Prayer Book*: "O God, the soul which Thou didst implant within me is pure. Thou didst create it and fashion it. . . . So long as the breath of life is within me, I will give thanks unto Thee, Master of all works, Lord of all souls." The Rabbis of the Talmud taught that "the righteous among all peoples have a share in the world to come" —that is to say, are heirs of immortality, alongside the righteous in Israel. One Midrash proclaims: "I call heaven and earth to witness that, whether one be Jew or Non-Jew, man or woman, bondman or free, according to their mode of life does the Divine Spirit rest upon them." And, on the High Holy Days, we pray: "O Lord, may all Thy creatures come to know Thee, and all mankind bow down to acknowledge Thee. May all Thy children unite in one fellowship to do Thy will with a perfect heart."

THERE ARE, to be sure, various strains in the texture of Judaism. Some elements stress the sinfulness of man (though always with the possibility of redemption), and some stress the chosenness of Israel (though usually implying salvation for mankind). Yet, though other strains are present, the element of which we speak today is, I am convinced, genuine and authentic in the stream of the Tradition. The evidence for that lies in the history of Jewish mysticism.

The difference between ordinary religion and mysticism, one might say, is one of degree—the degree of earnestness or intensity. When one says: "I believe in God"—that is religion. But when one says, as does the Psalmist: "As a deer panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul for

Thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for the living God. . . . how long till I come and appear before him!"—that is mysticism. This figure of speech, incidentally, is reminiscent of the parables of Sri Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna spoke of one having been immersed in water, panting for breath—or of a thief ready to crash through a wall for the sake of treasure. When such is man's yearning for God (said he), then God will be realized.

Mysticism, therefore, is the taking of religion in all seriousness, when theory and verbalization are transformed into search and verification. Evelyn Underhill, in her work entitled *Mysticism*, defines this term as "a highly specialized form of the search for reality"—a search which enlists especially "those vital powers of love and will, which we attribute to the heart." "Under the spur of this love and will, the whole personality rises in the acts of contemplation and ecstasy to a level of consciousness at which it becomes aware of a new field of perception." It rises to "that experience in which the human soul enters consciously into the presence of God."

There are many instances of such mystic experiences recorded in the Bible: Abraham at Mt. Moriah, Jacob at Beth-El, Moses at the Burning Bush and on Mt. Sinai, Elijah, when he heard "the still, small voice," and the visions that came to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. In addition to these individual experiences, there are numerous references to group efforts at attaining a higher and more vivid consciousness of God. For example, the priesthood brought special offerings to the altar of the Tabernacle, and at their head was the high priest who, on the Day of Atonement, invoked the Name of God in the Holy of Holies. On this day atonement was to be made for the people, to cleanse them, that they might stand "clean before the Lord." This was no

doubt a deep and moving experience. We read also of other groups—such as the Nazirites, who took vows of ritual purity; the Rechabites, who inclined toward asceticism, in the days of Jeremiah; and the *B'nai Ha-Neviim,* "the sons (or disciples) of the prophets."

From the spiritual expressions in the Bible we can easily surmise that a great struggle and striving must have been taking place during the era, say from the eighth to the second century B.C. And these feelings have been capsuled in certain of the Psalms—very much as certain sentiments and experiences of the early Hindus were presented in the Vedas or the Upanishads. Here are a few: "The Lord is near to all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy holy Spirit from me." "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, that I may walk in Thy truth. May my heart be unified ("one-pointed") to revere Thy name." And if we should ask: What was the goal of all this striving? That answer, too (as in the 19th Psalm), comes in the most Vedantic terms: "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. . . . More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Is not this but another formulation of Sat-chit-ananda: Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute?

So, this is the origin and the background of Jewish mysticism, as it manifests itself in the Bible. However, the more intensive and effective developments of it were yet to come. During the past two thousand years there were at least three major movements in Jewish mysticism that deserve our spe-

cial consideration. The first was that of the *Essenes*. The next, that of the *Kabbalists*. And the most recent was that of the *Hasidim*.

During the latter days of the Second Temple, there was a stratification of the society into certain distinct types and interests. On the one hand were the Hellenists, later the Sadducees. On the other were the "pietists," who branched off into the Pharisees and the Essenes. Our interest at the moment focuses upon these latter, for they constitute a remarkable development in spiritual life. Though they were relatively few in numbers, we are only now beginning to suspect how extensive was their influence. According to Philo, there were only some four thousand Essenes—and they preferred living in the villages rather than in the cities —yet one of the gates of Jerusalem was named after them.

From the contemporary writings of Josephus, Philo, and Pliny, we gather a fairly clear (though inadequate) description of their lives. They had a carefully planned, self-sustaining economy, together with an advanced, rigorous religious discipline. Property was shared in common, the diet was simple and austere, and the rules of cleanliness were quite strict. Most members observed complete celibacy. There were regular periods of worship and silence. There were four classes, or ranks, within the Essene communities, according to spiritual achievement. Josephus mentions three of their masters who had prophetic powers and could foretell events. Visitors to these communities reported a great sense of calm and tranquility; also that its members were beyond fear and pain. When the Roman army captured Jerusalem, some Essenes were persecuted and tortured, in order that their secrets might be obtained. Yet, we are told, they endured it all unyieldingly and cheerfully.

Our knowledge of this group has been tremendously

enhanced in our own day by the recent fascinating discoveries of ancient scrolls from the Dead Sea. One of these scrolls contains a Manual of Discipline, setting forth the rules of the organization, requirements of membership, and a ceremony of admission. From the new information that has come to light (for instance, in Edmund Wilson's *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*), some notable similarities are established between this Jewish fellowship and the early Christian church. Both held meals in common as a kind of sacrament; both practised ritual immersion (or baptism); both placed great stress on personal devotion and brotherly love. As a result of these striking similarities, there is speculation to the effect that John the Baptist and possibly Jesus himself may, for a time, have had some direct contact with the Essene brotherhood.

Be that as it may, there can be little doubt as to the basic significance of this experiment in earnest religious living. We are not quite certain what happened to this particular spiritual enterprise. Probably it was abruptly halted by the Roman destruction. But that certainly did not spell the end of Jewish mysticism.

The Jewish Encyclopedia describes a group of Jewish mystics that settled near Alexandria, Egypt, known as the *Therapeutae* ("Worshipers of God" or "healers"). These, according to Philo, embraced the life of contemplation. In their monasteries they offered thanks to God every morning at sunrise for the light of day, as well as for the light of the Torah (i.e. the Law and the Prophets), and again at sundown they praised God for the Truth and the Light hidden within the soul. On the Sabbath they assembled in a large hall for the common study of the Torah and for their communion meal. And on certain festivals they spent the entire night in prayer and song. The Therapeutae admitted women

members also, who lived a monastic life and had special areas for their meals and their worship.

Such movements were, of course, variations from common practice. Nevertheless, even within the normative Tradition, there was the presence and recognition of mystics. (See Ernst Mueller's *A History of Jewish Mysticism.*) The Talmud and the Midrash have numerous accounts of supranormal experiences on the part of such leading personalities as Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai. With regard to the last, it is told, that he lived in seclusion for thirteen years, during which time he acquired much knowledge and wisdom. Various miraculous powers were ascribed to him, and to his disciples, and later generations believed him to be the author of the "Zohar," central work of the Kabbalah (lit., "Tradition"). In all probability, the Zohar ("Illumination") was not composed until much later, at about the thirteenth century, but the fact that it was traced back to Rabbi Simeon, of the second century, is significant of the trend that had been growing during that time.

The Kabbalistic movement—which is our second major area of interest—was largely academic or scholastic in nature, engrossed in trying to unravel the mysteries of the universe. Scripturally, the point of departure was usually the Story of Creation or Ezekiel's vision of the Heavenly Chariot.

The Kabbalists were deeply concerned with the problems of matter and spirit, of body and soul, of good and evil, of the many and the One. Like most sincere religionists, they were eager to know man's true nature, his relation to God, and what it is that separates man from God. And their answer was amazingly "Vedantic" in character. They said that the whole of creation came about through *Sefirot*, a

process of "emanations" from God. The further these emanations went, the less spiritual they became, inasmuch as they were removed from their original divine Source and Essence. Thus the world and the individual soul came into being. Man, according to their view, is a key element in the whole creative scheme. For in him are combined the material and the spiritual. In him the pure, inner Self has been covered over and eclipsed by various outer husks or shells—what Vedanta would call "layers of ignorance"—so that he has forgotten or lost sight of his essential nature. It is this dark outer covering which accounts for division and conflict, and so-called evil. This is the "world of opposites," the world of constant change and illusion ("maya"). It is not the world of Reality, it is not God.

According to the Kabbalah, human birth is only a descent of the soul from a higher to a lower sphere. The Zohar also speaks of the doctrine of *gilgul*, which is "reincarnation," or the transmigration of souls. It follows, therefore, that man's major purpose in this life is to liberate the soul from its earthly attachments and bondage. And this can be done through *Torah* (spiritual learning or discrimination) and through *Teshuvah*, penitence (literally, "a turning about"), a "renunciation" of the enticements of the world and a facing in the direction of our true goal.

It should be mentioned, in all fairness, that a good deal of Jewish mysticism (as in other cases) veered in the direction of occultism, a preoccupation with physical phenomena, and the like. There were false Messiah movements, and so on. For this reason, even if for no other, a study of comparative mysticism is most helpful, for it serves to point out the pitfalls and to highlight the real attainments.

We now come to the third—and, in a sense, the most intriguing—of the Jewish mystical movements: Hasidism.

In the writings of Swami Vivekananda, in the Bhagavad-Gita, and in other Vedantic sources, various paths (or yogas) toward the realization of God are set forth. The main ones are karma, jnana, and bhakti—the paths of service, reason, and love. In my own mind, as I was thinking about the various developments in Judaism, I could not help but assign each to a different yoga. Of course, none is exclusive, but each does seem to follow a certain pattern and set a particular tone. The Essenes were largely a *working* group, dedicated to the building of an ideal community. The Kabbalists were *philosophic* mystics, trying to interpret the Scriptures and the world of experience. The Hasidim (as we shall see in a moment) aimed at sanctifying all of life with a sense of divine *love.*

One of the last of the Kabbalists and a forerunner of the Hasidim was Rabbi Isaac Luria, who lived in Safed, Palestine, in the sixteenth century (described in Solomon Schechter's *Studies in Judaism,* 2nd series). Rabbi Luria gathered about him a group of associates or disciples, who soon came to refer to him as *Ari,* "the Lion." Of him it was said that he beheld Spirit everywhere—in the rustling of the leaves, in the song of the birds, in the rushing of water, or in the flickering of flames. The mysticism of Luria, though it embraces Kabbalistic study, was directed mainly at *Tikkun ha-nefesh,* "perfection of the soul." He inspired special prayers, hymns, and devotional exercises.

Then, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in Poland, there appeared Rabbi Israel Baal Shem (lit. "Master of the Lord's Name"). The Baal Shem, as a youth, instead of going to school, spent much of his time in the solitude of the woods communing with God. Later he became an assistant schoolmaster, but instead of drilling his students in the usual book learning, he taught them to chant and to

pray and to rejoice in the Lord. A father once complained to the Baal Shem that his son had forsaken God. "What shall I do?" he asked. The Baal Shem replied: "Love him more than ever." He was an unusual person, and it was not long before many disciples and a host of simple, pious folk began to flock about him. He became the prototype for several generations of outstanding teachers and disciples, and a new vitality was infused into Jewish life.

Some of the characteristics of this movement are: first, a strong guru-disciple relationship. The master was called the *Zaddik* (a righteous, or saintly man). His intimate followers would see in him the embodiment of divine qualities and higher powers, while others would come on pilgrimages from time to time to be taught and inspired. Another characteristic was the sense of great joy in the service of the Lord—not asceticism or mortification (as had been practised elsewhere), nor mere intellectual scholarship. When the master and his disciples came together, there was dancing and singing and a festive meal.

Lastly, Hasidism stressed the omnipresence of God. Man must serve God, through all his thoughts, words, and deeds, and thus he will release the divine spark within. There is no distinction here between the secular and the sacred, between good and evil—all our impulses must be directed and "sublimated" toward the one Goal. And in order to do that, of course, the ego must be overcome.

A typical story is told (in Martin Buber's *Hasidism*, p. 185) of a friend who, coming to see a Hasidic teacher, knocked at his door. The teacher inquired, "Who is there?" and the visitor responded, "It is I." But the door was not opened, so the man knocked again. Whereupon the voice from within said: "Who is it, who is so bold to say 'I'—that which God alone may do?"

Sadness, for example, according to the Hasidic teaching, is the attribute of an egoist, one who is always thinking, "Something should rightfully come to me; something is wrongfully lacking to me." (See *The Hasidic Anthology*, by Louis I. Newman and S. Spitz, p. 243.) Whether in worries physical or spiritual, it is always "I" at the root of it. In contrast, one saint once prayed: "O God, I have no wish for Thy Paradise, nor any desire for the joys in the world to come. I want Thee and Thee alone."

We have here also the idea of non-attachment to the fruits of our work. Work itself is necessary, but it should be done as a service to God, without expectation of reward. Indeed, in Hebrew, one word *Avodah* is used for both work and worship. By this concept all the ethical virtues—and particularly service to others—become exercises in spiritual growth.

One leader, Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, (quoted in *The Hasidic Anthology*, pp. 258-9), summed up much of the Hasidic outlook in these words: "God is everywhere. He is among the most common of men; he is to be found in the lowliest occupation. Delve deeper and you will find a way to serve God in everything and in every work and place. No matter how low you may have fallen in your esteem, bear in mind that if you delve deeply into yourself, you will discover holiness there. A holy spark resides there which, through repentance, you may fan into a consuming flame which will burn away the dross of unholiness and unworthiness. Passion and desire surround understanding as the shell, the kernel; break through the shell and thereby attain understanding."

As a result of such self-discipline and pious devotion, some of the Hasidic masters did indeed attain a high degree of God-consciousness. Of one it is related that during his

especially prayerful days he had to look at the clock occasionally to remind himself that he was in the temporal world. Solomon Schechter, in an essay on "saintliness," (cf. above) tells of a Jewish saint who fasted the first six days in the week. When asked how he managed to do it, he answered that he never meant to fast: he simply forgot to eat.

Martin Buber, in his *Tales of the Hasidim—The Early Masters,* has this to tell about Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of the town of Berditchev. On the forenoon of one Day of Atonement, during the Avodah Service, he was so overwhelmed with fervor that he fell on the floor and lay as one dead. In vain did those standing near seek to revive him. They lifted him from the floor, carried him to his room, and laid him on his bed. Then the Hasidim, who knew very well that this was a state which had to do with the soul and not a sickness of the body, continued in their prayer. It was only toward evening that the Rabbi returned and concluded the prayers with the congregation. In Vedanta, this might well be called a form of samadhi.

THUS we see how surprisingly similar are the various insights of mysticism at their higher levels. Hasidic Judaism, mystical Christianity, Zen Buddhism, Sufi Mohammedanism, Vedantic Hinduism—all, basically, seem to be pointing in one direction. No doubt, at some points along the way, there was contact among them. But the likenesses are too great to be merely historical or coincidental.

Western theologians often like to draw a sharp contrast between the Oriental tradition and the Judeo-Christian heritage. The Eastern teaching, they say, by making Brahman and Atman as One, tends to negate the world and individual life, while Western religion, being dualistic, leaves room for individuality.

For the vast majority of us, however, this is a purely theoretical question, with no relevance to our real situation. Ramakrishna pointed out very often: As long as the body and the consciousness of self are with us, we cannot pretend that they do not exist. Hence, if we must have ego, let it be the ego of service, the ego of devotion and love.

So it is not a question of dualism or monism, it is only a question of whether our thoughts and actions shall be self-centered or God-centered. On this, it seems, all the great faiths are wholly agreed: that our life has no other ultimate purpose but to seek to dwell in the Presence of the Eternal.

COMMUNICATION

GERALD HEARD

We have discussed vision. Considering thought in its broader sense it might seem a big, ambiguous word in the English language. And because in the end it seemed that there can never be true vision unless it is an aspect of communication —between that and this, between you and me, between the past and the future, between what we call the objective and the subjective—therefore it seemed necessary we should link it with this even more difficult, because more familiar, subject of communication.

We saw when we were considering vision that it must result in communication; and we shall see, as we consider communication, that it is a form of vision. And yet that seems a paradox. As we know, whereas vision has around it a not altogether pleasant aura of the visionary, of the phony, of those overstatements of poetic phrases which are then put into circulation as rather doubtful and inflated paper money of the spiritual world; communication has a harsher sound, really. One often thinks of it as "talking down to people," being a popularization that always leaves out the true richness of the discovery.

Of course, there is also always the great fear that a communication is issued by an authority, and that it is slanted, colored, meant to produce a reaction in us. The great word "advertisement," which has become so important to government, means "turning others." It means that you aim

this at them so as to manage to deflect them from their present position and fit them into the position that you wish. The analogy too often used—and yet with a great deal of truth in it—is that a random society is like a piece of unmagnetized metal. There are the atoms, and there are the structures of the metal in a random condition. Then apply a strong magnetic field, and they all with their separate charges become one-pointed—not in any transcendental sense, but in the practical and immediate sense. That they think one thing and say one thing—that makes government easy. That makes it possible for the attention of mankind to be directed in those channels which will lead to the maximum output of organized effort.

We cannot too often repeat in our present sociological crisis that all governments are half right; all governments rule by default. All governments are trying to manage us, because we must know that as a community we do fail to manage ourselves. No human being resorts, as far as we can see, to violence, until in bewildered fear of anarchy he has perceived that such apt forces as reason, persuasion, and example in his own case don't carry. And the result is, as St. Dominic said himself: I've used reason; I've used example. I've used these forces. He sold his few precious books—when books were worth their weight in gold and for him almost essential—to give to the poor when he was traveling through Spain. This hard ascetic was so moved by the fact that these people needed bread. The founder of the Inquisition was not at that moment energized by the thought that they must think rightly. He felt that they must be fed. And yet that is the very man who in the end was driven to make the most terrible instrument that has ever been devised by the human mind: the coercing and damaging of the will, which inevitably—because it is contrary to the process of

life—led to the wrecking of the very institution for which he gave his life.

So we realize that communication has rightly got a bad name. And we are suspicious of it in that level where our suspicions are most effective, most defensive, most impossible really to coerce—in the levels of our actual reaction. Without our knowing, when we are most loyal, when we most assert things, we have our saving clauses, our quiet reservations. One need only give a number of examples. Psychology has rubbed that lesson in, that whenever a person overaffirms a faith—wait, wait, in a little time he may take it up! No one is really a greater risk to those people who fear subversion than the very man who seizes on every possible means to impose what he calls "the right way of living." That is not a statement made without ample historical evidence.

It was that strange genius, with probably the drive of an epileptic visionary, Paul or Saul of Tarsus, who was determined to save Judaism as he understood it. When his own Church was hesitant—when wise men like his own teacher Gamaliel were inclined to wait and see and throw their weight in favor of tolerance—it was he who drove his hard, pointed spear of bitter opposition against the new development. And yet, when Saul himself was sent out upon the very process of completing what he thought was the extermination of a dangerous, but, thank God, easily liquifiable minority, he was seized with a seizure, and woke up to fight with equal fanaticism for the very side which he had attempted to destroy.

And therefore, when we feel a fear of communication, we must watch ourselves. When we feel, as many of us do, that any kind of move perhaps at the present time is unwise and we should wait, and that we should as far as pos-

sible not ask questions but obey slogans, we should remember that our assent to that proposition is not wholehearted. It is the mark nearly always of a premature convert if he tends to be terribly anxious that everybody should come to the light as he sees it. And the reason is his own uncertainty of whether his vision is true. The only possibility of being able to make that vision true is that other people, absent from the coercion which can be directed by a fanatic in those moments of his utter conviction, see that vision, and see it from their own point of view. No man who clings rightly to his sanity is satisfied when anybody takes an opinion which he utters simply because he uttered it. We are in communion with others when by other paths they have arrived at the same result that we have; when by other methods they have achieved those things which we feel we agree with them to be the things which we should achieve and yet have not achieved.

Now how did this particular process of subconscious dislike and fear of all kinds of communication grow up? When you understand a thing, you not merely can explain it, you understand that it served a purpose; it was expedient that this thing took place. Pain, frustration, disappointment, contrary opinions, oppositions, suspicion—all those things are very good thoughts because, not merely do they throw us back to examine whether the methods we have used to persuade are accurate; they are also, of course, questions. They may be asked with an absurdity which naturally causes a considerable cauterizing effect upon the tender growing edges of one's own egotism. But, when one has got over the sting and tautness of the cautery, they are also information.

There is, we can always remind ourselves, more information in a question than in an answer. But it takes great vitality to see this. It is much easier to imagine that we have got an answer than to want an answer. And the whole suspicion of communication did grow up when men had begun to discover that the answers which were given were not necessarily untrue when they were given, but that they were no longer adequate as a comprehensive answering of the contemporary question of the world as it seemed at that moment. We know now that no bolt falls from the blue, that no revolution takes place without warning, that no disease attacks the organism until it has been in the precancerous, or the pre-tubercular, or the pre-diabetic condition for a very long while. It isn't even true (in Plotinus' telling phrase) that nature speaks twice and then she strikes. She speaks again and again. There is no cataclysmic element present unless you have stretched the elasticity of the organism, of the environment, of its fellow people beyond all possible tolerance, and it smashes back.

Revolution is, of course, evolution going too fast. And it goes too fast because the organism no longer can give a total response. And when we view this suspicion of communication, we see that.

Take a genius, so quiet, so influential, so modern that most people have never heard his name: Selden, who sat in the Long Parliament, in the terrible struggle with the ankylosed form of kingship which existed in Charles I's England. A great legal mind; a mind to which the constitution of his country owes so much in its basic thinking upon what is law and what is consent and what is communication. He, having to confront the outburst of private judgments and sudden revelations, said in the suave and easy vernacular of the seventeenth century: You have a revelation from God

and you are certain about it; but then I need a revelation from God to know you had one!

And so you reach a stalemate. It was necessary that there should be this outpouring of convictions. The iron system that had settled in is said by that great Catholic theologian Von Hügel to have begun centuries before the revolution. It began because there was an unwillingness to accept new data. And there was an almost pathetic belief in the Church of authority that reason was the one bridge over to the minds of other people. That you were ready to reason, as St. Dominic said, that you were ready to reason, as St. Thomas always did, that you were ready to argue, but you were only ready to argue in terms of reasonable process. What we watch is the shattering attack of this warped vitality of the human spirit energizing again, as it moves in almost an epileptic seizure these limbs which were suffering from ankylosis. They were getting so congealed that no process was possible; and it was necessary, as far as we can see, that there should be what we might call a "group shock treatment." That is no fantasy to a historian looking back at the past.

Another towering figure, a much greater historian than Von Hügel, Lord Acton, continually toward the end of his life speculated in lines which are extremely suggestive of modern psychiatry. He asked himself if it was possible that there are times when we create such a tension in society that it can only throw itself and shatter itself into a series of private convictions. The outer world, the frame of reference, no longer fits. And increasingly people see that life is worthwhile, that they have access to reality and the right to private judgment.

There comes the slogan of a new phase of struggle. Of course it can't rest. What was ending in ankylosis, in paral-

ysis, in complete inertia under the iron grip of authority, has now become convulsive, epileptic. The whole process is under intolerable strain. And if it is let go on, it will become of course nothing but a competition of fanaticisms, and in the end an anarchy. And it is in that process, when modern man's mind came back again to examine reason, that he began to realize that there must be a third phase.

The trouble, as Plato says, is that our eyes look backward and our feet go forward. We always retreat on to the position which is actually going to be the new one, and do not know that it is. It is a very encouraging thing—if we have the nerve to recognize it—that this is what we are doing; that our very recoil from things makes us collide with truth. Our tremendous effort to resist a certain point of view means that we are driven to realize that our own point of view is really inadequate. In the desperate effort to get a case, to be able to defend ourselves, we shall snatch hold of things which will compel us to move on from the too narrow position which we have occupied.

So we can see that we are in a third phase. First, that of authority; secondly, of the right to private judgment—the passionate belief that what I have seen is true. And those two points seem to be in eternal competition. At present we should use the rather cheap and vulgar phrase that this is the dispute between science and religion. It is the dispute between those people who believe in reason and in all empirical data, or say they do; and those people who say: Yes, but this won't help you to live. And where shall I find a system which gives me a series of co-ordinated reactions? As Chateaubriand said, I return to the Church, for in the Church alone can I find the sanctity of the home, the destiny of my own life to face its utter loneliness and its final dissolution; and a conception that behind this vast inco-

herence there is a plan, a purpose, a designer, and a path. Yes, that is perfectly true, but there cannot be any returns in life. We may go back and reconsider, but in the end we have to realize that we are considering things as individuals, that our vision is partial.

THE solution to that very serious problem between anarchy and conservatism, between anarchy and tyranny, lies, I believe, entirely in the third phase, in which we begin to understand communication. It is going to be painful, whether we do it or not. But it means precisely this: others have rights to their vision, and we must live together. And at the same time one is quite certain that what I have seen is, within limits, my authentic vision. As long as we use that word, "within limits," we are going to grow. It is natural selection working on the soul. For it says, "I have seen something and there is some element of vision in me. But this will never be complete until I have the power of seeing as others see in their infinite multitude."

The *samsara* is *nirvana.* The multiplicity is the One—but only when the multiplicity is total. As long as there is one person seeing something and unsatisfied—not made to submit by coercion, whether that be lobotomy or propaganda; not made to surrender their vision but be able to contribute it—then and only then shall we have not only sanity but creation. In the end of that moving book *Wisdom, Folly and Madness,* written by a man who has been hopelessly off his head, the summarization is: We must never persuade the insane to surrender their vision. We should point out to them that we too have a vision. We do not maintain that our vision is absolute objectivity. In our vision too there is construction, there is hypothesis, there is magnificent fantasy.

But we ask them to contribute. We do not drive them out. We ask them to do the agonizing exercise of seeing their vision and trusting ours.

The real act of faith is not, I believe, in the idea of what we in our limited way call God. Beyond all terms of relatedness, beyond all limitations, it is whether I have the courage to perceive that you too reflect God. But you reflect him from a tiny and peculiar point—intensely valuable, but valuable as is every single note that the human ear can hear, not by itself, but because it can be combined. We are part of a fabulous composition. And, I think, that idea is very, very new in the modern world. It is the first time we have been able to say: It is not this or that; it is not a choice between the sane, the conventional, the people who are practical, and the people who are visionary and a bit over the edge and must be coerced. It is that we all have partial vision. And yet the very partiality of that is our authenticity. It is the most torturing thing to realize that what I see is true and it can contribute to what you see, that it is not true in the fact that I could ever impose it. It will take part in this whole frontage of this immense facade of understanding. It will take part in the gigantic composition which is in the outworn phrase "the music of the spheres." But it does not have any authenticity by itself, and yet it has authenticity with others.

We see at once that we are involved in the fascinating issue of communication. We know that we have to acknowledge perfectly that from the beginning of man's attempt to understand "where he was, what he was, and who he was," there is absolute truth, though a hard truth, in the tremendous saying of the Tao Te Ching: "Those who know don't say, and those who say don't know."

You must not at this moment think that your proposi-

tion can be more than a stimulant. It suggests there is something more to see. We have made the only real progress we have ever made with the problem of insanity when we have begun to respect the insane, when we have been able to say: It is possible we should entertain the hypothesis, the disturbing idea, that you did see something, and it was so intense that after that up to the present you have not been able to make easy, communicable restatement and to behave yourself in a profitable way to the rest of us. But then, if we saw ultimate reality, would we be able to do something about it?

The moment we look through the triumphs which have been made by accurate observation, how many of us can really take in the concepts which are present in advanced physics, in advanced music, in advanced painting? Again and again we show the promising signs of being angry about it, being resentful, saying, "It's outrageous that this kind of nonsense should turn up!" We are doing this to defend ourselves. We are getting too close to raw power. If we suddenly intimated to the mind what it would be, the mind would certainly rock on its bases.

We are on the threshold of a new power. It will be discovered piecemeal. They did not think for one moment that they were near atomic power when they were, as we know, within four years of it. Power is closing in on us in a new vision. And each of us is capable of his authentic response to it. Communication is not merely words—words are on the very lowest level. Communication is sound; communication is vision and color and light. The whole body is open in an enormous gamut of apprehension—apprehension which gives us apprehension because it refuses to be comprehension. It always says, "Little man, don't think you have ever caught me! Humbly know that for the moment

I have taken hold of you!" And the result is, apprehension is a deadly state only leading to an overwhelming anxiety unless it has in it the humility which at moments even that genius we have mentioned, Paul, had when he said: I judge not, brethren, that I could have attained to comprehension, but I believe I have attained to apprehension. And I stretch out further that I may attain more.

There is the real humility of the person who has had an authentic experience. If he could have turned away from ambition, then the history of Western man might have been very different. As it was, he had to give us more answers than questions, and the result is that we had to be imprisoned within his system, as in that of Aristotle, and as in that of Aquinas, until we had to split ourselves out of it and be born again. The very phrase he used, he did not realize would be used against the very shell that he was shaping.

WHEN, therefore, we come to this point of what communication is, we realize that every single human being has an authentic vision. He has seen a minute part of the reality. But he cannot himself begin to see the whole thing until he has communication. It is not merely the statement made by the old lady: "How can I know what I'm going to say until I've said it?" Even people who are perhaps a little too fluent in the pulpit do actually prepare what they are going to say. You can prepare, but like old Balaam with his ass, you do not necessarily say what you meant to say, because something better is given you by those who listen. For there is the real problem which we are dealing with in communication: Why did communication go wrong? Simply, because it failed to be communion. The person wanted to tell something. Yes, they were very earnest about it. They were

anxious to pour out this particular thing. And in the end they were ready to give all the answers and to enroll people as charter-paying members. If the person could cling to the hypothesis: This I have seen, but I know it is partial; but knowing it is partial, I know it can be part of a contribution. And in communion we can come to see it, for then I could see what you are seeing!

It is not, of course, even standing in somebody else's shoes. It is seeing through their eyes. And I do think there is immense hope in the world today right outside where the ordinary stresses of the conflict between conviction and ideology and reason and agreement lie, in the hot areas of the rapid change of our society which has been contorted so quickly in past generations. It is in the studies right outside this, the quiet and detailed studies—of animal behavior; of pointer readings which are going on when a person sits perfectly quiet and the electrodes are making a little dance—but so weak that until we could multiply it a million times we could not detect these glinting shadows of the dance of life and thought and understanding and appreciation. It is again brought out on the point of diagnostic help. It is again stressed in the electro-encephalograms. When the mind rises to its greatest height, then the most delicate detector gives nothing. We enter what has been rightly called the silent area. It is silent as far as evidently any exertion is required. For it is the shadow of the strain, of the effort, of the storm of fear of vision, of anger of achievement; it is those that flash in great waves and tidal storms across the brain.

But when it rises to its final vision, there seems to be no exertion. It is then, evidently, very close to that place—and here we are quoting a great authority on the brain—where we realize that the mind is not the brain, and that the

brain is functioning here, making adjustments and carrying this great distillery along with it which we call the body, and trying to fill it and empty it and put it to rest and keep it warm and make it get on with the others. And meanwhile over it hovers this mind.

The mind is a four-dimensional continuum. Those phrases of course are key phrases in our advance into a new world which should hope to have its own words, but whose words, I believe, will mean that we have entered a tertiary condition of understanding in which communication is communion, and in which we are continually drawing in from others and breathing out again. The heart must contract, but it must expand again; and if it does any one without the other, it is dead. The lungs have to do the same. We are reciprocal creatures. And our magnificent achievement and promise lie completely in this, that it is the number of people with whom we can reciprocate that is the criterion of how far advanced we are. And as we are all pushed outside the safety of the ordinary answers today into the vast openness of the gigantic question marks, because of that you will expect to get, not answers, not sedatives, not convictions even, but queries, stimulants, pointer readings.

The anomaly, the thing that seems to be discord—how long can you tolerate it? The thing that seems to be ugly, how long can you endure it? For that too could only be seen by you. You could only have it in your vision, in communication, because you really were able to stand it. Things that you can't stand at all, you don't actually stand, for you don't see them. They are completely outside. The short-wave radiation which rushes through the outer universe—you, I, none of us would ever have been evolved at all if we had been exposed to that. It wouldn't have been possible.

We were put in a place of median levels; we were put in places where there was stimulant, where we crept forward and had the divine gift of being a little bored so that in the end we were tired of too facile a success. We were too tired of comfort and we crept out a little farther. "They say the wind blows heavily out there; the light is blinding—do you really wish to go?" And we look to and fro, and we look back at all that we have done, and it seems jejune and childish, and we say, "Yes, I would like to grow. Can you assure me that I will grow?"

"Yes," comes the answer, "I can assure you that you will grow. But I can't tell you what you will grow into. And I cannot assure you that the 'you' which you think you are will survive the process."

Look back! Have I done anything else with the rest of my life? Is anything left when the great process goes on in all the great metamorphoses? Nothing, really, because it has all been taken up. Nothing remains with the past. Every single endeavor of the human mind, every great act of faith, every great vision, every great struggling with a discord, with an ugliness, with a conflict, with a challenge—they have always been annihilating to the self. The person realizes: If I embrace that, I should be distended beyond any shape. Yes, but you need not disappear. You could not have the challenge unless you were already aware of it and already hungry for it.

But you could not have had the communication, you could not have understood that out there, unless the others helped you. There are people who say: "I don't hold with people coming together. I go out and communicate with the All." We used to call them in Britain "blue-domers," because they always said, "I go out under the blue dome of light, and I don't like coming together with other human

beings that haven't such an immense vision as I have." And of couse it isn't true. It is a silly remark of the self-made man. No one ever begot himself. It isn't possible for us to be here unless endless care had been directed upon us. It is quite true, we have been damaged, but we have been much more given to than we have been damaged. And when we can get that into any one of our minds, we are almost cured.

There was that infinitely eloquent man who had stood for defying authority, who had stood up for the poor, but couldn't transcend certain terrible limitations—Chrysostom, a man who has only come down because of the immense compliment that was paid to his supreme gift as an orator—Chrysostom the golden-mouthed, the man who whipped the conscience of a wicked queen until she killed him. He defied the bureaucracy—infinitely more suspicious and cruel than any democracy that has been ever known in the modern world—of the narrowing and frightened Byzantine empire. He nevertheless couldn't control the vitriolic gift of his immense power in denouncing the very Church from which his own had been derived, the great Hebrew Communion. But when it came finally to die; when by God's mercy utter defeat had come upon him; when he is dragged through the streets and then out toward the highlands by the police of the day until he drops by the roadside; and when they are quite certain that he will never come back they leave him to die out in the thirst and the sun; when his disciples came round their beloved master to see what word of counsel and courage he would give—he was past any longer his eloquence and his denunciations. All he could be heard repeating over and over again was, Praise, praise for it all. Thanks, thanks for everything.

That is the supreme act—as simple and as bold as

that, but setting the keystone on a life which otherwise had been incomplete. And we are all attempting that. In the light of that moment, he saw the distracted and miserable empire attempting to vent itself. He understood the struggles of this incomplete Christian Church with its wish to exclude people. He understood his own vanity and pride in the supreme and rocketing gift which he had had. He understood that his very defiance of authority had in its pride quenched that of the people who crushed him. At that moment he was through. Everything was communicating, everything was interpreting.

Bernard Shaw once said in my presence: "*Tout comprendre est tout pardonner.* (To understand everything is to excuse it.) That," he said, "is rank sentimentalism." It may be if it simply means: Now don't think of it any more. Tear up everything. Let's go back! Let's be jolly and have another beer! It doesn't mean that. I think it is a truer thing if we said, To understand everything is to interpret everything in one's own terms. To say not merely, "In those circumstances I would have done the same," but to say, "In those circumstances that thing was done. It remains as a question mark, and we ourselves will accept it and understand it."

We shall—as I have often quoted Lord Morley, talking of those old revolutionaries who finally murdered so many people in the name of humanity—we shall not merely denounce you; we shall explain you. Yes, but that is too superior. We shall not merely interpret you. We shall understand it, but understand it without any surrender of our own vision. Think what a conflict of opposites that means! Think what a gigantic tension! This is true; this is my vision, and yet your vision isn't quite the same, and yet—the chance of the noblest hypothesis of the greatest possible

act of faith is precisely that. Your vision is true for you, and my vision is true for me. And none of these visions by themselves is enough; and all of them only have in them—thank God!—the promise of further questions. We shall go on; we shall pass this thing on. This is the apostolic succession of the unclosed questions. An open-ended universe is said to be the universe in which we live, which leads to an open-ended life process, which leads to the open-ended consciousness—always opening out, always refusing to close. No question is closed.

THE first tremendous discipline we have to undertake is: I will never say, "I can't understand a person acting like that. Such hideous inconsistency! I found it nothing but the most calculating hypocrisy!" Remember: hypocrisy means the power of having two judgments; and whether those two judgments are the judgments of treachery and retreat and deceit, or whether those judgments are the fact of realizing the agony that there is an esoteric doctrine and there is an exoteric doctrine. It requires two to tell the truth—one to speak it, and the other to hear it. Every time a person speaks he is doing one thing, he is hopelessly committing himself to necessary misunderstanding.

And people say, "Surely silence is better." It isn't possible. Long ago, the same witty man—Lord Morley—said: Mr. Carlyle, the great philosopher of silence, has left us those twenty-eight stout volumes in which at the end of his life he had succeeded in compressing his philosophy of silence! Poor old Carlyle couldn't do otherwise! And he had preserved, unknowingly, silence. He had raised a bewildering set of questions. All of his answers were absolutely worthless. But he brought out, years before we thought he was a

danger, the challenge of the other side. He thought of himself as a conservative. He wasn't. He was a revolutionary in terms of totalitarianism. He was thinking continually of power per se. He was imploring people with all that strange Scotch-Anglo-German rhetoric to pay attention to that other type that has vision. And you should have vision, he said. He did not see the solution. He could only leave us with the questions. And the questions are these: How many queries can we endure? How often can I answer: "This is the truth for me now. It may not be the truth for tomorrow, but I do not therefore say that everything is incoherent"? This very question inevitably leads to an answer.

We are back again at this tremendous conception of the "hope deferred." Every question provokes an answer; every answer provokes a question. The thing can never stop until we are beyond the conflict of the opposites. That is the principle which undoubtedly has been revealed to us today. It is, I think, the most necessary provisional hypothesis we should deal with, that wherever you find the challenge, there you will find the possibility of the answer, and the answer is safe insofar as you definitely accept it as being the challenge to a fresh question. There is never going to be any settling down. No science is going to be complete; no vision, even of the highest mystic, is ever going to be final; no music will ever lead to the piece in which at last the journey of man toward satisfying harmony and understanding and rhythm is achieved. No painting is more than a hint, a little design put down to remind you: This man saw from this point. Now go on from this.

Sometimes, as far as we can make out, as in Athens, as in fourteenth-century Germany, it is possible that it is the field that is fraught with expectation and makes it possible for the great master—whether he is a sculptor, or a painter,

whether he is a poet or musician—to do what he has done. Intuitively he understood the agony of his time, and he presented therefore, for the time being, the great symbol in which that conflict was, by being stated, put in a position in which it would lead to certain responses, certain feelings. History is not untrue; history does not repeat itself. It is a gigantic process in which creation goes on, and it is the agony of realizing that this must be treasured in the past. It exists there as a Parthenon exists. It exists as a Bach fugue exists, and those can be dated and put down. But it also exists in the vision which it gives you and in the moment in which you appreciate it here and now, for the spirit which reacted to those manifestations at that time is still working.

I know that all of us must at certain moments suffer from discouragement. We say, "The more I seem to explain this thing, the more people misunderstand. Isn't it right to be silent?" There is undoubtedly a right to be silent. But that silence can sometimes actually be preserved as long as silence, that speech-silence, leads to the challenge of the question. If it is possible to listen and say, "There was a little hint of sincerity in that, and that I can use. There were certain elements which we should call insincere. Even those will awake and await our further examination"—it is so interesting to see, even in such a modern matter as metallurgy, that those things which again and again were thrown out as alloys, as unnecessary objects, those have come to be of the greatest possible value.

A grotesque example was given on human, petty greed. When English sovereigns, pounds, gold coins came to the shores of the Rio Plat, the ingenious and poverty-stricken Paraguayans found a process of picking out the contents of the actual gold coin and filling it up with a vulgar common

metal that was of no use there and which, because it came from the Plat River was called platinum. Many of the clever merchants, when they received the pounds, broke it open, and seeing it had the worthless stuff, threw it into the water. A gentleman, who is very interested in metallurgy, told me there is an active trade among the gamins of the city to dive down into the mud and seek for those coins that have been thrown away.

It is only an illustration that if we are ourselves sufficiently sincere, we shall find something—a value and a challenge—even in the most pathetic defensiveness which we call the insincerity of the person who is making a case. They could not make a case unless they had a feeling that somehow they could communicate, that there could be a communion. And the fact that they may have overstated it and may have been childish was fear again. If we had had no fear, we should therefore not have been deceived. It is this reaction of the sensitive soul; it is the fact that here is something—as the French say, *manqué*, spoiled, afraid—that we can take it, we can transform it.

Don't let us therefore be afraid that what we say may be misunderstood. God is being continually misunderstood, why should not man? We are continually of course saying things wrongly. But in any way we say may be this challenge. No statement can be made of any sort without producing some result upon another. For God has compelled us to be the universal communion. And we can do nothing in this universe without affecting others. What we may hope for is that our humility makes us realize that.

COMMUNION goes on continually. He is always giving Himself to His universe, but because He wishes us to become givers and creators like Himself, He is always giving us

questions. He is always rousing us. And it is when we are puzzled and distressed, it is then we may stretch out our hand to Him and say, "This is your question. This is your challenge to me. You are treating me as somebody who is growing up. You are treating me as somebody who, one day, You will want to be united with You."

That does not mean returning to safety. That does not mean authority. That does not mean that we are going to be able to get all the answers. It means that we shall go on to a process which we cannot conceive; that we are going out to an adventure which we cannot underrate. We all know that in the depths of our hearts. Charity is the carrying wave of understanding. We all long to have it. When it is present in us we know it is there. That is the profound communication. That is the communion of all saints and all souls. And in that spirit we shall be together until in that tremendous moment, as Plotinus says, we shall see the One in the many; we shall see the vision in the communication; we shall continually radiate, unrestrained and unbaffled, each to each. And, as he says, "The glory will be endless, for we shall know even as we are known."

"RESIST NOT EVIL"

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

YE HAVE *heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

This truth—that we should love our enemies and not resist evil—is the highest truth, taught by every religion. Buddha expressed the same ideal in the Majjhima Nikaya:

> If a villainous bandit were to carve you limb from limb with a two-handled saw, even then the man that should give way to anger would not be obeying my teaching. Even then, be it your task to preserve your hearts unmoved, never to allow an ill word to pass your lips, but always to abide in compassion and good will, with no hate in your hearts, enfolding in radiant thoughts of love the bandit [who tortures you], and proceeding thence to enfold the whole world in your radiant thoughts of love in which there is no hatred or trace of harm.

With most people, the ideal of non-violence is a very unpopular truth, and one which they find nearly impossible to understand and to practice. It is significant that Jesus, after teaching this truth about non-resistance, goes on to say: "Be ye therefore perfect . . ." In other words, the practice of this truth in our own lives would give us perfection. Indeed, only he who is perfect, who has realized his oneness with God and actually sees the divine Reality in all beings, can turn the other cheek and live in universal love. Where is evil then? Who is an enemy then? For a man who has reached such perfection, the virtue of non-resistance is a spontaneous outpouring of his experience of God.

In *Les Miserables*, Victor Hugo tells how Jean Valjean, the escaped convict, stole six silver plates from the Bishop, Monseigneur Bienvenue. When he was caught by the police, and confronted with the theft, the Bishop not only forgave Valjean, but said: "I am glad to see you. You forgot to take these silver candlesticks along with the silver plates I gave you!" And he handed him the candlesticks. This is pure fiction. Yet such incidents have happened in actual life.

Pavhari Baba, an Indian saint who lived in the last century, one day surprised a thief in the act of stealing from

his ashrama. The thief became frightened and ran away, leaving the goods he had stolen in a bundle behind him. The holy man took up the bundle, ran after the thief, laid the bundle at the feet of the thief, and with folded hands asked him to accept the goods, since nothing belonged to himself.

Once upon a time, my master, Swami Brahmananda, was practicing austere spiritual disciplines in Brindaban. While he was sitting alone, in meditation, a stranger laid a warm, new blanket beside him. A few minutes later, another stranger came by and took the blanket away. Swami Brahmananda never moved. He smiled to himself, watching the divine play.

But how are we to practice this virtue of non-resistance before the attainment of such a lofty state? By trying to increase our love for God. Through such love, non-violence and other virtues will manifest naturally in our lives. Forcible or artificial practice of these virtues would lead us nowhere. It is all a question of spiritual evolution.

Dr. Paul Elmer More says in his article "The Religious Ground of Humanitarianism" from the *Shelburne Essays*: "The doctrines of Christ, if accepted by the world in their integrity—the virtues, that is, of humility, non-resistance and poverty—would . . . simply make an end of the whole social fabric . . .; and there is every reason to believe that he [Christ] looked to see only a few chosen souls follow in his footsteps." Of course it is quite true that if everyone lived up to the highest religious ideals at the same time, there would be no human society as we know it. Yet all of us some day, in some life, will have to unfold our latent divinity and reach perfection. If we fail to do so in this life, we will be born again and again until we realize our union with God. There is little likelihood that all people will

reach this divine union at the same time, because only a few souls long to achieve this goal at any one period. Therefore we find a great variety in character, in spiritual growth, and in standards of conduct among mankind. This fact has frequently been inadequately recognized in the social philosophy of the West, which states that "all men are created equal." According to the concepts of democracy, equal opportunities are thought to bring equal results. But has this theory any basis in the facts of life? Variety and unity in variety make up the uniform law of creation. The facts of birth and death, and of life itself, contradict the theory of equality and sameness. Of course there must be equal justice for all—equal opportunities for everyone as far as the various fields of life are concerned. But we must take into consideration that individuals are born with different temperaments and tendencies, and so cannot grow and succeed in the same way and to the same extent, however equal might be the opportunities afforded them.

Indian philosophy has recognized this unity in variety for many centuries. It states that one God dwells in the hearts of all beings. But God is not manifest equally in all, and all beings are not equally living in God. There is no denying the fact that human society is a graded organization.

Swami Vivekananda remarked upon this fact:

> Two ways are left open to us—the way of the ignorant, who think that there is only one way to truth and that all the rest are wrong—and the way of the wise, who admit that, according to our mental constitution or the different planes of existences in which we are, duty and morality may vary. The important thing is to know that there are gradations of duty and morality, that the duty of one state of life, in one set of circumstances, will not and cannot be that of another.

Vedanta considers non-violence the highest virtue, as do all major religions. This ideal must never be compromised or lowered. But Vedanta philosophy takes into consideration that all people under all circumstances cannot live up to this ideal. For some individuals it is necessary to learn to "resist evil" in order that they may grow into a state in which they may successfully practice the ideal of non-resistance. Take a man who does not resist because he is weak or lazy, and will not because he cannot. Is his non-resistance a virtue? Or take another who knows that he can strike an irresistible blow if he likes, and yet does not strike, but blesses his enemies. The one who from weakness does not resist, commits a sin, the other would commit a sin by offering resistance. That is to say, we must gather the power to resist; having gained it, we must renounce it. Then only will this power of non-violence be a virtue. But if we are weak and lazy, unable to resist, and yet deceive ourselves into the belief that we are actuated by the highest motives, we do not merit praise.

Once a young disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was crossing the Ganges in a ferry boat from Calcutta on his way to visit his master. The other passengers in the boat were speaking against Sri Ramakrishna, saying that he was crazy, and a fake who misled young men. At first, when the disciple heard this, he argued with them mildly, explaining: "If you knew him, you would not talk about him like that. He is a very holy man. Besides, he is my master, so I must ask you not to speak ill of him in my presence." But this mildness only encouraged the critics to further attack. They began to say the most sarcastic and unpleasant things they could think of. Then the young disciple got very angry. He jumped to his feet, and began to rock the boat, exclaiming: "If you don't stop, I'll upset this boat and drown you all!" The

passengers were scared. They saw that the disciple was an athletic young man, well able to do what he threatened. Not another word was said against Sri Ramakrishna during the rest of the trip. Later, when the disciple told his master about this incident, Sri Ramakrishna was displeased with him. "Why should you care," he asked, "whether people praise me or blame me?" And he taught him never to offer violence under any circumstances. However, on a different occasion, another of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples was traveling by boat, and once again the passengers were talking against Sri Ramakrishna. The disciple begged them to stop, but they would not listen. So he kept quiet. Later, when he reported this to his master, Sri Ramakrishna reproved him severely: "What!" he exclaimed. "You call yourself my disciple, and you let people slander me in your presence? Didn't you have the courage and the strength to force them to stop?"

Here we find Sri Ramakrishna giving what appears to be altogether contradictory advice. His reason for doing so was, of course, that he was dealing with two very different individuals. He wished to correct the over-aggressiveness of the one who was ready to be taught non-violence, and the timidity of the other by teaching him first to "resist evil."

In connection with the concept of gradation of duty, the widespread misunderstanding of why Sri Krishna in the Gita urges Arjuna to fight may be cleared up. We should remember that the Sermon on the Mount was given by Christ to his dedicated monastic disciples in ideal surroundings of solitude and peace. The teachings of the Gita, on the other hand, were transmitted by Sri Krishna on a battlefield to a householder-disciple, a warrior by profession. The act of war has evolved from Arjuna's character, from his previous actions. He has not yet reached the spiritual en-

lightenment which would permit him to renounce action. To fight is Arjuna's duty, dictated by his temperament. Sri Krishna points out to his disciple: "Your own nature will drive you to the act." The teacher realizes that what Arjuna considers his revulsion from the act of killing does not stem from spiritual realization but from cowardice. Not by shirking his duty, but by performing it and practicing devotion and self-surrender to God, Arjuna can transcend the law of cause and effect and realize the highest spiritual truth.

Of course, from the standpoint of the Absolute, there is no duty, no action, no physical universe of name and form. Brahman alone exists. Brahman, the all-pervading Spirit, is described in the Gita as deathless, birthless, and unchangeable, untouched by action. Sri Krishna tells us:

> You dream that you are the doer,
> You dream that action is done,
> You dream that action bears fruit.
> It is your ignorance,
> It is the world's delusion
> That gives you these dreams.

But before we are united with Brahman in our consciousness and have actually realized the Absolute, we must employ a relative set of values. We cannot jump out of our skin. That is why Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna, and every spiritual aspirant, the way upward from inertia to illumination through the sphere of action. We cannot miss out any of the steps if we are to have true spiritual growth.

Philosophically speaking, every action is really performed by Brahman's power, which manifests in what in Hindu cosmology is called the three gunas: sattwa, rajas, and tamas. Body, mind—in fact, the whole physical and psychic universe—are made up of these gunas, which may be trans-

lated as energies or qualities, although there is no single English word that can define their whole nature and function. But we are all familiar with their expressions. Sattwa manifests as beauty, balance, purity, and peace. Rajas means activity, creation, restlessness, and passion. Where tamas predominates there is solidity, resistance, and inertia. In the mind of man, the gunas are present in a relationship of extreme instability; this is why we pass through many moods during the course of a single day. Although all three gunas work in every man, one or another of these energies generally predominates over the other two. And a man belongs to one of four groups or classes, depending on which one of these three forces is predominant in him.

According to the Gita, there is the Brahmin, endowed by nature with sattwa—serenity of mind, self-control, forbearance, and wisdom. Second is the Kshatriya. Heroism, fortitude, activity, leadership—the qualities of rajas—are natural to him. Then comes the Vaisya. Also rajasic by nature, his interest is in money and power, in the tasks of providing, in trade and agriculture. Fourth are the Sudras. Servers by nature, they do not have much ambition or initiative. They may be considered the most tamasic of the four groups.

Here we find the origin of the caste system, which later degenerated into a hereditary social structure. All four classes are necessary in society. As far as spiritual life is concerned, there is no question of a "higher" or "lower" category. Sri Krishna explains very explicitly that everyone can transcend the gunas and realize God, no matter which caste he belongs to: "All mankind is born for perfection and each shall attain it, will he but follow his nature's duty." To assume the duties of another would bring a man into great spiritual danger. He should fulfill his duties according

to the law of his own being, in the spirit of worship. By offering all his actions to God, he ultimately will attain purity of heart and selflessness, and become fit for the vision of God.

Man's duties and practice of virtues differ according to his particular stage of life, depending on whether he is a householder or a monk. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell a parable illustrating this point.

Once upon a time, there was a holy man who came to a village. The villagers warned him that he must not go along a certain path because a venomous snake always lay there, which had killed many people. "It won't hurt me," said the holy man, and continued on his way. Sure enough, the snake approached, reared its head, hissing and ready to strike, but when it saw the holy man it prostrated humbly at his feet. The sage taught it to give up the idea of biting and killing. The snake, having received initiation into spiritual life with a sacred name of God, went off to its hole to pray and meditate according to instructions. The holy man proceeded on his way. Soon the boys of the village discovered the change in the character of the snake. Knowing that it was now harmless, they would attack it with sticks and stones whenever it came out of its hole, but the snake would never strike back. After a while, the snake became so weak from its injuries that it could scarcely crawl. Only rarely, at night, it would come out of its hole in search of food. When next the holy man came to that village, he was told that the snake was dead. "That's impossible," said the sage. "It cannot die until it has attained the supreme realization of God." He went to the snake's hole and called it. Hearing its teacher's voice, the snake came squirming out, crippled from the blows it had received and terribly thin because it was not getting enough to eat. The holy man questioned it about the

reason for its condition. "Revered sir," the snake replied, "you asked me not to harm any creature. I have been living on leaves and fruit. Perhaps that is why I'm so thin." The snake had developed the virtue of forgiveness and had forgotten that the children had almost killed it. The sage said: "There must be a reason other than want of food that is responsible for your condition. Try to remember." Then the snake recalled: "Oh yes, some village boys beat me, but I wouldn't bite them. I just lay silently and suffered their torments." The snake expected to be praised for not resisting evil. To its great surprise, however, the holy man got quite cross: "You fool!" he cried. "I told you not to bite. Did I tell you not to hiss?"

Sri Ramakrishna's meaning in this parable is that householders, who have duties toward their families and live within the framework of society, may have to hiss now and then to protect themselves from the hostile actions of others. The goody-goody man, who lets himself be cheated and tricked, is not being saintly. If such a man arouses the aggressive instinct of another, he shares the guilt in that aggression. The same is true of social groups. It would be sheer folly to abolish police forces in a world which is not ready to live up to the highest ideal of non-resistance. Of course, householders are always bound to love their neighbor and their enemy equally, and to abstain from violence. Although they may hiss, they must never inject their venom into others.

The monk must practice non-violence in its absolute form. When his heart becomes purified and his love of God intense, he will reach a state where non-violence in thought, word, and deed becomes natural to him. In the Gita such a man is described as having the same attitude "toward friend and foe. He is indifferent to honor and insult, heat and

cold, pleasure and pain. He is free from attachment. He values praise and blame equally. He can control his speech. He is content with whatever he gets. His home is everywhere and nowhere. His mind is fixed upon God, and his heart is full of devotion." He sees the supreme Reality in everyone, in the sinner as well as in the saint. He alone really can do what Christ asks him to do—to love his enemies, bless those that curse him, do good to those that hate him, and pray for those who despitefully use and persecute him. He has reached perfection.

TEACHINGS OF THE DISCIPLES

COMPILED BY
SABINA THORNE

RITUALISTIC WORSHIP

563. To see God everywhere is the highest worship; meditation is the next best; prayer and repetition of the divine names are lower than that, and external worship is the lowest. Ordinary people perform worship either to escape from the displeasure of God or in expectation of fulfilling some desires. All these are low motives. Real worship is not done till devotion overflows the heart and tears roll down from the eyes for a glimpse of God. A true devotee takes God's name with every breath, is filled with sincere devotion and offers flowers, leaves, and water to God without any selfish motive, saying, "O Mother Divine, worship and prayer are nothing but opportune moments to call on you."

Swami Ramakrishnananda

564. You should worship both outside and inside yourself, as He is everywhere. He is as much in the image as inside yourself. So worship Him everywhere, always regarding yourself as a servant or a son of Him, and thus distinct from Him. Unification comes only in nirvikalpa samadhi, where there is no worship.

Swami Ramakrishnananda

565. The more we advance in spirituality and the nearer we approach God, the closer becomes our relation to him.

The worship of God is impossible without having some [particular] kind of relation between the worshiper and the object of worship.

Swami Abhedananda

566. Just as one is now rooted in the idea that one is so-and-so, similarly when one becomes firmly established in the consciousness that one is the Atman, then only will there be the advaita consciousness. It is to attain to this advaita consciousness that one has to go through dualistic spiritual practice; for we are fixed in dualistic consciousness. We have to purify it gradually by establishing an intimate relationship with God. Now we are related with the world; this has to be given up and a relationship established with God. If this relationship with God is established in all its fullness, then duality will vanish by itself and there will be left only God. This little "I" will vanish. This is how the advaita goal is attained through *upasana* [worship], through dualism.

Swami Turiyananda

PRANAYAMA

567. Q.: Maharaj, do we have to practice pranayama [breathing exercises]?

A.: We seldom advise anyone to practice pranayama.

Swami Shivananda

568. Q.: Is the practice of pranayama and asana [yogic postures] beneficial?

A.: The practice of them brings one occult powers and occult powers lead one astray.

Holy Mother

569. The mind is by nature restless. Therefore at the outset, to make the mind steady, one may practice meditation by regulating the breathing a little. That helps to steady the mind. But one must not overdo it. That heats the brain. You may talk of the vision of God or of meditation, but remember, [the] mind is everything. One gets everything when the mind becomes steady.

Holy Mother

570. The real aim of pranayama is to control the mind. To keep a close watch at all times on the vagaries of the uncontrolled mind is the best way of training it to rise from the lower plane to a higher plane. In order to practice pranayama properly, a qualified guru is necessary, regulation of food is imperative, and the mind will have to be kept pure. . . . It has to be done with great care. Or else, it may do harm instead of good—it may cause mental derangement even. . . . I think that the purpose [of pranayama] can be achieved by mental control [meditation]. The mind will become completely calm and remain elevated in a higher plane. And then, this [meditation] is a safe method—slow but sure.

Swami Vijnanananda

571. Q.: We have been practicing breathing exercises. Should we continue these practices?

A.: No! Breathing exercises in themselves can be extremely dangerous. It is sufficient if you will repeat the name of the Lord. Through the practice of japam and meditation you will reach the stage of kumbhaka [suspension of breath, essential to a concentrated mind] without risking the dangers which may easily come from the practice of breathing exercises. Practice japam, and your breathing will become finer

and finer, and you will gain control of the vital energy in a natural way.

Swami Brahmananda

572. When the heart is filled with intense longing for God, respiration almost stops. In that state, repetition of holy names, meditation, singing of devotional songs, reading of scriptures . . . are done with great concentration, love, and devotion, and that condition of respiration is called pranayama. The mechanical restraint of breath or slow breathing, without any love, longing, or reverence for God is of no use for the attainment of knowledge or devotion.

Swami Shivananda

573. . . . pranayama comes of itself to those who repeat the Lord's holy name and think and meditate on him with devout and intense longing. In the spiritual life the result of this is immeasurable. In practical life also there is a growth of mental powers, purity of character, peace of mind, charity, resolute will, and so forth.

Swami Shivananda

574. The supreme duty of man is to remember Him always, whether one is engaged in consciously repeating his name or not. Every breath of ours should be associated with Him in our mind. We should consider that we breathe in God to make the mind pure, and we breathe out God to make the outside pure.

Swami Vijnanananda

OCCULT POWERS

575. It is easy to acquire occult powers, but hard indeed to

attain purity of heart. To find purity of heart is to know the real truth of religion.

Swami Brahmananda

576. Psychic powers . . . are great powers in the eyes of the world . . . but the great spiritual teachers do not care for them. . . . They consider them as great obstacles in the path of spirituality; they do not deny their existence; they admit it but . . . they say that if you pay attention to these powers you will not rise on the higher plane of God-consciousness, you will remain confined within the psychic realm. . . . True seekers after spiritual perfection never crave them but shun them as obstacles and as a source of bondage and self-delusion.

Swami Abhedananda

577. Powers sometimes come of themselves to the spiritual aspirant, but the moment he cares for them he is gone—his further progress is stopped. These powers, again, do not last. Not to speak of using them for selfish purposes, even using them for other ends means losing them. A man set out from home in search of the gems of the sea. When he came to the seashore he found variously colored pebbles and shells scattered there and he set himself to fill his pockets with these—he forgot all about the gems in the sea.

Swami Turiyananda

578. When a man becomes pure and truly spiritual, temptations of a subtler kind such as some occult or miraculous power, or some sudden attainment of prosperity, try to allure him continually. . . Should these powers attract his attention, there is every chance of his being led astray from the ideal life.

Nag Mahasay

579. If you search for and find God, all the occult powers will be won unto you. And what is more astonishing than a dwarf's scaling the Himalayas is that once the beatific vision has been vouchsafed unto you, you will never be tempted to abuse your powers. Like those great men who, given the freedom of a city, never use it, so does one with the privileges of the house of immortality. The sons of immortality never stoop to magic or display of power.

Swami Turiyananda

PRAYER

580. If we cannot get on altogether without help, then why not ask the Lord himself. Why go to others?

Swami Ramakrishnananda

581. Whenever we pray to God in right earnest he is sure to come to us. The trouble is, we pray to so many others besides God. We pray to the doctor to give us health, to the shopkeeper to give us food or dress, and in among the rest we pray to God to give us spiritual light and knowledge. When we look to him alone and pray to him and to no one else, he never fails to answer our prayers, if we make them really intense.

Swami Ramakrishnananda

582. Pray to God with tears in your eyes whenever you want illumination or find yourself faced with any doubt or difficulty. The Lord will remove all your impurities, assuage your mental anguish, and give you enlightenment.

Holy Mother

583. Q.: Now, Mother, what is best for me [to pray for]?

A.: How little intelligence does a man possess! He may require one thing but he asks for another. He starts to mold an image of Shiva but he ends by making that of a monkey. It is best therefore to surrender all desires at the feet of God. He will do whatever is best for us. But one may pray for devotion and detachment. These cannot be classified as desires.

Holy Mother

584. Pray: "Do not give me such work to do as will make me forget Thee; and wherever Thou keepest me, may I ever remember Thee!"

But do not say to Him: "Give me this, don't give me that." It will be a selfish prayer. When you want to do one thing and do not want to do another, you allow your ego to come in. Some there are who are afraid of work and try to avoid it. That makes their bondage and selfishness lasting. Pray to Him for bhakti. But be ever ready to obey His commands.

Swami Turiyananda

585. If a man will be selfish and beg of the Lord, let him be thoroughly selfish and demand the biggest thing he can think of—God. Pray to God constantly in this way: "O Lord, grant that I may know my own nothingness and that thou art all in all. Help me to realize that I am a mere instrument in thy hand and that all is done by thee."

Swami Ramakrishnananda

586. When man's vanity is puffed up by name, fame, importance, and wealth, he has no hope to reach thee, O Lord. Thou comest to the poor, the lowly, to those who have noth-

ing in this world. Come to me, O Lord! All I have is thine; it was never mine. Thou art all my wealth.

Swami Ramakrishnananda

587. Pray constantly with a pure, sincere heart: "O Lord! I don't know what is good and what is bad for me. I am entirely dependent on you. Grant me everything I need for spiritual life. Take me along the path that will bring me the greatest good. Give me the faith and strength to remember you and meditate on you constantly."

Swami Brahmananda

588. . . . weep and pray to God thus, "O gracious one! I am weak and helpless. Forgive the sins which I have committed in this [life] or in previous lives, knowingly or unknowingly. Remit the results of my evil actions." If you can sincerely weep with a contrite heart, he will surely pardon your sins.

Swami Ramakrishnananda

589. When you feel depressed, you must drive away that feeling by saying, "I belong to the Lord, he is my very own. I am his child. He is holding me by the hand and will surely do what is good for me." When you are not able to fix your mind on God, pray earnestly to him, "O Lord, please make my mind steady since I am not able to do it myself. Helpless as I am, I seek refuge at your feet."

Swami Saradananda

590. We judge men by their actions, but God looks into their innermost minds. Be sure of this: God runs to him who prays with a sincere heart. Be pure in heart and always make your thoughts and lips one.

Swami Brahmananda

THE CONTRIBUTORS

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD in early 1958 was in India, collecting background material for a biography of Ramakrishna.

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Vedanta and the West

Vedanta teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life to unfold and manifest this divinity; and that truth is universal. Vedanta accepts all the religions of the world and reveres the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, because it recognizes the same divine inspiration in all.

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