

The Mystery of Life and How Theosophy Unveils It by Clara M. Codd

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CAN WE KNOW THE TRUTH?

THERE are certain questions which we are always asking ourselves. We want to know who we are, and why we are here, and if there is any goal to life, and if there is any design behind the wonderful universe. Religion, science and philosophy essay to answer these questions, and often the answers seem incomplete and unsatisfactory. Yet we intuitively feel that there is an answer, and that that answer must be completely in accord with the natural order of things. Are there deeper facts about life which, if we knew them, would make us understand life better, and if so, who knows them, and where are they?

THE MASTERS OF THE ART AND SCIENCE OF LIVING

There are vast and immutable laws governing the progress of life. This is its science. Most of us are merely children in the great school of life and are learning by experience something of these great laws. But there must be those who know them thoroughly, and therefore share their power. William James, the psychologist, once said that all great thinkers presuppose that there must be behind every different form of human knowledge a *Root Knowledge*. What would that Root Knowledge be? Surely the great Art and Science of life itself. Occultism, about which we hear so much in these days, has been defined by a great occultist as: "The Science of Life and the Art of Living".

Just as in the science of mathematics where there are the children learning that two and two make four and the great professors of the Science like Albert Einstein, for example, so in the great School of Life there are the scholars of varying degrees of growth and attainment, and also the great Professors of that Science of all sciences and that beautiful Art of all arts. For untold ages in the history of this planet great masterminds, sages and adepts have garnered this deeper knowledge, and have handed it on from one generation to another; and now, in these modern days, they have lifted a tiny corner of the veil which screens this tremendous knowledge, and given us, through their pupils, an outline of the universal principles which governs all life. What these are, and how they illuminate life for us, we will now try to describe.

THE FIRST GREAT PRINCIPLE: THE UNITY AND DIVINITY OF LIFE

A great thinker once said that the Rules of the Universe were so few, continually repeated on a larger or smaller scale, that seeing one in operation one could infer the same on another scale. And H.G.Wells wrote that the fundamentals of every religion are the same, and so few, that one could "write them on a postcard". We could write them thus in three sayings of Jesus. And the first would be when He said: "One is your Father". For then He proclaimed what every great Teacher has said, that the Human Race is Divine in origin, and somewhere shares in the Universal Life which we call God. Yes, every "son of man", however abandoned and degraded, is always and for all time also the "son of the Most High". and nothing can take that birthright away from him

How is he a son of the Most High? For outwardly with many of us there seems to be no sign of such a heritage. Here we have to try to understand ourselves better. We only see this outer physical body, and we know that there are subjective processes always going on called feeling and thought. Where do we think and feel, and through what medium do they move, since with the death of the body they seem to disappear, yet we intuitively feel that they have not ceased to express the man somewhere?

BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

Man, is a threefold being expressing himself in three different spheres of matter simultaneously. The Bible speaks of our having a body, soul and spirit. Some people confuse the last two terms, but in the original Greek they are quite different words. The word "body" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "bodig", meaning the dwelling-place. We get the word "abode" from it. "Here have we no continuing city", for this "coat of skin", this working-clothes of the body is changing all the time, and we shall one day leave it on one side. As long as we have it we are by it put in touch, through its five senses, with the surrounding world as we know it now with all its myriad experience and events. But the great powers of thought and feeling which make us truly men are not originated in the brain. The brain and nerves are like the keys of a piano to the musician. He plays on them, and if they are in good condition they serve him well. When the player has gone, the piano can sound no more.

THE THOUGHT WORLD OF THE SOUL

Where is he then? He is now working through a subtler medium, and in a more subtle world. This world and instrument of expression is not a long way away. It is quite near, it is all round us. Have you ever imagined what your soul looks like? It is not attached to you somewhere. The word "soul" is the translation of the Greek word "Psyche" from which we get the words psychic and psychology. Psychical research tells us that our souls have a material basis, but the matter of which they are composed is not physical matter. Interpenetrating the atoms and molecules of this world is a finer, more quickly vibrating order of matter. We will call it psychic, and it pervades the whole of the physical universe like water pervades a sponge in a bath. Our soul-selves, being composed of this psychic matter, interpenetrate and surround this denser physical body, withdrawing from it at death, and then taking the consciousness with it.

In the psychic body every thought and every feeling are radiant, vibratory powers, thrilling through our souls and affecting the surrounding atmosphere, finally creating all round us a psychic expression of our ideals and desires which tend to affect our consciousness, and also to affect other people and the world around us.

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

In the days we all know, more or less, that thought *is* a mighty power. The "wireless of thought" will soon be fully recognized and understood. In that world whatever we think of we are really in touch with at once. A "rapport" is set up between ourselves and the object of our thoughts. Thus, if it is a friend we think of, we are with him. Our loving thought has instantaneously reached him. This is also true when he has passed away from the body. He is never out of reach of our loving thoughts.

When thought reaches high in aspiration, it also touches the great ideal and brings back an immediate response. Whatever a man thinks of he is immediately in touch with, and whatever he truly loves he can never really lose.

THE SOUL BUILDS THE LIFE AFTER DEATH

This subtle surrounding world is full of radiant thought creations, largely made by the thoughts of myriads of men. There, after death, we live for long periods of time, assimilating the lessons of life, and enjoying a long rest from the battles of life. And the result of life there is that we come back again after a long time, not only refreshed and stronger, but grown in character and capacity from the assimilation of the experiences of the life we have just quitted. And there we meet again all those whom we have loved and known on earth.

THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF MAN

But what is the Spirit? That is the third, the immortal, factor in man That remains,whatever happens to the others It has a state of consciousness so deep and true that most men never realize they have it or that is even there But one day,as inner growth proceeds,they will gradually become aware of that diviner self. It can "register" no evil. It is always pure and shining. And yet it grows by the best and purest of our experiences here. It is forever part of the eternal Life of the universe, and so far from our present understanding and imagination that it can only be indicated by the language of poetry

Jesus told His hearers that they were "gods" and every one of them "children of the Most High". And St.Paul puts it very beautifully when he speaks of "the hidden man of the heart in That which is not corruptible". That is "the Christ in you, the hope of glory", which will one day save every man from ignorance and sin, for sin is only ignorance and blindness of soul.

THE SECOND GREAT PRINCIPLE: THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

The Second Great Principle is a necessary corollary to the First. If spiritually all men share the same universal life, come from the same Father, travel the same journey to the same ultimate Goal, then the Brotherhood of Man is one of the great facts of Nature. It rests on the hidden Divinity of Man. And there is no one outside that Brotherhood, however ignorant, evil or savage he may be. Here is a question which has puzzled many people. Why are some men born ignorant and savage, and other men wise and pure and true? We see people born idiots, cripples or criminals. And others born geniuses, saints and heroes. Why these differences if the great Life-Force is loving and just?

MANY LIVES ON EARTH OR ONE LIFE?

We shall never find the answer if we think that we only live here once in the long pilgrimage of the soul. Once, or many times, have we lived here. Which theory covers the facts of life best? A great part of the world has always believed that we come back to life here again. But here in the West, though things are now rapidly changing, we have been taught that we only have one life on earth, and that after it we shall go either to eternal bliss or eternal torture. How very illogical that idea is! We cannot have eternity at one end of the stick only. If we are now going to live for ever, we must have already lived for ever. It is clear that this body will not live for ever, and who would wish it to? Can we not picture getting by degrees a much better one, more sensitive, more resilient, more beautiful? As evolution proceeds, we shall come into increasingly better bodies, more fitted to express the unfolding powers of ourselves as souls. So on the whole, over vast periods of time, humanity will struggle up from the darkness of ignorance and pain into the sunshine of knowledge and joy.

One life does not explain how we start so unequally equipped. Why does one man have everything in his favour, and another so little that sometimes we say of that man: "Poor fellow, he never had a change from the very beginning". The truth is that in the great family of humanity, just as in the smaller units we all belong to, no one is of the same soul-age. Would it not be a very dull world if we were? Some have lived here many more times in the School of Life than others, and so they have more "in them", more insight, wisdom, self-control, capacity. The ignorant, stupid or evil man is a younger soul in the great human family. Life's experiences, often bitter and tragic, will teach him the great laws of life and develop his latent capacities.

LIFE EVOLVES IN CYCLES

This takes place by repeated lives on earth. Here again we can argue by analogy. We all believe in progress, and unthinkingly picture progress as advancing along a straight road. But there are no straight lines in the universe. Progress takes place in great cycles or waves. Take the little cycle of a day. It has its morning, midday and peaceful evening. Then, after a night's rest, life beings again from where we left it the evening before. The year follows a larger cycle, spring, summer, winter and then spring again. Must it not be equally true of the cycle of a man's life? Youth, maturity, old age, and then - after a long rest - youth again, picking up the threads of life just where we left them the life before.

So often when we get towards the end of life, we look back and wonder why we have not accomplish here more. Such ideals we had, and now where are they? Perhaps we are looking in the wrong direction. We did not come here to make a fortune, climb the social tree, or become famous. Such things are the "treasures of earth" which cannot endure. The "treasures in heaven" belong to the growing and developing soul, such as growth in character and capacity, wisdom and understanding, and by the forming with other soul of links which can never break. If at the end of life we can see some gain here, then indeed we have not lived in vain. What are life's experiences worth if not to teach us something, to develop latent power and wisdom? A great French philosopher once said: "If youth only *knew*: and if age only *could*!" From the standpoint of reality, when we come back to youth again we *shall* be able to put into practice what we have learned from life's experiences and efforts now.

THE EVOLUTION OF GENIUS

This is how genius and character are evolved. They are not the "gifts" of some arbitrary Deity. They represent the stage of our soul's growth, and the triumphs and defeats of other lives. We need not go out of life, very little cleverer or wiser than we came in. It all depends upon ourselves. We can make the most of our capacities and opportunities, or we can neglect them. Like the man in the Bible allegory who had only one little talent, we can bury our small opportunities or powers, and perhaps never notice them. Then we may be sure that larger ones will never come along. Just as a man studies and practices an art or a trade day after day, year after year, and the power or capacity grows steadily; so life after life men add to their power and one day are born as heroes, saints, or geniuses.

Perhaps you will say that the law of heredity explains all this. But it leaves as much unexplained as it explains. It does not tell why a genius does *not* hand on his supreme powers to his children, nor why a "black sheep" appears in the ranks of a reputable family, or a genius springs from the soil of limited and sordid surroundings. What we inherit from our fathers and mothers is simply the kind of body and nervous system which will more readily, or otherwise, express certain soul, or psychic characteristics. They give us a good or a bad piano to play on, but the ability to use it comes with ourselves. That is where we are our own ancestors.

THE "COMMANDMENTS OF GOD" THE LAWS OF NATURE

Now how do we come into a certain family ,into the ranks of a certain nation,with certain characteristics and abilities? Is it chance or is it law? If there is one thing that is certain,it is that this is a universe of law. Strictly speaking there is no such thing as chance. We may not be able to see what all those laws are or how they work,but we may be sure they are always there

Religious people speak of the "Commandments of God", and we have been taught that they were delivered to Moses on the top of a mountain But the real Commandments of God are the Laws of Nature. With a magnificent disregard of ourselves as personalities the Laws of Nature act according to their nature surely and inevitably. Of them we may say, in the poetic words of Scripture, that there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". They are "the same, yesterday,today and for ever". For God does not change His Mind, and as a great occultist once said: "The Laws of Nature are the imprint of the Divine Mind upon matter". Sir James Jeans tells us that science is now sure that there is a "Master-Mind" behind the universe, and that as far as they can see that Mastermind is a marvelous mathematician.

LAW IN THE INNER AS WELL AS THE OUTER WORLD

We are now fairly familiar with the idea of natural law in the physical world. The popularisation of science has made most of us "law-conscious". We no longer think that natural happenings are due to a personal Deity interfering or taking revenge. When I was a child we lived near a farm whose farmer was a man of very lurid language. One day when he got badly gored by a bull, I heard my nurse saying to our cook, "Just before the bull got him, he was swearing something dreadful. It's a judgment on him !"

It is only a little step towards realizing that law also reigns in the psychological and spiritual realms. If we put our hands on a hot iron it will burn us for it is its nature so to do. It is no good saying; "I did not know it was there, so it should not have burnt me." It is our business to know or find out. In the same way there are laws of feeling, desire and thought, which work unfailingly. It is our business to study them, and to obey them. For example, if we obey the physical laws of health we reap vitality and health; if we disobey them, disease and death. So, if we obey the laws of the spiritual and psychological worlds of our being, we shall reap happiness and power, but if we disobey them misery and limitations. God does not make us unhappy. We make ourselves so by our ignorance and selfishness. It is not surprising that so many of us are ignorant and selfish, for spiritually speaking, we are not yet very "grown up", and the reactions of Nature to our selfish deeds and motives which brings us pain and disappointment are slowly but surely teaching us wider, purer ways. Let us see how all this happens.

NATIONS ARE DIFFERENT "CLASSES" IN THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

As before stated, we are all standing at different levels of soul-growth. If this were universally understood we would have a very different outlook upon national and international problems. Within the ranks of a nation we would not expect of ignorant men or lower races the same self-control and understanding as we might well ask of a more educated populace. We would also realize that when we come back to life we cannot always come back into the ranks of the same nation. Nations have their life-periods and disappear just as individuals do. Once mighty civilizations in Egypt, Chaldea, Greece and Rome existed. They have gone, yet we are still here, who have lived through these civilizations and learned some of their lessons. How stupid then to be too extremely nationally-minded. Every nation has its place, its peculiar genius and culture, and to stamp it out or exploit it is to make the whole world poorer.

Whilst we are in the ranks of a certain nation we are tremendously influenced by its national outlook and culture. One side of us is being specially developed. How one-sided we would grow if other sides were not developed by taking incarnation in the ranks of another nation type.

Greater than any nation's particular interests are the supreme interests of humanity as a whole. And understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect and kindness could do more for this sad star than all the selfish lust for gain or lust for national dominations in the world. Most of us are incarnated into the ranks of many different nations, to "round out" our evolution. Some times a great patriot is born into the ranks of the same nation many times, because he has made such "karmic" links of love and service with that nation that they call him back.

HOW WE COME TO A CERTAIN FAMILY

When a child is born people talk of the "little stranger" who has arrived. But in truth it is never a little stranger. Love links from the past have been attracting that soul to incarnation with you. An old friend has come back to your care whilst his new body is weak and undeveloped. It is a trust for you, a beautiful thrust. You did not make him, he does not belong to you. He belongs to God and to himself.

Very occasionally the opposite magnetic pole to love, hate, forms a family relationship, but this is very rare. We are not always in the same relationship to each other, otherwise how would we grow in experience? The love of parents for their children, of friends or lovers, are all different ways of love. But have you not seen a great love between two people which partakes of something of all the ways of loving? The marriages "made in heaven" are often the meeting of those who have been happily married before. Sometimes we get married on a purely surface attraction and find ourselves married to a stranger. Then, I suppose, we must get to know the stranger.

There is one thing that is certain. Love rules the universe, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, and whatever a man really loves he can never lose. It will be with him in the world of after-death, and with him again in succeeding lives upon earth. Love has never known defeat!

HOW DESTINY IS SPUN UPON THE LOOM OF LIFE

But how did we come to life again with a certain character, certain capacities, certain surroundings with all its unexpected events? Does Law reign here, and can we find out how it works? Let us look at life as a whole, and realize that every individual part is closely connected with and affecting all others as well as being affected in its turn. "No man liveth or dieth to himself alone". The destiny of humanity at large is like a carpet being woven on a loom. Underneath one cannot see what pattern is coming out. But perhaps if we were in the position of the "gods" we would see from on high the pattern that was beginning to show. The picture is woven of threads, living threads which are the eternal souls of men. And because man is a threefold being, with the threefold activity of thought, feeling and action, each of which is correlated to a certain finer, interpenetrating plane of matter where it expresses itself in colour and form, if we could see it with finer eyes, he is all the time sending out energy on three planes of matter simultaneously.

Now, no energy can be expended without producing its appropriate result. We are really illimitable centres of energy or power, and whenever we think, feel or act, we send out these forces, and the universe answers according to its immutable laws. We never cease from sending these forces out, although we do not generally stop to observe that we are doing so, because we can not help thinking, feeling and acting at every moment of our lives. We realize to some extent that our actions bring results for we can often see that they do. But it does not occur to many people that it is equally true of those subjective energies called desire and thought. *They* are energies sent out into the universe, and sometime, somewhere, the universe will reply according to its laws.

So man's energies are like a thread of 3-ply wool. Three strands are inextricably mingled in his life, reacting upon each other, the strands of thought, desire and action, and all together they spin his future destiny, bringing him, his friends and relations, opportunities in life, character and ability. In order to see this more clearly, let us now unravel the three strands and look at them singly.

THE THREAD OF THOUGHT

We will begin with the deepest, the most fundamental of all, that of thought and thinking. The very word "man" in its Sanskrit derivation, means "the thinker". Man is compounded of thought. What he thinks and desires in his subconscious self, which is only a modern name for his "soul", makes him what he is at any one moment. This is the meaning of the Bible saying: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he". The Indian Scriptures put it rather differently: "What a man thinks upon in this life, that hereafter he becomes". Here lies the formative strength of all idealism. Many people consider ideals as imaginary and not real. But they *are* real. What one sees in one's "mind's eye" are thought-forms built by longings and aspirations in the plastic matter of the surrounding mental world, and play a very dynamic part in shaping ourselves and our future. Did any man ever really succeed in any undertaking, however small, if on setting out he pictured that he would never be able to do it? So ideals, aspirations, unselfish longings, show us with a kind of divine clairvoyance what we are meant some day to be in the future. Looking *down* the stream of time we see pictures called memories. But when we look *up* the stream we see, not what we were, but what we *shall* be, the image of man's yearning and God's intending, for every true ideal is germane to the dreamer. It expresses his fundamental nature, which is unique in each of us. Even a snowflake is not quite like any other snowflake; and no two souls are the same. Each has his peculiar past and his own unique future. Indeed there is a "word of God" which cannot be uttered until each of us in turn grows up into the Light. It can only be said through us.

THE WIRELESS OF THOUGHT

It is well to consider this fact of thought and its power, for we can remould our own lives, and help other people by it. Do we originate thought in the brain? Surely not. Otherwise thought would cease with the death of the body. No, thought begins first of all in the "psychic body" or soul, where it is a vivid, creative power. Every type of thought means a certain type of thought-wave generated there, and this in turn instantly sets up a synchronous vibration in the brain cells. Now what does this thinking do to us since it affects not only ourselves but others too?

WHAT OUR THINKING DOES TO OURSELVES

First ourselves. Every vibratory power is associated with some form of matter, physical or otherwise. Thought travels through mental matter. Who can tell where the influence of a thought ends? And we cannot keep it to ourselves. It is no use to say: "I shall not tell you what I am thinking of; my thoughts are all my own", for the unseen influence of them is radiating from each one of us all the time. Do we not *catch* moods from each other, and when many people are made to think along one line what is called mass psychology or suggestion is created. Think how a fervent orator sweeps us off our feet, or a lynching crowd does deeds they are ashamed of afterwards.

Now our mental selves get into habits as well as our physical ones. When a train of thought becomes habitual and fixed it constitutes a trait of character. Traits and tendencies firmly fixed make up a character, and that means a destiny. For character matters more in life than even environment or capabilities. Have you not seen a man of character overcome an unfortunate environment, and a man of great capacities make nothing of them for lack of character? But character is not an arbitrary gift of the Almighty. We evolved it in the same way as we evolved our abilities by action in the past. Character grows by brave and honest facing up to life. If we shirk the lessons of life, leave decisions and responsibilities to others, we must not be surprised if we do not evolve a "strong character". Sometimes a strong character is intolerant and cruel. Then life teaches such a soul mercy and compassion by the mysterious road of pain.

A soul is like a flower. It needs both the sunshine and the rain. The sunshine of human happiness makes it expand and put forth its powers; the rain of tears should purify, render unselfish, make it understanding and compassionate. What sort of a person would we be if we never suffered any sorrow or disappointment, but like a spoilt child had everything we fancied with no trouble? Life is engage in forging *men*, not children or automatons. Tennysons wrote some wonderful words.

"Life is not as idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning tears.
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And shattered with the shocks of doom,
To shape and use."

To shape and evolve the coming godlike being of peace, happiness and power. For the end of pain can only come about by the ending of ignorance, and selfishness which is the greatest ignorance of all.

RE-CREATING CHARACTER

Can we alter our characters? Surely if we go about it with imagination and determination. Remember that whatever you dwell on in thought that you are slowly becoming like. Hence dwell in thought sometimes on beautiful, true, heroic, noble ideas and deeds. If you care to, one day take stock of your character, and see where its chief deficiencies lie. Remember that everyone is imperfect, or they would not be still here in the School of Life. And then picture to yourself what the opposite of those deficiencies are, how you could learn to act them out in life, how somebody else always instinctively - in other lives it was *not instinctive*, but deliberate - acts them. When you can remember, and do not be surprised if it takes you quite a long time to remember, act accordingly. You will be surprised at the sense of power which will flood you. You will grow happy and full of youthful enthusiasm when you find out that you can really deal with yourself, and that you have other lives in front of you in which to grow into your ideal. And as you evolve your own standard or creed, much better than one accepted from outside, you will become an influence and a power amongst your fellowmen, and those who are not as strong as you are will find shelter with you and inspiration and strength.

WHAT OUR THINKING DOES TO OTHERS

Then we must remember that our thoughts also reach others. As we go round in life we carry with us our personal influence which is a synthesis of our normal thoughts and feelings. Perhaps that is our greatest gift to the world. Emerson once said: "What you *are* speaks so loudly to me that I cannot hear what you *say*."

But if we think specifically of some person, some place, or some ideal, we are at once in touch with them, wherever they may be. Prayer reaches the Heart of the Universe, loving thought surrounds a loved one, living or "dead". Of course, no one is ever dead; he has only changed his state, and our love and our thoughts reach him just the same. What a mighty power is in our hands if only we knew it and cultivated it. Old-fashioned people used to pray for their friends; we can think of them with love and wish them well with all our hearts. We can also wish humanity well, and be sure that the wish has not been formulated in vain.

If we think ill of people, that also is a thought-force which reaches them, but does not help. It only subconsciously accentuates the very failing we deplore. And when many people think all together, it is not difficult to imagine what kind of unseen suggestion is reaching the object of their remarks.

So the first strand of our nature, thought, weaves for us our present and future characters and capacities. Let us re-create ourselves, and not wait for the slow process of evolution to do it.

THE THREAD OF DESIRE

Now the second strand, the power of desire. That gives us our opportunities, and our friends and enemies. There is a saying in the Bible that the Lord will give to every man his heart's desire. That is absolutely true, if it is his whole heart's desire, and not only a part of it. For that is a demand gone out into the universe, bringing him its fulfillment, good or bad. Love and hate are also variants of desire, and both attract. Always we shall find again the things we love, and also the things we inordinately hate and fear. So we must learn to transmute enmity into trust and understanding and forgiveness.

Desire also brings opportunities. Never did such come unless it had been at one time desired and worked for, even if death called a man before his ideal was reached or the desire of his heart achieved. Then it will come early in another life, and others will call him blessed. As Browning wrote: "No work begun shall ever cease for death."

THE THREAD OF ACTION

It is easy to see how the third works, for we know that our actions are affecting the world and others all the time. They *must* affect them in one of two ways. Either they are helping the happiness and progress of all, or they are hindering them. If our words and our deeds have helped and cheered, some time, somewhere, help and encouragement will come back to us. If they have been unhelpful, selfish, cruel, they will return bringing frustration, tragedy and pain. They will come back to us through the medium of other people, who are thus unconscious agents of the Law which says that whatsoever a man sows that he shall also reap, and learn by the reaping. Some of these natural results come lives afterwards, when instead of being crushed by them a man is like gold tried in the furnace. Yet though they seem to limit us, the other side of them is opportunity and upliftment. Nature's "vengeance" is impersonal and medicinal. She destroys to heal.

Thus our environments are created and the chief outstanding events of our lives. What would we consider a "good" environment? Being born with a silver spoon in our mouths? Ah! no. There is often no one more out of touch with life and all its wonderful lessons than those born millionaires. Rather being born into a circle of good friends and loving relations. Once a Maharani came to the Buddha to ask him what she should do to ensure being born in her next life beautiful, wealthy, and with many friends. I can only remember the Lord's answer to the last question. He said: "Oh! Queen, if you would have many friends then you must learn in this life to give away with both hands." The ungenerous, calculating selfish spirit never knows real friends.

THE THIRD GREAT PRINCIPLE: THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS

This leads us to the third of the great Principles of Life. Just because we are so intimately bound up together, every thought, desire and action resounds through the united spirit of life called humanity, and produces its inevitable reaction. Hence this Law of Spiritual Dynamics has been formulated by all the great Teachers in the well-known Golden Rule. In the words of Jesus : "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them, for *this is the law.*" Just as the first great truth of the Spiritual Unity of all men is necessarily followed by the second truth of the Brotherhood of Man, so that too is followed inevitably by the third, that as that intimate bond leads us to affect each other all the time, the individual must learn to do no harm nor to grasp selfishly. That is the *Law of Brotherhood* and to break it is to bring about endless suffering and pain, whether an individual does it, or a group of individuals , or a nation.

That does not mean we must never "fight." To knock down a bully is sometimes the best way to teach him to consider the rights of others, especially those of the weaker.

So day follows day, and sometimes not for many days does a result make itself felt. And life follows life, and its leading events have their roots in a long past. There come times in history when nations are called to settle their accounts. The Bible says that righteousness exalteth a nation. This is true, for no nation can deal unjustly without laying up for itself a crop of future troubles. Neither can a class exploit another class without laying seeds of future revolutions.

HOW WE REMEMBER PAST LIVES

But, we may say, how does this profit us if we do not remember this past which is now influencing us? (Let it be remembered that the future is influencing us even more!) Sometimes people will say that they cannot believe that they have lived here before because they do not seem to have any personal memory of it. There *are* people who remember, either partially or completely, but most of us do not seem to. Sometimes in early childhood memories come through and are lost as the child grows up.

Now what do we mean by memory? To most people it means mind pictures of past events. But if that is all it really means we have already forgotten most of this life, even most of the present day. If we tried to remember every thought, word and deed of a day we should not succeed, yet psychology tells us that each tiny event has made its impress upon our subconscious, and a series of like impressions presently produces a tendency of power. A man who plays the piano well does not "remember" all the times he practiced, but his subconsciousness does and gives he memory back to him synthetically as a developed capacity or power.

Thus our capacities are memories, our likings and dislikings, so often seemingly capricious to our present mind, sometimes even phobias and certain periods of history, that seem to attract us greatly. Love at first sight, when it is genuine, means the meeting of old friends or lovers. Think of the story of David and Jonathan, the prince and the shepherd-boy. It is written that on meeting the "soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David," and that "he loved him as his own soul." Why should that have happened when he knew nothing about David? Here were clearly two old and dear friends meeting once more.

The detailed memory of past births *can* be recovered. It is a power of what is called "Yoga", which means that when a man has developed in himself the full consciousness of his more sublime self which has lived through all the lives, that self will give him back the memory of them all. Meanwhile it would not help us to carry a great number of memory pictures of the past with us, so Nature gives it to us in a synthetic form showing as our instinctive and subconscious reactions to life. This does not invalidate the fact that memories of our long past *do* sometimes come back. If we keep our ears open we may come across such people. Like the famous story of Kipling's of a banker's clerk who remembered having been a galley-slave in Rome

THE LIFE AFTER DEATH

Can the Ancient Wisdom called Theosophy tell us anything about death and the life that awaits us beyond? All religions talk about a heaven and a hell. Are there such places? Only Christianity talks about an *eternal* hell, because after the first centuries that great religion lost the truth of reincarnation, so they had to place unending results upon fleeting and finite causes. It can be safely stated that there is no place of torture in the universe, though there are unhappy psychological states which men have really created round themselves whilst they were alive.

The first thing to remember is that the world of after-death is not a long way away. It is all round us. It is composed of that fine and subtle "psychic" matter which permeates and surrounds this globe. Our soul or psychic body is also composed of it, and it, too, permeates and surrounds our physical counterparts. This can be "seen" by a certain order of psychic sight, and one day all men will possess it. Then they will *know* that there is no such thing as death in the universe; only a continual change of state. When a man dies he slips away from the denser physical body and begins an independent life in that subtler world. It will not be unfamiliar to him, for he already knows part of it when he left his body temporarily through the gateway of sleep. Shelly wrote: "How wonderful is sleep! Sleep and his brother death." They are the same Gateway. Why then fear a passage we have so often taken before, and which is so supremely natural? But whilst we are only asleep we are still connected with our sleeping body by what looks like a line of light, a magnetic link. At death this ceases. Perhaps this is the meaning of the familiar words of the Scripture: "Ere the silver cord be loosed."

HEAVEN AND HELL

Where are we then? It is difficult to describe, but we are living in a world where the mighty creative forces of thought and desire are objective in action. So every man builds for himself as he lives the world of his after-death experiences. Our selfish, evil, cruel deeds and thoughts shut us into self-made prisons from which we must work our own way out to brighter realms. But our highest aspirations, our purest and most unselfish deeds, our purest loves, and our appreciation of that which is beautiful and true, build for us a wonderfully lovely life of what to each one of us will be complete happiness and fulfillment for it will mean ideals come true.

These friends and loves will find each other again, idealists will see their ideals realized, devotees will be in the presence of their Lord, artists will know what Beauty truly means, and even the simplest man, if his thoughts were simple and true will have his time of happiness and upliftment, the rest-time of his spirit after the trials of earth. It is also a period of great assimilation. Before a man returns to earth, perhaps not for hundreds of years, he will have moved through a concatenation of events in that inner life which were the fruit of seeds sown during life, and by them life's lessons and experiences will have been woven into soul-power and knowledge.

Thus we grow, life after life, with soul-lives in between. The things which belong to us as souls for ever endure. Those which concern only this temporary body must pass away. This is the meaning of Jesus' words about laying up for ourselves "treasures in heaven". That which concerns the body alone such as eating and drinking, sex pleasure, climbing the social tree, amassing money, we must surrender at the gateway of death. But the things which belong to us as souls, such as all intellectual, spiritual and emotional interests, will not only persist, but gain all the time added development and power.

LOVED ONES PASSED ON

Do not think of those you love who have passed on into what the Celts called "the Land of the Ever-Young", as sad or unhappy, or even as missing you. They have ever your deepest soul with them, and may even for a time see you at night when you are free of your body. When your turn comes to pass on they will be the first to welcome you. They are not "dead". They are more "alive" now than when carrying a heavy physical body. They have now a form which knows no longer hunger and thirst, heat or cold, or illness, or fatigue, or old age. Would you wish them back to an aching, ill, tired body? We should try and realize the truth. No hell is there in the universe save the temporary one of a man's own making: and a heaven ultimately for all which is built by their own aspiration and desire.

THE FUTURE THAT AWAITS US

There will come a time when life, either on this side or the other, will hold no more to teach us. Then we shall be nearing the stature of a Perfect Man, an Adept of knowledge, power, compassion and love. Some are even now nearer than others, but sometimes, somewhere, all will reach it, for we all have come the germ of perfectibility in us. "Somewhere the weariest river winds safely to the sea". For man is a god in the making, and one day he will to the fulness and the stature of his diviner self.

Yes, that is true in spite of the death and horror of this present day. They are the birth-throes of a new and happier age for men. Through the agony of the present hour man is coming into a happier heritage, when instead of rivalry and tyranny and love of gain, the era of human cooperation and tolerance shall be born, and the end of poverty and war begin. For human life is always more than possessions, and human happiness than domination and pride.