

Transforming Light

The Living Heritage of World Religions



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AND
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HARPER & ROW, PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK, EVANSTON, AND LONDON

70.53614

*To those who believe there is a truth which will
set men free from prejudice, from the greed
that wrecks the social order, from degrading
poverty, from crime, from fear, from war,
To those in all lands who labor for a united world,
To those who pray, Thy kingdom come on earth,
To those who seek the light that does not fail,
the peace that passes understanding, the love
that heals, the secret of divine civilization,
the religion of the future,
This story of the rise and decline and ensuing resurrection
of Prophetic influence is dedicated.*

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First Edition

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 70-85065

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Unseen Being, is concentration upon the thought of God, his glorious attributes, his love, his guidance when the individual truly turns to him. The dedicated ones, the saints, in all religions, who desired the presence of God as earnestly as other men and women desire their worldly successes were rewarded beyond all their hopes. They testified that to them came a mind-transforming, will-renewing, heart-expanding experience: direct consciousness of God's divine and eternal life within them.

The Buddhists call this consciousness nirvana, or paradise. The Christians call it the birth from on high. To the Jews it is "the secret place of the Most High." To the Muslims it is awareness of the Living Light. Paul says that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to imagine the immortal wonders prepared for those who love God.

The Unity of Nations

MANY PERSONS REASON: I could believe in God if all the world was good. But when I see maimed children, broken lives, premature deaths, the insane, slums, pestilence, earthquakes, poverty, the madness of war, I lose faith in a well-wishing Creator.

Before man, was nature, with its mighty upheavals, its violent hurtling hurricanes, its crashing earthquakes, its floods. Of themselves these were not evil. They became an evil when they affected man. The savagery of wild animals, the way they kill and devour each other, is not for them unlawful, but according to their nature.

Right and wrong, good and evil appeared with man. The laws that govern the animals permit them to prey upon each other, to fight for what they want, and get it at any cost. In the human world this is evil, for man is more than an animal and must not be ruthlessly destroyed.

How does man know that the behavior of wild animals is evil in him? Because man can see that he causes suffering, a faculty the animal does not possess. A despot when entertaining a number of guests at dinner let loose in the room a boxful of scorpions, and commanded, on pain of death, that no one move. It was his pleasure to watch the agony of his guests when stung. The scorpions in themselves were not evil. The human being who released them was the degraded one. Napoleon Bonaparte was brilliantly endowed; his intellect, his indomitable will, his gift for planning great undertakings were remarkable. But he made his genius serve his insatiable thirst for power, his cruel desire to be master of the world.

Century after century people do the things that create misery,

that all but wreck humanity, and then say there is no God. Of a truth, God has no part in the tragedies human beings bring upon themselves and others through the misuse of their God-given freedom.

Men of ability use their talents to take from others the barest necessities, piling up for themselves more than they can ever use. Others, seeing what they think to be the prominent position of the rich, would like to be prominent also. When by the manipulation of labor, perhaps, or by political power they attain such a position they often become stealers of the common good themselves.

So arise the problems of poverty, unemployment, corruption and graft, strikes, and strife between capital and labor, lack of profits, lack of consumers, war.

Modern scientific and technical knowledge has built up a system of warfare terrible beyond the most murderous hopes of any conqueror of the past. By this means the barbarous policy of conquest is carried on: stealing territory and forcing the conquered people to submit to the distasteful government of the oppressor or be killed. A man or woman who deliberately kills another human being is sent by society to the electric chair. The ruler who destroys a million or more "foreigners" and annexes their country is called, by his nation, a valiant patriot. "Hands off" has been the cry of the conqueror since historic times began: leave me alone while I take from other nations their lands, their possessions and taxes.

Being today socially one humanity, we suffer vicariously for the lawlessness of others. Being one body, all the members are affected when any nation is out of order. Our present-day unity visits upon us the iniquity of any of us. Some groups cry for splendid isolation and a self-sufficient nation. The problem cannot be solved in this way, for the recent discoveries of science and technology and our unescapable economic and scientific interdependence have eliminated national self-sufficiency.

We are free to live by the laws of the animal world, or by those of the intellectual and spiritual world. We know by long experience that to live by our lower nature brings upon us ignorance, poverty, sorrow, frustration, war, crime. When the people who form the nations follow the laws of mutual consideration, and hold

in check those who do not value these laws, the whole world will move forward simultaneously. Suppose Canada and the United States had to fortify the three thousand miles of borderland between them. Suppose each of the states that make up the United States had to equip itself with armies and fleets of airplanes, with border forts and tariff barriers against the other states. Instead, these states are the United States. Their interstate differences are settled by their Supreme Court. A universal Congress legislates for the good of all. This is possible because all the states can trust each state to keep the faith.

A universal society of the nations with an International Court of Justice, universal limitation of armaments, lowering of tariff and trade barriers through reciprocal or general consent, just access for all to natural resources, raw materials, and world markets are essential to world peace. Certain national defenses are necessary for internal peace; collective security under international law is the only permanent safety. If a large majority of the nations formed into such a society they could control the unruly ones, open a new era of international cooperation, and keep universal peace.

The establishment of a beneficent world society can be brought about only through a fundamental change in international attitudes, acceptance of the essential unity of mankind, and a sincere agreement to settle international differences by arbitration under universal law. It is imperative that all the nations be willing that every nation is treated with the same justice each nation wants for itself; that each nation consents to subordinate its own interests for the good of all, and makes real economic and national sacrifices to maintain world peace.

A stable world society is possible only when the nations can trust each other. We can be sure of a nation's behavior when we know it is based upon belief in a universally righteous order of which all nations are a part, and to which they are under perpetual obligation to be trustworthy, when we know the nations are working under the direction of God's Prophet, who guarantees their good character. When a nation's belief in God and the moral law breaks down, with the result that the people discard religion as useless, they have no standard of values but their own desires.

If the world was secure in a universal peace, sums of money vast

beyond all dreams would be released for economic advancement, education, and the betterment of every nation. Social security is essential to stable civilization: international, national, economic, personal security. Security for libraries, schools, universities, for childhood, for middle life, old age, for investments and savings. Security for the employer and the employed. Ordered security. Through the centuries some kings have considered their subjects merely as objects for taxation. A society where a few own everything, and the poor have nothing but their poverty is in peril.

Every civilization that does not encourage individual enterprise, initiative, and freedom of thought declines. But social freedom must be controlled; for social security requires economic justice. The extravagant wages demanded by workmen in times of prosperity, the equally extravagant prices demanded of the consumer, the extortionate claims of landlords, the unrestricted freedom of the capitalist or the labor leader soon paralyze society. Justice is the strength of the international, the industrial, the social order. The most enlightened self-interest is justice, for only justice can see far enough to be truly enlightened. Only justice can decide how large a profit a man should collect, and the wage he should pay or receive.

All who live in free countries are part owners in the most important business of the world: government. The objectives of good government are protection and security for the governed. Governments have protected the well-to-do from thieves, landlords from tenants, creditors from debtors, the family from dissolution, the poor from destitution. Governments have made citizens secure against foreign invasion and civil sedition. Good governments have interfered in business with tariffs and taxes, with laws for the preservation of contracts, the collection of debts, the prohibition of usury, with laws forbidding the employment of women and children in factories at starvation wages and body- and soul-killing hours of work, with laws protecting the farmer, the inventor, the worker, the investor, the consumer.

Business for business' sake, even science for science's sake, will have to give way to science and business for the sake of all men. Charles Dickens presents an ideal from the heavenly world, in his *Christmas Carol*: "'Business!' cried the Ghost, wringing its hands

again. 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!' " The men of pre-eminent ability who have used their genius and vast fortunes in this way are a glory of the world. Attaining character and intellectual education themselves, they devote their gifts to others less privileged.

When the social problems that bring calamity to all the world are solved and the nations make concessions for the sake of the general welfare—and this must come about if humanity is to progress or even survive—the personal problems of daily life still remain: why my illness, accidents, losses, failures, frustrations? How can my problem be solved so my soul will be satisfied?

We are born to live by our mind and spirit and the Godlike power hidden in our will, not by our animal desires. We are free to choose either world; and herein lie our hope and our misery. If we advance because we have no alternative, achievement loses its meaning. When, of our own free will, we climb toward perfection and God, we appreciate the prizes we win. If God forced us to be his friends, our love, our friendship would have no value. A personality made perfect by free choices is humanity's glory.

Life is a school in which we are meant to prepare ourselves to become companions of God. Difficulties are a stimulus to activity and achievement. What would we think of the student who registered in a university with the request to his teachers, "Now be careful to make my work easy. I am really interested only in walking a pathway of roses." This is what many of us demand of life: it must hold no troubles. If we do have trouble, we will not believe in God. If we do not have trouble, God is quite unnecessary to our universe.

If we understand them, our troubles become steppingstones to ever higher attainment. Moral perfection, writes Emerson in his *Journal*, "is always the glory that shall be revealed; it is the 'open secret' of the universe." We wrestle with poverty and sickness and unemployment, with an adverse environment; and like Jacob, we do not let our adversary go until he blesses us. Mencius wrote,

"When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any one, it first exercises his mind with suffering and his sinews and bones with toil; it exposes his body to hunger and subjects him to extreme poverty; it confounds his undertakings. In these ways it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature and supplies his incompetencies. Life springs from sorrow, and calamity and death from ease and pleasure. When men are possessed of intelligent virtue and prudence in the management of affairs it generally arises from their having been in distress." Yet, in the school which graduates heroic perfection, most of us are, at least part of the time, unwilling students.

The soul's highest aspiration is communion with God. When this communion is attained the answer to every personal problem is immortality. The life beyond death was the great thought which sustained Paul through his years of persecution. It was the hope of Jesus' disciples; it is the final sanction for righteous living. It is a vital challenge, belief in an eternal world, where everyone receives justice, according to his ability and his striving. In this immortal world no one can injure another. Everyone is governed by perfect wisdom and love, for his own highest good. Such a life, coming some time, makes this life well worth living. God did not make this physical world perfect lest we become too attached to it and fail to learn the lessons that will help us in the eternal world. To justify the travail of childbirth and the weakness of childhood one must see the grown man. Only the life beyond the death of the body can reveal the spiritual strength and ineffable glory achieved through overcoming the personal problems and frustrations of this world. Through the centuries, many noble people were sustained by the certainty that if they did their part, a Golden Age would come upon the earth, and for them individually there was an immortal life in which the injustice of this world would be rectified.

The problem of evil is in the main the problem of social and mental mismanagement of the resources God has given us. When we subtract all the harm man has done to man and we have done to ourselves through lack of knowledge, spiritual education, self-control; and add all the equipment science has furnished us today for the control of pestilence, dire poverty, famine, for the healing of physical and mental ailments, we find we could go a long way

toward eliminating evil. God did not give us a ready-made world and ready-made instinctive habits, as he gave them to ants and birds and bees. He made us his free partners in building a just and righteous world, revealing to us the plan and assisting us with the power to carry it into action, while waiting for us actually to create it. We know what the skilled gardener accomplishes by planting and cultivating trees and flowers, how he remakes and beautifies the land. So can human activity, rightly directed, remake this world.

The great evils and the causes of evil are ignorance, prejudice, exclusive nationalisms, greed, hatred, cruelty, selfishness, lust, and fear; and these are preventable. Religion and science working together can destroy them. The method of prevention is education: science and religion working hand in hand to eradicate them. When education in true democracy, brotherhood, knowledge of God as the Father of all races and nations wins in the war with education for racial fanaticism, class struggle, and the lust for domination and conquest, then a large part of the problem of evil will vanish as the darkness of night disappears at the rising of the sun.

There is only one way to permanent safety. God has shown us this way through the great Prophets, who have carried humanity through periods of dire calamity into the light. When we spread their teachings with the thoroughness and untiring devotion that the nations committed to world conquest use in their life-destroying purposes, we shall finally so firmly establish the Prophets' great moral, social and spiritual laws that the majority of the world's people will recognize and immediately root out every death-breeding doctrine.

Science and evolution have brought us to the crossroads. The only way now possible is to follow the laws which lead from the jungle to the security of a permanent peace.