

Course -  
for life progress

Handbook

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# CHARACTER

A SEQUENCE IN SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

BOOKS BY  
STANWOOD COBB

CHARACTER

PATTERNS IN JADE OF WU MING FU

SECURITY FOR A FAILING WORLD

NEW HORIZONS FOR THE CHILD

DISCOVERING THE GENIUS WITHIN YOU

THE WISDOM OF WU MING FU

THE NEW LEAVEN

SIMLA—A TALE IN VERSE

THE ESSENTIAL MYSTICISM

AYESHA OF THE BOSPHORUS

THE REAL TURK

PAMPHLET:

THE MEANING OF LIFE

# CHARACTER

*A Sequence in Spiritual Psychology*

By STANWOOD COBB



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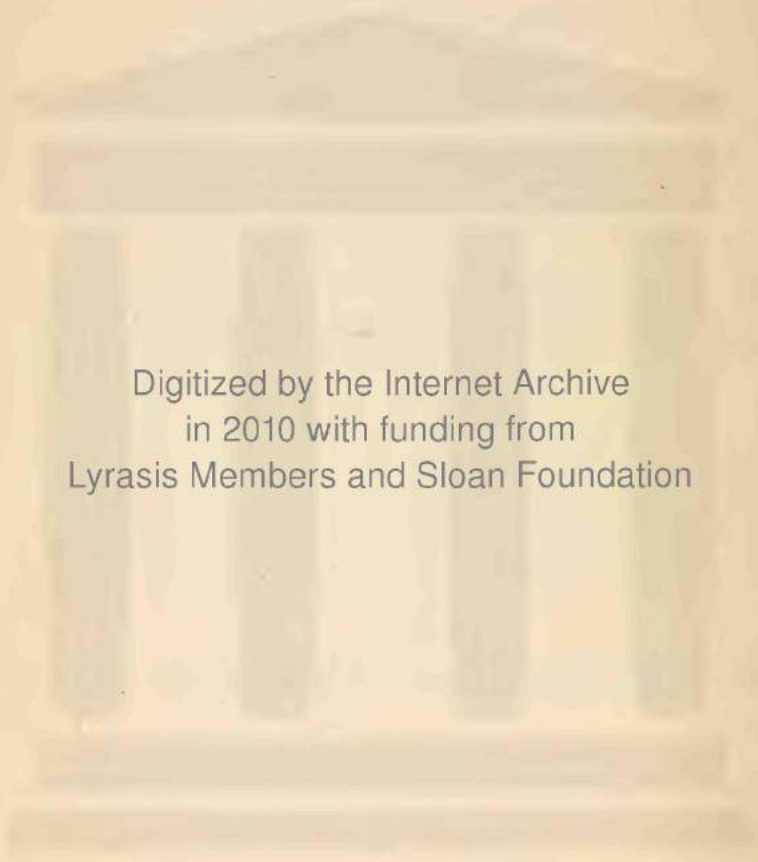
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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

# A Spiritual Autobiography

THE present age is so distinctly one of change and transition that few individuals who think about life and destiny remain satisfied with ancestral and traditional dogmas.

It is an age of change. It is also an age of search, and that is its greatest virtue. For out of the growing welter of confusion, search may and ultimately will find better ways of living, higher and more universal truths.

Today—as in the rich Mediterranean culture of the Golden Age of Rome—new sources of inspiration, multitudinous new claimants of world truth impinge upon the consciousness of the progressive liberal thinker.

What the modern man, therefore, thinks about life and the universe is a composite of inherited forms and ideology; of personal observation, thought, and conviction regarding the nature of existence; and of new inspirational material flowing in from every side, wherefrom each individual chooses in accordance with his temperamental susceptibilities, his predilections, and his experiential past.

## 2

My own search for truth has been like that of countless others. Born and brought up in an earnestly religious (though liberal) New England home, my thoughts turned early in the direction of spiritual and metaphysical thinking.

At the age of seven I read the Bible through, with what profit I know not. At the age of twelve I read it through again under the following circumstances: Sunday School in an orthodox church became an impossible absurdity for me, because my teachers could not explain contradictions and incredibilities in the Bible. Yet church and Sunday School were the inflexible parental order of the day. So I proposed a bargain. I offered to spend the equivalent time reading the Bible at home Sunday mornings if I could be excused from Sunday School. The bargain was parentally accepted and I profited much from this second reading of the Bible.

Later on, in conducting devotions in my school, I have read the important dramatic and spiritual sections of the Old Testament through many times. Instead of tiring of them, with every reading I marvel the more at their literary perfection and their spiritual power.

At the age of fourteen I accidentally stumbled across Hindu mysticism into which I delved with



great zest; and at fifteen naturally gravitated toward Theosophy and Unitarianism. These schools of spiritual thought, with the subsequent addition of Buddhism and New Thought, remained my spiritual food through college days.

Upon my graduation from high school I had presented as my salutatory "Beacon Lights of History"—which included Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Christ, and Mahomet. The principal of the school would not permit me to associate Christ with these other founders of religions, so the address was given with Christ omitted.

It had been during this senior year at high school that I arrived at a great truth—the fundamental validity of all the world religions. It happened in this way. One day I came across the fact that Christianity was composed of some two hundred sects. I knew that many of these claimed not only to be truth, but to be the sole vehicle of truth and salvation. It was absurd to think, however, that one of these two hundred sects had stumbled upon the only key to salvation, and the other one hundred and ninety-nine were in error. On the contrary, I opined that all of them had some truth and none of them a monopoly on truth. Continuing this train of thought I arrived at a similar conclusion regarding the world's great religions—that all had truth and validity and that none had uniqueness.

This was the spiritual philosophy which I had presented in my salutatory. It proved too liberal for the kultur of the '90's (1899 to be exact) in even as liberal a human environment as Newton, Boston's most cultured suburb.

## 3

In my senior year at Dartmouth I met with a similar evidence of traditionalism in high places. To a famous visiting preacher, who on the day subsequent to his sermon was available for religious conferences with the students, I propounded a question which had been bothering me. Undoubtedly, I said, various other suns throughout the universe had planets, and those planets had every likelihood of being inhabited by some living species which would have developed as far as man has on the planet earth. If Christ was the unique Son of God, sent down from God to guide us to salvation, what about the peoples on those other planets? Did they also have their Saviors? But how could they, if Christ was the unique One?

The preacher side-stepped this difficult question with the lazy answer: "Well, I wouldn't bother about that. There is no reason to think there are any other inhabited worlds." Thus he persisted in the geocentric Ptolemaic conception of the universe



as presented in the Bible, which represents the stars as existing only to light the earth by night and the sun as kindly traversing a circle around the earth to light and heat it by day.

One other experience in similar vein put an end once and for all to my attempts to find satisfactory explanation of the universe through the wisdom of any theologians. I forget what the problem was which I took to Dr. Tucker, President of Dartmouth, whom I then esteemed and still do in memory as one of the noblest men this country has produced in the last generation. Dr. Tucker, who had been a clergyman before taking the presidency of Dartmouth, I found to my immense disappointment was unable satisfactorily to clear away my religious problem. I can see now that that was not so much his fault; probably no other person could have solved my problems then. There are certain things that one must thrash out for oneself.

## 4

After graduation from Dartmouth I continued, in a period of ill health, to give more serious consideration than ever before to the problem of life and of the universe. During this period I had the privilege of reviewing books for the *Boston Transcript*. The books assigned to me were of a serious nature on



subjects such as philosophy, social sciences, religion, New Thought. I found much material in these books to meditate over and digest. Their scope was broad as human thought itself. A marvelous experience for youth, after the formal regime of college education, to dip untrammelled into the thought of so many minds. The very reading of these books was a mental discipline as well as spiritual inspiration, for they were to be analyzed and criticized as well as enjoyed.

During this same period, while I was teaching Latin in the Brockton (Mass.) High School, I had an amazing spiritual adventure. I was out for a walk one evening and happened to pass a little chapel on a side street, from which light was streaming and the sound of congregational singing. I went up to the door to look in and see what kind of service it was. There was a small group of about twenty in the congregation. The young clergyman officiating immediately came to the door at my approach and so cordially urged me to come in and join them that I allowed myself to be persuaded. It was, as I found, a church of the Disciples of Christ or Campbellites, an offshoot from the Baptist denomination strong in the Middle West but not widespread in the East. This little group of simple working people, with a young clergyman who was still a theological student supplying their needs, I found to be the most

spiritual and vital Christians I had ever encountered. Their religion was real. It not only inspired their worship with a deep sense of reverence and nearness to God, but inspired—as I found on conversation with them later—their whole lives. They called each other brother and sister. They were simple people. One was a night watchman of the railroad; one drove a baker's team; one, a girl, worked in a candy factory—and so it went. When these people prayed they really talked with God. The power of the Holy Spirit shone through them and affected me deeply. I had never seen any such expression of religion. Undoubtedly the early Christian communities were of such nature. I should call this a true line of descent in the Apostolic Succession.

Every Thursday night I attended their service, feeling more and more drawn into their mystic and celestial brotherhood. Finally the time came when they urged me to join their church. This would require baptism by total immersion, a ritual quite antipathetic to my religious philosophy up to date. But I thought, why should I let a simple matter like this stand in the way of fellowship with this wonderful group? Their theology was not narrow, only this requirement of total immersion. So I accepted the ritual and joined their brotherhood. As one would expect, the baptism itself did not translate me into a celestial condition of life; but my



fellowship with these simple and earnest Christians was then, and remains in memory still, one of the sweetest and loftiest spiritual experiences of my life.

Several reasons at this time impelled me to study for the Christian ministry and I naturally turned to the Harvard Divinity School for this purpose. What denomination did I select? The young clergyman in charge of the church I had joined naturally urged me to go into that sect—Disciples of Christ. But as I investigated its churches in Greater Boston I found nowhere such a spiritual expression as I had seen in the little Brockton chapel. On the contrary, these larger urban churches were in no way superior to churches of the other orthodox denominations. So much to my friend's disappointment I selected the Unitarian church for which to prepare my ministry.

## 5

My two years at Harvard Divinity School were extremely fruitful from a spiritual as well as an intellectual standpoint. There was then presiding over the department of the History of Religions one of the greatest scholars of the world, George Foote Moore. I took every course in the History of Religions and Comparative Religion which the Divinity School had to offer. I also profited greatly by a course in Mysticism under W. W. Fenn, later Dean

of the Divinity School. This course was outstanding. For in a period when religious mysticism was treated in most of the theological schools of the country as pathological, Professor Fenn treated the subject with the deepest sympathy and consideration. I suspect he was a mystic himself. Under the stimulus and inspiration of his course I did an immense amount of unrequired reading in the mystics of all the great religions of the world—Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism. The Harvard Divinity School had at that time one of the finest libraries in the world on comparative religion and I found here a wealth of material that I had never been able to discover previously and saturated myself in the mystic thought of those great spiritual souls, the mystics.

In the course of this reading I arrived at an interesting discovery, one that might have been expected: namely, that the mystics of every religion have the same theme and sing the same song—God-consciousness, the Divine love and the joy therein derived, and the losing of oneself in the greater Whole. So transcendent is the similarity of experience and expression on the part of these world mystics that one could hardly tell, if one did not know beforehand, to which religion any particular mystic belonged.

It is but natural that this should be so. For after all, there is but one God and one Universe; and the



search for Reality and the experience of Reality must therefore on the highest plane be one. These mystics—so free from trammels of theology, so dedicated to truth in thought and in experience—seemed then and still seem to me to be the beautiful flowering of religion; “a life hid with Christ in God” as Paul expresses it.

During this period, also, I delved deeply into Swedenborg whose voluminous works were available to divinity students at the amazing sum of ten cents per volume. I liked then and still like Swedenborg's teachings regarding the other world—that individuals sort themselves out there by the natural law of gravitation. People are not cast into hell. They choose that coterie of souls because their natures fit it. As Swedenborg points out, evil souls hate the light just as bats do. They would be in pain and unhappiness in the midst of a spiritual coterie, just as spiritual people would be in pain and unhappiness in the midst of a hellish coterie.

I felt the reasonableness of this explanation, since we can readily see the same law working out upon this earth. A man of evil thoughts, purpose, and desire nature introduced into a group of highly spiritual people would at first be bored to death by their conversation; then become uneasy; and finally acquire such a painful psychology as to wish to burst out from their midst and seek the companionship of

fellow-souls in evil. The same thing would be true, vice versa, of a spiritual person.

I liked also Swedenborg's clear-cut statement that the only rewards that accrue to us in the future life from our good deeds here are where the deeds result from absolute sincerity of purpose. If deeds of benefaction and philanthropy are for self-interest and self-glorification, they do not accrue as advantage to us in the other world. How similar this is to the Hindu doctrine of non-regard for the fruits of action, and to Christ's teaching that it is what flows out from the inner man that is important, not the outside appearance.

## 6

After two years at the Harvard Divinity School, I renounced my intention of entering the ministry. It seemed to me that the Christian Church had in general become a mere lecture platform among intelligent college-trained congregations, and among simple folk it remained too much intrammeled in traditional theology. More and more, it seemed to me, the position of the clergyman was anomalous in an age when people read and think for themselves. In past ages, when congregations were illiterate, they needed to have their scriptures read and expounded to them. But in these days of universal literacy and



independence of thought the clergyman is no longer the specialist in religion as he was in past times and as to this day the doctor is still a specialist in medicine, the lawyer a specialist in law, and the teacher a specialist in whatever subject he is teaching. The clergyman unfortunately is not a specialist in anything, not even in saintliness; for it is quite apparent that theological training does not produce saintliness. And it seemed to me then, and still seems to me, a very artificial situation into which clergymen are forced. If they are exhorting their congregations to righteous living, they must perforce be of greater saintliness than any in their congregation. But this is an abnormal and unnatural thing to expect of the clergy. Some are more spiritual than any in their congregation, but it just happens so. After all, is not the day of the layman's religion here? The Quaker church perhaps has the right idea, in that no one is designated as the official clerical head or expounder of truth to the others.

At any rate, I knew that my own character had not arrived at a degree of perfection which placed it above characters in the congregations I was preaching to as I supplied in various pulpits of Greater Boston. I did not like the assumption of the cleric that he is of a different cloth from the laity and must be more spiritual than they. If I felt more spiritual than my congregation, well and good. But one does

not feel spiritual at all hours of the day or on all days of the week. Moreover, spirituality is a slow and painful growth covering all of one's lifetime. It cannot be commanded, like scholarship, on a year's notice.

Hence it was with relief that I renounced the Divinity School and headed for Constantinople, Turkey, to accept a position in Robert College as teacher of English and Latin. My three years—1907 to 1910—in the Orient were among the most romantic and fruitful of my life. For youth to be placed in the midst of an alien culture and religion is a wholesome and fructifying experience. One is forced to analyze customs, moralities, characters of various races and modes of religious thought; and to compare them for efficacy and fruitfulness of living. One discovers that much of the vaunted superiority of Western civilization is illusory. One discovers a deep and tranquil happiness in the Oriental life of which the Occident is in sad need.

What, after all, are the goals of living? Happiness seems to me certainly one of the major goals. Growth and development is another. The Orient excels in the art of happiness. The Occident excels in the art of growth and development. Somewhere between these two worlds of thought and living lies the middle way, which it has constantly throughout my life been my aim to seek and to express.



My study of Islam in thought and in practice during this period was exceedingly interesting and fruitful. I came to esteem highly the mode of living which Islam produces in pious Moslems—their unswerving loyalty to their religious faith, their serene and tranquil patience, their joy of living in the midst even of difficult circumstances.

When the Turkish Revolution of 1908 put the Young Turks in power, the mosque service was thrown open to non-Moslem visitors for the first time in the history of the world. No Christian hitherto had ever been able to witness the Islamic mosque service unless in disguise and with great difficulty, hence little study had been actually made of their ritual. The bare forms were known but an actual analysis of the spirit and psychology of their service had not been sufficiently known. I found upon attending the services in various mosques on what is their Sabbath—the Friday of our week—that there was evidenced a whole-hearted sincerity and devotion in worship such as exists nowhere in Christendom. The nearest approach to it is in a cathedral service among illiterate and simple peoples of Italy or of Ireland. But even that does not compare with the vivid faith and zeal of Islam.

Emboldened by these visits to mosque services I

undertook a dangerous thing, which was to descend upon the floor of St. Sophia during the annual service of the Night of Power. I wore a fez, the characteristic accoutrement of the Turk, and so was able to pass from group to group after the ritual was finished. The ritual itself I had observed from the balcony, to which I had been admitted by diplomatic card.

After a half hour among these pious Moslems, I felt apprehensive of being followed and I hastened out as quickly as I could. Had I been discovered in their midst, even the tolerance of the Young Turk regime could not have saved me from being torn to pieces by these zealous old-time Turks.

The results of my study of Islam and of the Turk were published in book form in 1914 by the Pilgrim Press under the title "The Real Turk"—a book which almost lost the liberal-minded manager of the Pilgrim Press his job. For it was the first book that had appeared in America sympathetic to the Turk and to Islam.

At this time also I made a deep study of Islamic mysticism and of the great Sufi poets of Persia—Nizami, Jallal u'Din Rumi, Jami and others.

## 8

In 1908 I had the unique privilege of visiting in his prison home in Acca the then head of the Bahá'í

Faith, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I had come across this movement in America during my study at Harvard Divinity School and I eagerly seized the opportunity opened to me by an American friend of visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was necessary for me to disguise myself as a Turk for the purpose of this visit, since 'Abdu'l-Bahá was at that time in grave danger from the Turkish government on account of a suspicion that he was fomenting revolt with his American pilgrims. This was just before the Turkish revolution, the darkest and most dangerous period of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life, a period of tyrannic and unjust oppression, fortunately terminating in complete freedom that very summer.

It was in February, 1908, that I visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá and spent two days as his guest, having the privilege of several interviews with him as well as his presence and conversation at meal times. Later on, in 1910, I spent a week as his guest. At this time he was living in Haifa in a residence built for him on Mt. Carmel by an American follower, a Mrs. Jackson.

'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed to me then, and he seems to me still, to be the supreme elucidator of spiritual truth. I admired greatly the lucidity and reasonableness of his exposition of the deeper meanings of life, of the spirit and of the Cosmos. The teaching of his father, the world figure Bahá'u'lláh, founder



of this movement, made an immediate and natural appeal to me. For my own thought had prepared me for the spiritual philosophy of the Bahá'í teaching: that all the world's religions have validity and are the expression of spiritual inspiration, and that Religion is indeed one and should be one in practice the world over.

I liked the Bahá'í explanation (to use an Irish bull) of the nature of God: that is, that the nature of God *cannot be explained or understood in finite terms*. For the finite mind of man cannot in any way comprehend the Infinite, nor can that which is contained in the Whole comprehend that Whole. If we reflect, it becomes immediately apparent that man, the creature of the Infinite, can in no way surround and comprehend his Creator. God in His Essence, then, is unknowable to man. This doctrine, elucidated to me by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is quite consonant with the convictions of our modern scientists who do not deny a Planner of the Universe but who reject anthropomorphic conceptions of Deity.

Science and Religion must agree, said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There can only be one truth about the Universe. Religion, shorn of its superstitions and theology, and Science shorn of its bumptious dogmatism must and will approach each other in complete unity of idea and of purpose. 'Abdu'l-Bahá goes even so far as to say that if Religion denies the

plain truths of Science, it is not Religion but superstition.

I liked 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching on eternal life: that it is something that must be earned, not something into which death initiates us; and that unless the spiritual senses are developed in this life, one will enter the future life immensely crippled and unable to function. This continuity of spiritual development and progress was in consonance with my whole philosophy of life and my spiritual convictions.

Highly pregnant with implications for successful and noble living upon this planet were 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings regarding the Holy Spirit, which he explained as the great cosmic force through which Deity creates and manipulates phenomenal existence. The Infinite does not descend to the plane of the finite. At no point do these two worlds of being contact each other. The Holy Spirit is that function and attribute of Deity through which the Infinite creates, controls and operates. *This great Creative Force of the Cosmos is directly available to man, through spiritual aspiration, as a vital spiritual and creative force in his own life.* Amazing was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assertion that this spiritual force is as regnant in man's intellectual maturing and creative development as it is in his spiritual growth and fruition.

The World Order proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh (who



died in 1892) and now expounded by 'Abdu'l-Bahá —with its program of world peace and brotherhood; of a Parliament of Nations; of abolition of all prejudice, national, racial and religious; of a universal auxiliary language and an ultimate world curriculum for universal education—all this appealed to me then as the most stupendous vision for world improvement I had ever encountered. Today, in the midst of world chaos and confusion, its noble and colossal outlines stand out still more strikingly from the multiplicity of thought and the confusion of ideology of a decadent civilization.

If in the course of this book I quote widely from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's utterances, it is because they bear so strikingly upon the problem of character development. These utterances were published subsequent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to the United States in 1911-12, during the course of which he gave addresses from platform and pulpit all the way from the eastern to the western coast of this country. It is from these published addresses that I quote in the course of my book.

## 9

The moral and spiritual ideas set forth in this book will be seen, then, to be the result of wide contacts with the spiritual thought of the ages. These ideas are what appear to me as Truth today. But

as the nature of Truth is derived fully as much from experience as from ratiocination, I do not claim any finality in the doctrines here presented. I should indeed hope that my philosophy of life ten years from now would have wider and more illimitable horizons. Nevertheless, I present these ideas today for what they are worth to the reader. If they stimulate him to thought, they will have fulfilled their purpose. If they inspire further search and study into the spiritual literature of the ages and into the spiritual experience which Life itself offers, they will have amply rewarded the effort put into their publication.

PART I

FOUNDATIONS FOR  
CHARACTER





## CHAPTER II

# Character is Destiny

**C**HARACTER is destiny. For deeds flow from character, and our deeds create our destiny.

As mountain ranges form the backbone of continents, so character forms the structure of life. It is incorrect to say that there is good character and bad character. There is simply character, or the lack of it. There is more than goodness in character. There is also wisdom and beauty. A life without character is a life deformed and crippled.

Every individual should develop character. Not because it is good to be good; but because righteousness is the only way to continuous success, happiness and power in a Universe founded upon moral law.

The perfecting of human behavior is both a science and an art. Character development, therefore, may be viewed as a scientific process, exercising our utmost intelligence and judgment. It is possible to arrive at ideal standards for conduct through the use of this scientific judgment, as Socrates did.

But the *practice* of right conduct is not a science so much as it is an art. Here emotion enters in, and

imagination. Intelligence may chart the way; but the will must be persuaded to undertake, and persist in, the arduous daily task of self-perfectioning.

It is in this aspect of character development that religion is functional. Why and how religion is essential to character-building will be shown in detail in subsequent chapters.

## 2

There is a time-factor in the development of character which is important. Lack of recognition of this pregnant fact may cause confusion.

In other words, there is a definite progress and sequence in the growth of character—a sequence which follows natural laws. This growth, like that of a seed, begins from within and expands outward. As the seed first absorbs and expands, so the life of the individual, in its early stages, is chiefly an absorptive and expansive process. Self-expression is the keynote of character at this stage.

But life must bear fruit. And so the law of duty lays its inevitable claim upon the expanding life of youth, and he becomes, in obedience to it, a *man* fulfilling the obligations imposed upon him by a life set in the midst of human society.

From the law of duty to the rule of love is a step higher. Altruism should be the dominant note of



maturing life. To continue a slave to centripetal forces at this stage of life is to fail of correct living.

The soul of man is in its essence a centrifugal outgoing force. Its ultimate values lie not in acquisition but in outpouring; not in self-containment but in self-escape. What are the goals of life in this, its highest stage? A concluding chapter will try to make this clear.

## 3

A thousand and one things could be said about character. As life is never finished (*not even by death*), so character-building is never finished. Its details are as infinite as the details of existence itself.

In this brief book one can only show a pattern, so to speak. If that pattern be clear and convincing, the reader can fill in details for himself. Experience, after all, is the best teacher. In fact, it is the only teacher whose counsel we are apt to heed.

## 4

This book, then, is not so much a book of advice and exhortation as it is an attempt to chart out the life of righteousness—its ways and its values—in as simple an outline as possible. It does not attempt to *urge* the reader to be good (a rather useless process, that of moral exhortation!). It only seeks, to the

best of its ability, to open the reader's eyes to the consequences of righteous action and of unrighteous action, of character and of the lack of character. Perchance some slight influence may thus emanate from its pages to help the reader face life and its issues scientifically, undeceived by those illusions which the desire-nature creates—gilding the picture of evil with fool's gold.

## CHAPTER III

# Scientific Foundations for Character

THE laws of moral conduct, the habitual observance of which becomes character, are to a certain degree scientifically derivable from the nature of the Universe we live in. Just as the physical sciences discover and apply the laws of the material universe, so social science can discover and apply moral and spiritual laws relating to man's behavior as between himself and his fellow men and between himself and the Universe.

The rules of human behavior discernible in the human relationships fall into the province of sociology and ethics. The rules of behavior as between man and the Universe fall within the province of religion, which might be defined as man's attempt to harmonize himself with the Universe.

The social sciences are not so successful in the discovery of laws within their field and the application of those laws as are the physical sciences. This is due to several unsurmountable obstacles: first because human behavior is partly unpredictable; secondly because in the social sciences only a part of the scientific process of discovery and verification can be employed.



The physical sciences, creating by the processes of induction or deduction their postulates from the observation and classification of data, can in many cases verify these postulates by experimentation. The scientists can even create artificial situations for the purpose of verification, thus arriving more swiftly at absolute proof. The magic exactness of the physical sciences is demonstrated by their power of accurate prediction and of successful application of the laws they have discovered. Thus applied science abundantly demonstrates the marvelous power of theoretical science in discovering the hidden laws of nature.

In the social sciences, observation and classification of data can be employed to substantiate the processes of induction and deduction. *But the verification of the postulates thus arrived at has to await considerable passage of time.* For the social sciences can rarely employ laboratory methods for creating human situations and conditions. Verification of theories, therefore, is extremely difficult and slow. It is for this reason that the social sciences are so inferior to the physical sciences in accuracy and in agreement as to truths and laws. They have to depend for their progress almost wholly upon case study, and this takes time. The observance of individual behavior and of group behavior requires years, even generations, of careful study in order to

arrive at accuracy of judgment. This is because the social scientist cannot artificially create laboratory conditions for experimentation. We cannot make guinea pigs of human beings.

The Greeks, initiators of the scientific approach to the Universe, knew only the methods of observation and classification of data as foundational for the processes of induction and deduction. It was not until the post-Renaissance scientists began to use experimentation that the marvelous accuracy of modern science and technology became possible.

The social sciences are young—hardly for one hundred years have they received the attention of world thinkers. Is it not possible, then, that the time may come when the social scientists will invent, as have the physical scientists, more accurate methods for the discovery of truths and laws within their particular field?

## 2

The laws of ethics, as a social science, are therefore discoverable by observation from history and from the contemporary life around us. Upon the data thus collected and observed the ethicist, by the processes of induction and deduction, can create general postulates; and these postulates can then be roughly checked up by further observation.

The spiritual laws which relate man to the Uni-



verse he lives in are likewise deducible from observation and theorization. Certainly whatever scientific processes are available for this end can be applied to the study of the Universe as it relates itself to successful and harmonious living upon this planet. In fact, every individual is bound to analyze the Universe, sooner or later, from such a point of view.

Even savages try to analyze life to decide whether nature is friendly or hostile to them and if so, for what reasons. Upon these observations they base their primitive religious concepts and their moral laws of conduct. Their powers of observation are limited, their reasoning crude. Nevertheless they succeed in working out definite rules of procedure which among some primitive peoples, notably the North American Indians, arrive at idealistic and noble heights.

In fact, the most important question man can ask of the Universe is just this: are You friendly, neutral, or hostile to me as an individual? Upon the answer to this question, an answer which man derives in part from experience and ratiocination, will depend the type of his philosophy of life. The Stoics, for instance, elaborated noble spiritual concepts from such a study—finding their highest expression in the writings of Marcus Aurelius who apostrophizes the Universe in such terms as these: "Nothing is too early or too late for me, O Universe, which is in due time for Thee."

The earliest Greek scientific thinkers—Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes—succeeded in marvelously analyzing the Cosmos with the scanty means at their disposal. They noted first the infinite complexity of phenomenal life. Existence consists of a plurality of objects, animate and inanimate—there can be no question of that. This must be the starting point of all thought about the Universe, as it became the conclusion even of such great modern thinkers as William James and to a degree John Dewey.

But the Greek thinkers went beyond this appearance of plurality and arrived at the noble concept of Unity in Multiplicity. They discovered an infinite order ruling over an infinite number of separate entities within the Universe. The Universe is orderly—that is the supreme concept at which human thought may arrive concerning it. If orderly, it is then an essential and organic unity. This is the point reached by modern scientists such as Eddington, Jeans and Millikan—namely, that the Universe represents a Plan.

## 3

If the Universe is orderly, it follows that definite laws are discoverable in accordance with which this orderliness is inviolately maintained. These laws, as functioning in human life, where consciousness operates, may be called moral laws.



There are certain moral laws, then, which ensue from the very nature of man and of the Cosmos which man inhabits. The great central laws of the Universe are Unity in Multiplicity and Harmony in Diversity. From these great cosmic laws as they apply to the life of man individually and collectively, and to man's relation with the Universe in its totality, may be derived many minor laws by which human behavior, if it is to be wise and successful, must be regulated.

These two cosmic laws of Unity and Harmony are the scientific foundations, then, of the moral character of man. They are essential to social life upon this planet. They are essential to the individual's relation to the Whole. Their due observance guarantees harmony, happiness and health; and in proportionate degree, success.

If we could adequately conceive the colossal and infinite scope of these laws and their cosmic inviolability, we should fear to break them.

## 4

These moral laws may be called scientific in the sense that they are derived from the rational study of existence itself; they are arrived at by deduction based upon observation and classification of data; and they can be scientifically checked by further



observation. The careful study of history, which has up to the present, during a period of some six thousand years, collected an enormous amount of human data; the study of biography; and the study of the contemporaneous life about us—will yield an immense amount of data leading to the understanding of these moral laws and furnishing ample scope for their verification.

Thus the moral laws are scientific, just as the physical laws are scientific. They are not legalistic, not rules created by man. They are simply the procedure of the Universe, the methods which the Universe employs for successful functioning. Only by following these methods of the Universe and obeying the laws which the Universe itself lays down, can man hope to thrive on the planet which he inhabits and which he will eventually learn to operate.

A life-long study along these lines has convinced the author that the moral truths, where really discoverable, can be stated almost in mathematical terms. That is, like the physical laws, they have a certainty, an inviolability, and a proportion or ratio-adjustment. We must recognize, of course, the difference between the moral laws of the Universe, and the ethical custom and usage as actually current among races and peoples. The latter varies greatly with peoples and epochs. The moral laws

of the Universe never vary. They are part of the substructure of existence.

## 5

Why, then, cannot ethics be a science, and the building of character proceed without the need of religion? Unfortunately it is not the intellect which rules in most individuals, but the emotions and desire-nature. Only philosophers control their behavior by their intelligence. Other human beings—and this means more than ninety-nine out of a hundred—use their intelligence only to attain the objects of their desires. It is their emotional nature which motivates and rules them.

Religious foundations for character are needed for two reasons. First, religion is essential to give motivation and spiritual aid for the reinforcement of reason as grounds for character development; religion can control man's emotional nature, as the intellect cannot, for the reason that religion is in itself a master emotion and as such has the power to regulate and harness man's other emotions to lofty ends. Secondly, religion brings to humanity definite spiritual concepts not easily derived from the scientific examination of the Universe. The Prophets—such as Moses, Buddha, Christ, Mahomet, Bahá'u'l-láh—reveal us to ourselves from a plane of knowl-

edge which we may call inspirational or revelatory. Once They give Their majestic message, we realize its cosmic truth.

These Revelators speak from the plane of immediate or intuitive knowledge. They are able to explain to us the occult or hidden spiritual nature of man and of the Universe.

As a modern scientist might go among backward peoples and teach them the great physical laws of nature and their application, so the Revelators come to man upon this planet from a plane of higher experience and knowledge and teach humanity moral and spiritual laws essential to its spiritual development, and equally applicable to material progress in so far as such progress is implicated in man's obedience to certain necessary cosmic laws.

The moral development of humanity would be infinitely slow but for the message of the Revelator, and man's spiritual progress would stop far short of its distant lofty goals but for the higher truths which the Revelator brings.

6

The science of human behavior and the art of right living are more important today by far than are any of the physical sciences. Our discoveries in physics, chemistry, biology have put us far ahead



materially and have built up a marvelous technological civilization.

Meanwhile, man's moral and spiritual progress have sadly lagged—resulting in the immense moral confusion of humanity today; the breakdown of all the sanctions of the past; the rapid social, political, and economic deterioration of humanity; and the threatening trend of planetary disintegration.

Humanity could live happily and successfully for centuries without making a single further discovery in the fields of the physical sciences. But humanity will suicidally perish if there does not speedily ensue moral and spiritual regeneration.

We must then for the present concentrate, the world over, on those great spiritual laws which make for harmony and happiness in human existence. Here lies humanity's necessary path for the next few generations.

## CHAPTER IV

# Religious Foundations for Character

THE rules of ethics or code of morals which individuals are supposed to live up to differ from age to age, according to the development and exigencies of human society. They are the expression of the racial or group consciousness.

The best tiger, as William James used to point out, is the one that kills the most rabbits. The best Indian in the days of savagery was the one who could gather the most scalps of his enemies. A recent article in *Liberty Magazine* points out the obligation upon the young braves among the head-hunters of Borneo of bringing home the heads of their enemies to dry upon the rafters before they were deemed worthy of a mate.

To kill a man with premeditated purpose is here murder, punishable by legalized death. Yet among certain peoples even today who practise the law of the vendetta—Arabs and mountain whites of the Appalachians—not to so kill, under certain circumstances, would be a gross violation of tribal morals and would condemn the individual to obloquy and disgrace.

The heroes of the Old Testament whom we consider paragons of past virtue and spirituality had many wives. But today in this country a man who has more than one wife is punishable by imprisonment.

Honesty in savage tribes is a virtue seldom failing. Nothing is ever stolen from one's fellow tribesmen. But to successfully take part in expeditions of military and wholesale robbery from neighboring tribes is the badge of the highest virtue.

Thus certain moral codes are established by the human environment in response to exigencies of climate, geography and kultur, and upheld by powerful social and legal sanctions.

## 2

In striking contrast to the relativity of humanly evolved morals are the codes of ethics revealed by founders of the world's great religious systems. These codes claim absoluteness. And the adherents of such religions acknowledge individually and collectively this absoluteness and try to achieve in the practice of daily living the norms or ideals thus presented to them from the plane of divine truth.

"Prophecy claims moral and religious absoluteness," says Dean Willard L. Sperry in his book of Yale Lectures, "We Prophecy in Part." "All men and all societies are judged by a divine standard.



There is nothing relative or comparative about it. What is conceived as God's perfection is the norm. The two major themes of prophecy are these: Man's sins as they stand discovered by the righteousness of God, and the nature of the ideal society in which righteousness will be realized."

## 3

The prophets reveal eternal principles of conduct, principles which are cosmic in their extent, laws to which all existence must render allegiance. They are not laws in a legalistic sense, but laws in the natural sense—laws of behavior upon which the very structure of order and harmony of the Universe depend. These laws represent ethical and cosmic necessity. From them there is no possible healthful deviation.

These spiritual laws, these eternal truths never vary. They are absolute. Their applications, however, may and do vary from age to age. Even the successive Revelators themselves change these applications, abrogating specific rules of conduct established by their predecessors and establishing new rules to fit a new age.

Thus the law or principle of love was applied at first only within the family, then the clan, then the tribe and nation.

The Hebrews, under the stern leadership of Moses and his successors, proceeded not only to fight but to exterminate surrounding tribes. Christ deepened and broadened the application of love to life, establishing new standards for the expression of spiritual love on the part of mankind. Yet up to today this spiritual love inculcated by Christ has never, even in the idealism of Christendom, overstepped the boundaries of nationalism. Today, the law of love for the creation of a new world order, so declares Bahá'u'lláh, is to apply in a world-wide scope, eliminating war and establishing universal peace and brotherhood.

## 4

The Prophets not only set forth to man cosmic laws of behavior. They also reveal man to himself—his lofty station, his spiritual reality. They teach man how to live a moral and spiritual life that will strengthen and develop the transcendental side of his nature and restrain and sublimate his animal side.

“God sent his Prophets into the world to teach and enlighten man, to explain to him the mystery of the power of the Holy Spirit, to enable him to reflect the light. . . .

“Let us listen to a symphony which will confer life on man. Then we shall receive a new spirit,

then we shall become illuminated, . . . unfolding the inner potentialities of life. *Whenever the sun of reality dawns, the lower sphere expresses the virtues of the higher world. . . .*"\*

Revealed truth flowing into the channels of social custom greatly modifies it, establishing new norms and ideals toward which society gradually evolves. Thus every Revelation has founded a new civilization built upon its moral teachings.

The Revelators are not only revealers of moral truth but also perfect Exemplars of the truth they teach. Thus they stand out through human history as divinely appointed Models or Patterns for human behavior.

## 5

From the welter and conflict and relativity of shifting tribal and racial morals a certain confusion as to conduct is inevitable. This confusion is pronounced and exaggerated when tribal or racial cultures mingle as in conquest, commercial intercourse, intermarriage. Such chaos in ethical codes is one of the chief reasons for the moral and social obliquity of half-breeds; they have no definite standards or sanctions of conduct.

Thus the Occidental cultural invasions of Asia have tended to break down the age-long ethics

\*'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Divine Philosophy." Bahá'i Publishing Society, N. Y. C.



traditionally operative. China has been especially disturbed since its revolution of 1911 by this inflow of Occidentalism, until Confucianism as a pattern of ethics is practically gone.

Too sudden and too crude an intermingling of ethical codes brings unexpectedly peculiar and disadvantageous results. It is said that Christianity, when too naively introduced into African villages, destroys the honesty and integrity built up by tribal customs and taboos without sufficiently establishing the new ethics of Christianity, so that the net result is a lowering of morality. Thus we see the paradox of a religion lofty in its ethical code actually operating, by confusion of kulturs, to lower the moral code of a people it converts. This is of course not due to the nature of the Christian religion itself but to the unwisdom and crudity of its application.

In past history one can trace epochs decidedly marked by such confusion of morals due to a mingling of miscellaneous cults and the weakening of ancestral and traditional codes. Thus the morality of the Greeks rapidly degenerated under contact with the kulturs and religions of Asia Minor. In turn the Roman character degenerated as the cults of Greece, of Asia Minor, of Mesopotamia and of Egypt invaded it, breaking up entirely the old Nature-State religion of Rome with its severe codes of integrity and simplicity of life.

It is in an age of irreligion that moral principles

become the most weakened and confused. *Then expediency tends to take the place of righteousness and definite standards of conduct disappear.*

Such is the age we are living in today. The authority of religion is waning the whole world over and the moral sanctions of religion are rapidly disappearing. Within the great world of Christendom only a few communicants still guide their conduct by any principles of religion. Exceptions to this lapse in the efficaciousness of Christian motivation are to be found among certain groups—notably the Quakers, the Christian Scientists, and the Oxford Group. Of these Christian sects it may be said that the majority of their adherents still consciously make religion a guidepost to life. *With these exceptions religion in Christendom is more a matter of ritual than it is of ethics. Yet outside of Christendom the condition is even worse.*

Public thinkers, as well as the clergy, are alarmed by this moral chaos in which the selfish and gross instincts of human nature easily rise to the top. But all their inveighing and moralizing and preaching will do little good. Just as in the age of the Roman emperors the moralizing of the philosophers and poets availed nothing to stem the moral decline.

What is needed in such a period of moral decline is a spiritual rebirth of humanity. Christianity brought such rebirth to Rome. Today we need a spiritual rebirth on a planetary scale.



## 6

In a vitally religious age society vigorously enforces the moral sanctions. In an irreligious age the question of right and wrong becomes scumbled over with self-interest and passion, and a moral confusion and chaos ensue. Also society loses its power of enforcement, because once standards of revealed truth are overthrown there remains no unity of ideology or of compulsion. As among the Sophists of Greece each man becomes a law unto himself, and man's intelligence is too often used to rationalize unrighteous conduct.

A deeply religious age, on the contrary, furnishes powerful sanctions and also powerful motives for righteous conduct.

## 7

The laws that religion lays down are not arbitrary. They are essential and necessary principles for the attainment of social unity, harmony, peace and prosperity—insuring a perfect organization of society.

These laws of conduct, as regards the individual, correspond with his own inner nature and its development toward the emergence of spiritual man.

An important motivation for right action is the realization that righteousness is self-advantageous—that it is a process of self-development into con-



stantly higher and higher states of being. Violation of this law of righteousness and spiritual growth is realized to be folly as well as sin. For to retrogress or fail to progress is in reality the greatest tragedy of existence.

A firm conviction of future existence is the greatest motivation for righteousness that a person can have. For from such a conviction comes the realization that progress is the law of life, that it does not end here, that its scope is infinite, and that failures to progress here will produce fatal consequences in the life to come.

The greatest reward of doing good is to grow better. The greatest and most tragic punishment for doing wrong is that one is thereby growing worse. So simple is this moral law that it can be expressed in almost mathematical terms. Yet how many people are living in definite accord with it? Probably not even one-half of one per cent are conscious of this law and are guiding their lives by it.

*God does not enter in, to judge and punish. We judge and sentence ourselves, and administer the punishment! We cannot escape the consequences of our actions! In this respect the Universe is sternly automatic.*

This majestic law of spiritual cause and effect the Theosophists have made the keynote of their ethical

system. It is a most potent motivation for individual growth and development.

The occultist sees this earth as a stage of existence where the imperfections of human nature are to be changed toward perfection. *Life here is a school in character-training.*

It is not meant that earthly existence should be too happy. This is not the plane of perfection, earth is a crucible for the refining and moulding of character, says 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

## 8

The troubles of life are in reality lessons in character-training. If they are taken advantage of, they are more valuable to us than gold or diamonds. Events reveal us to ourselves and teach us how to overcome those flaws which they disclose in us. Thus the events of life force us to grow in character. The advantage we take of these events measures the degree of our attainment.

The wise man searches every event, every happening in his life, every misfortune for some deep lesson of self-improvement.

If we do not grow in character throughout life we are missing the sole purpose of existence on this earthly plane!

*The purpose of life is growth through struggle. We cannot avoid struggle. But we can meet strug-*

gle as an opportunity for growth. We can suffer obstacles and frustrations to be merely a misfortune to us, or we can utilize them as aids to development.

We must see to it that our trials and sufferings become a means for growth. We can forge out of our misfortunes a golden coin to pay our way onward and upward. We can make stepping-stones of our dead selves and rise to higher things.

As we become progressively purified in character, obstacles are more and more easily met through the aid of Divine Grace and Guidance.

## 9

Collective humanity, like the individual, learns from disaster. The cruel sufferings of the world today—the universal moral disorder, the economic and political uncertainties, the physical deprivations and the prevailing psychological and spiritual chaos—are in reality a sort of planetary test revealing human society to itself in all its weakness and baseness of character. Events are proving more than words the weakness and inadequacy of its present institutions.

Thus humanity is collectively being forced to rise to new altitudes of social and spiritual character. Out of all this chaos and suffering will arise a purged and purer humanity. Man's calamity is God's opportunity.



Because of the world's extraordinary physical and psychic interrelation today and the inevitable breaking up of local moralities and customs due to the coalescing of national and racial kulturs there is demanded, if we are to have any improvement in the present situation of confusion, a new unity of moral concept and practice which will be world-wide.

"As mind directs in human affairs, it is evident that order cannot be obtained unless there is first produced a oneness of intellectual and moral perception."\*

How is this oneness of intellectual and moral perception to be established?

H. G. Wells has the happy plan of creating a vast international university which shall bring together the leaders of thought in every department of knowledge, with the aim of forging out world unity of concept and practice. To this project he is earnestly devoting the last years of his life in his lectures and writings. As critics point out, however, there is no possibility of thus unifying world concepts through the meeting of various academic scientists and philosophers. The tendency of the intellect is analytical and dispersive, not synthetic

\* Rev. R. P. Wilson, "Discourses from The Spirit World." New York, Partridge and Brittan, 1855.

and unifying. "*Tot homines, tot sententiae.*" As many men, so many opinions. The greater number of scholars that gather together for this Wellsian project, the greater the confusion and chaos that would result; the fewer scholars, the less confusion. And of course if one world thinker could be selected, preferably Wells, absolute unity of concept could be attained! Yes, unity of concept could be attained by one thinker, but who is going to put the concept across? Thus we have the insurmountable paradox that the more leaders there are undertaking this Wellsian project the more chaos will ensue; whereas, the fewer the leaders of thought that might engage in such a project the greater would be the futility of it.

No! Human ratiocination and philosophic effort can never create this unity of moral perception and of moral practice which the world sadly needs today.

There is only one thing that can create and establish unity of moral concept and practice, and that is religion. The reason why religion can be effective in this domain is because, as we have already shown, it claims divine sanctions and thus achieves one hundred per cent loyalty amongst its followers. Thus as a religion spreads, no matter how small and insignificant it may be at its inception, it exerts a spearhead thrust upon the disunity and chaos of world affairs. And as a religion continues to grow



it draws more and more of current thought and practice into its majestic orbit, until finally chaos yields to order and righteousness and harmony again prevail.

## 11

The Revelator reveals a body of truth and sets an example in his own life. More important still, he releases a dynamic power—the power of the Holy Spirit—which touches people's hearts and helps them to struggle toward perfection.

It is very difficult to live these divine teachings. Yet it is not the word only, but the living it that counts. The Revelator charges the world with a Power, just as electricity may charge a battery. When the spiritual battery of humanity runs down, another Revelator appears to revivify it.

“Mere knowledge is not sufficient for complete human attainment. The teachings of the holy books need a heavenly power and a divine potency to carry them out. A house is not built by mere acquaintance with the plans. . . . The teachings of the holy books need a divine potency to complete their accomplishments in human hearts. It is evident that the confirmation of the Holy Spirit and the impelling influence of a heavenly power are needed to accomplish the divine purpose in human hearts and conditions.”\*

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá in “Divine Art of Living.”



Individual improvement is necessary before general social and world improvement can be achieved. A government cannot rise much higher than the average intellectuality and righteousness of its people. A world civilization based on peace, good will, universal love and brotherhood cannot be imposed as a mere pattern upon a world population full of hatreds, prejudices, greed, sensuality and selfishness.

A change in human hearts is necessary in order to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth.

## 12

A grave responsibility rests upon all those who preach a new world order. Unless their own lives and characters are distinguished in ethical quality, how can they expect the ideal civilization which they urge upon others ever to be established? First they must purify and ennoble their own hearts and then persuade the hearts of others by the purity of their character as well as by the zeal of their religious devotion.

“Rather, what is well pleasing is that the cities of men’s hearts, which are under the dominion of the hosts of selfishness and lust, should be subdued by the sword of the word of wisdom and exhortation. Everyone then who desires victory must first subdue the city of his own heart with the sword of

spiritual truth and of the word, and must protect it from remembering aught beside God. Afterward, let him turn his efforts toward the citadel of the hearts of others."\*

A double moral responsibility rests upon human beings in the day of a Revelator. Not only do they owe it to themselves to achieve perfection. But if they become adherents of a New Religion, they owe it to their Prophet to live the truths He preaches, so as to be able by their deeds and lives to persuade others to their new-found truth. And as they develop a new cosmic character superb in its purity of motive and its integrity, they will be called upon for leadership in world affairs.

Great souls shall and must arise to reconstruct the affairs of the world in the new spirit of understanding, says 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The World War, he says, has taught humanity the need for personal, social, national and international adjustments, if the world is to become safe for humanity. We must change our standards of living. Our activities must be regulated not according to policy, but according to principle. This is the aim of the new humanity in a world where ambitions are still the expression of greed and lust for power to be wielded only for self.†

\* Bahá'u'lláh: Victory Tablet.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Unpublished Notes of Marie Watson."

PART II

THE GOALS OF  
CHARACTER





## CHAPTER V

# Self-Development

THE individual is born into this world helpless and harmless. He is incapable of committing evil. But he cannot on that account be said to have a perfect character. That is attained only by wrestling with life itself in a stage of maturity where man has the strength and intelligence to choose good or evil.

The first stage in the building of character is necessarily one of self-development. The early years of every human being, as of the animals, are years of expansion, of development, of maturation.

The infant, the child, the youth develop by experimenting with the world around them. Character is being formed in these adjustments of the individual to society, even from the earliest years; but this character development is largely in the hands of those who train the infant. It is not until adolescence is approached that the child is mature enough to analyze himself and deliberately build for character.

Parents and educators have a great responsibility, therefore, as regards the kind of character that emerges in the 'teens. This character, as condi-

tioned by home and school, is not easily modified in later years. The child with a good home and with intelligent parents who carry out conscientiously and effectively their responsibilities in the way of child-training—such a child, especially if morally stimulated by family example as well as by precept, has a fortunate advantage over all other children.

## 2

The stage of life from adolescence to physical maturity is still one of self-development and self-expression. During this period of youth the individual has little responsibility to society but much responsibility to himself. It is his duty to discover and develop all his powers and train them for efficient achievement in later years. Most important during this period is the exploration and discovery of oneself, the development of practical wisdom and the careful choice of a profession.

One should build for success. There is nothing unspiritual in a process of self-development that will make for efficient functioning in one's chosen career and lead to material success.

Vocational or professional skills, efficiency in one's work, industry, ambition to excel and to rise to the top: these qualities are perfectly compatible with spiritual law, though they are expressions of the



material side of man. Since we live in a world of matter, we must adapt ourselves to it successfully. Such an adaptation is our first spiritual obligation toward existence.

Work, and through work material success, are a cosmic and universal obligation. Men can find no alibi in their religion for neglect of external responsibilities and of the factors of success. Education itself must fulfill the obligation of preparing youth for a successful career. It is the duty of the educator to equip youth not only with general knowledge but also with vocational or professional skills. Work is a cosmic duty to which all men, without exception, are obligated. And man's work should be efficient and fruitful.

The first duty that youth faces in the development of character, then, is the duty of self-development. Youth has a sacred obligation to awaken and train all his powers to their fullest potentiality. This is not selfish, though it may appear egocentric. Ambition is a virtue in youth. Later in life it may become a fault and a danger.

## 3

There are certain virtues essential to success and happiness in life which must be acquired early: industry, honesty, self-restraint, control of the physi-

cal desires, harmony with one's social environment, the spirit of coöperation, patience, sincerity. It is such qualities as these which great men early in their 'teens set themselves consciously to achieve. If these qualities are gained by the individual, success and happiness in proportionate degree are assured him.

Religion, with its definite ethical precepts and its strong motivations and sanctions, is a powerful factor in the building up of a character which may have its practical as well as its spiritual aspects. It saves youth from excesses and from self-indulgence. It makes for self-restraint, probity, integrity, coöperation and loyalty. It stimulates moral progress and inspires constant effort toward self-improvement.

The fact that an earnest religious-founded conscience is a factor of material success is definitely shown in the economic history of the Puritans, the Scotch Presbyterians, the Huguenots and the Quakers—all of whom have been as notable for their economic success as for their moral and religious conscience. There may be other factors for the outstanding economic success of these sects, but the sober character of solid integrity inspired by religious conscience is of all factors by far the most notable and effective.

It may not be dignified of religion to base its appeal to youth on grounds of practicality. *But youth*



*should not be unaware that the only completely sound, wholesome and effective life is one which travels on the highway charted by religion.*

## 4

The study of one's own self—the realization of one's tendencies toward good and evil and of one's potentialities for achievement—is the most fascinating and valuable of all studies. It was the slogan of the ancient Greeks: "Know thyself."

The physical sciences teach us the nature of the world around us and how to rule it. "The Occidental," says Edward Carpenter, "knows how to rule everything in the world except the square foot under his own hat."

Psychology teaches us our own nature and how to rule that. Psychology today is materialistic in its tendencies. The psychology of the new age will be spiritual in its foundations and this spiritualized science of psychology will be profoundly effective in aiding youth to acquire a perfect character.

Spiritual psychology teaches man the dual nature of his being: that on the one hand he inherits from his physical evolution all the qualities of the animal—aggressiveness, cruelty, greed, envy, cunning, temper, self-seeking; on the other hand, man has that within him that gives him the capacity of de-



veloping the spiritual qualities of kindness, patience, honesty, self-sacrifice, universal love, and purity of mind and body.

The tragic limitation of present-day psychology and education is the failure to discover and present the spiritual side of man, which is just as potent and far more important a side of his nature than his animal trend. Every man, every woman has the capacity and the power to progress along the path of spiritual perfecting. One of the most important missions of the Founders of religions is to assert this duality and call upon man to rise from the lower, earthly side of his nature toward the celestial, angelic side.

## 5

Paul, two thousand years ago, expounded this psychology efficaciously. These two beings in man Paul calls the carnal and the spiritual man respectively; and his preachment consists chiefly in the exhortation to avail oneself of the aid of the Christos for the all-important task of putting off the garment of carnality and putting on the garment of spirituality.

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the

earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

Thus does Paul train his flock, directing them, exhorting them, encouraging them in ways of nobler living—always the true psychologist, the man of insight into human as well as divine truths.

\* \* \* \* \*

“In man there are two natures, his spiritual or



higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint.

"If the soul identifies itself with the material world it remains dark, for in the natural world there is corruption, aggression, struggles for existence, greed, darkness, transgression and vice. If the soul remains in this station and moves along these paths it will be the recipient of this darkness; but if it becomes the recipient of the graces of the world of mind, its darkness will be transformed into light, its tyranny into justice, its ignorance into wisdom, its aggression into loving kindness, until it reach the apex. Then there will not remain any struggle for existence. Man will become free from egotism; he will be released from the material world; he will become the personification of justice and virtue, for a sanctified soul illumines humanity and is an honor



to mankind, conferring life upon the children of men."\*

## 6

The physical qualities of man are not in themselves evil. It is the use we put them to that may make them harmful. In themselves they are part of the biological foundation for existence. In animals they are necessary and quite innocent. In man they are also necessary—but not innocent unless sublimated by the power of the spirit.

It is those fundamental urges in a human being which he shares with the animal world that give him energy and power of achievement. This physical side of man is as important to his existence on this earthly plane as is the spiritual side.

The first application of intelligence to our self-training in character should be the awareness of our duality and the effort to transubstantiate our animalistic qualities into spiritualized correspondences on a higher plane.

Thus one's tendency to anger can be modified into a power for controlling other human beings for noble ends. George Washington knew how to change his fierce and at one time ungovernable temper into a powerful factor for governing men.

The instinct for self-preservation which is ex-

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The Reality of Man." Bahá'í Publishing Society, N.Y.C.

pressed in the animal as greed and cruelty can be modified in man to an expression of energy and efficiency for career-success. In a spiritualized humanity, such expression of the will-to-exist need not be cruelly competitive nor egoistic. On such a spiritualized plane of humanity there will not remain any distressing struggle for existence.

## 7

Every individual starts life with a certain hereditary or destined endowment. This is his working capital. It is important for him to realize as early as possible in life those tendencies toward good and evil, toward failure and success with which he started existence on this earthly plane. To be wisely aware of one's faults and ignoble tendencies is to make constant effort toward overcoming them. To be aware of one's proficiencies and gifts is essential to a wise and successful choice of career.

One should make a daily practice of self-examination, not in any morbid way, but from a spiritual standpoint—daily reaffirming one's resolution to overcome one's faults and strengthen one's virtues.

What would I be tomorrow that I am not today? Thus we should examine our accounts each night, and each morning start forth to increase our treasures of perfection. *The only wealth we intrinsically*

*possess is the richness of personality we have gained through self-unfoldment. By means of this wealth, all things we would gain are directed unto us. This is the universal law of growth.*

In the analysis of self or of others, this truth is very helpful: that our faults are the shadows of our virtues. In other words, faults are but the excess of some quality in us which is valuable when exercised under proper restraint.

We have already spoken of how capacity for anger may be a danger or a value to man. So every quality in excess becomes a fault and danger to one's success and happiness. For instance, thrift may become penury and stinginess; efficiency may become overbearing; amiability tends toward irresponsibility.

In fact, there is not a single virtue but which tends toward a vice when in excess. On the other hand, there is no fault of temperament which may not be modified into a valuable trait.

## 8

The first claim which life makes upon us is the claim of perfecting our bodies. The proper care and use of the body is in reality a spiritual obligation. Christianity emphasized our sacred duty to our bodies, that they are temples of the living God. We



may not abuse them. To do so is a sin, even though it brings no harm to other people.

This responsibility to our bodies as vehicles of our mind and of our soul is strongly emphasized by every religion. Control of the appetites and passions is the beginning of spiritual development. Lack of control of them injures body, mind and soul.

Even in the simplest things we should practice self-restraint and wisdom. Our diet should be wholesome and not over-indulgent as to amount. We should keep to regular and adequate hours of sleep. We should take what recreation is needed, avoiding however that which tends to deplete one's vitality or which is merely a waste of time.

Youth owes a sacred duty, then, to his body during the important formative period of post-adolescence leading into manhood and womanhood. Parents should instill in their children this sense of responsibility and should train them in wholesome methods of eating and of bodily care and send them out into life intelligent managers of their own physical system.

There is no demand that spirituality can make upon us which would betray the body and its needs. Spirit does and can control and guide through matter, Marie Watson reports 'Abdu'l-Bahá to have said; but matter has its own laws upon its own plane

and will exact its own toil; he who fails to acknowledge and recognize this truth will lead to a wrong psychology and the result is difficult to remedy.

The thing to note here is that this responsibility to our bodies is in reality a spiritual responsibility and cannot be abdicated in the name of religion. Spiritual enthusiasts can find no alibi in their religious teachings for neglecting their bodies or for thinking that strong souls can be built upon sickly constitutions, enfeebled by too much unwise zeal. "Balance in all things" was the motto of the ancient Greeks, and it is the guiding spirit in the transcendent teaching of all the Revelators.

## 9

*Mens sana in corpore sano*—"a sound mind in a sound body" was the Roman maxim. Youth is a period not only for body-building but also for mental development through education. An ignorant person may have a kindly and noble character, but he cannot be said to have attained that lofty station which God has designed for human beings. If religion is one of the wings upon which humanity flies, science is the other. The acquisition of knowledge is therefore a spiritual responsibility.

This advice should be given to every college stu-



dent: "Let the corps of professors and the students be impressed with the purity and holiness of your lives so that they may take you as paragons of worthiness, examples of nobility of nature, observers of the moral laws, holding in subordination the lower element by the higher spirit, the conquerors of self and the masters of wholesome, vital forces in all the avenues of life. Strive always to be at the head of your classes through hard study and true merit. Be always in a prayerful state and appreciate the value of everything. Entertain high ideals and stimulate your intellectual and constructive forces."\*

There is no end to study. It does not cease upon graduation from college. At every age we should be expanding our mental horizons and acquiring an ever-growing and more solid body of knowledge for the better understanding of the world and Universe we live in.

Knowledge is power. It lifts man from the condition of dumb driven cattle in the fields of life into enlightened human beings capable of managing their own destiny. As Albert Mansbridge once said to me in discussing workers' adult education: "The acquisition of knowledge ennobles man. It raises him from an animal to a thinking being. It is one of the

\* Excerpt from a letter by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Persian students at Beirut University, who were under his educational charge.



greatest gifts of life, and no one should be deprived of it."\*

It is the vision and aim of America to afford educational opportunities to all. Theoretically, these opportunities are without limit. Practically, distinct limits to institutional education arise from economic or other causes. But such limitations can afford no alibis to those who sincerely yearn for knowledge and for culture. The avenues to these great life-values lie open on every hand. Self-education, once literacy is acquired, is a feasible and unlimited possibility, and even has certain advantages over standardized institutional education on the higher levels.

The most thoroughly cultured man I have ever known was not a college graduate, and I doubt very much whether the rich flavor of his culture could have developed in the frigid atmosphere of intellectual bureaucracy which reigns in most institutions for higher learning.

The moral is, no one need remain supine in conditions of ignorance or low culture. Aspiration,

\* Albert Mansbridge, founder of the adult education movement amidst the labor class of England, author of "An Adventure in Working Class Education," self-risen from the ranks of the illiterate, has a great vision for education. The workers' adult education movement in England owes its world-preminence chiefly to his inspired efforts and devotion. He is now president of The World Association for Adult Education.

application and discrimination cannot fail to enrich educationally and culturally any individual who desires such enrichment. The means of culture are abundantly at hand. It is the degree of desire which will measure the degree of effort and accomplishment.

To any who would say: "I never had the opportunity to get an education," I would reply: "You never truly wanted one!"

As the first step in character is self-development, so the first proof of capacity for a strong rich character is resolution and achievement in world fields of knowledge. We have no one but ourselves to blame for failure.

10

Toward what types of knowledge should we aspire? We cannot afford to give our valuable time to the acquisition of miscellaneous and desultory knowledge. Nor should our primary aim in the development of intelligence and acquisition of knowledge be simply self-advancement or the glorification of self, but the ability to contribute to human progress.

The youth of today should therefore master both the physical and social sciences. Especially should they become proficient in history, sociology, economics, psychology, and political science. They must be prepared to assume leadership in world



affairs and these studies are very important foundations.

Throughout the process of education as the chief factor of self-development, we must beware of selfishness or too great self-centeredness. Youth must develop the altruistic and spiritual qualities at the same time that they are developing their intellectual powers.

I like the following ideal of education set forth by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a talk to the students of Beirut University: "The Universities and colleges of the world must hold fast to three cardinal principles.

"1. Whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the extension of the boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evil, a standard universal system of instruction, and the diffusion of the lights of knowledge and reality.

"2. Service to the cause of the students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness, and the excellency of virtues and animating them with the excellences and perfections of the religion of God.

"3. Service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The thoughts of universal peace must be installed in the hearts of all scholars."



## 11

In all this great and important process of self-development, of character formation, of intellectual advancement throughout the period of youth, we must learn how to call upon powers greater than ourselves if we are to make adequate achievement. Man cannot through his own will power and intelligence create a perfect character for himself. The pull of the animal is too strong in us. We cannot, as it were, lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. The human will is not a completely adequate instrument for perfecting the self. For the will is divided in its allegiance, torn and pulled in two diverse directions: toward the spiritual plane by the spiritual side of our nature, toward mundane goals by the natural and desire side of our nature.

Thus the will is not a completely free and independent instrument for self-perfection. Instead of being able to dominate and rule our desire-nature by the will and intelligence, we tend to be controlled and governed by our emotions and to make use of our intelligence as an instrument to gain the objects of our desires.

It is vastly important, then, that we train our desire-nature heavenward, so to speak; in other words, come more and more earnestly to desire spiritual progress and spiritual powers and attain-

ments. This desire is greatly strengthened by aspiration, prayer and meditation; and by association with others who are spiritually minded.

Prayer is the food of spirit. We can no more expect to develop spiritually without it than we could expect to develop physically without food. Man cannot rise spiritually by his own unaided efforts. He needs the power of the Holy Spirit for self-perfectioning. This is attained through prayer, through turning to God and beseeching aid and grace for such a spiritual development.

## 12

There is a mysterious power which is called the *grace of God*. It is something that few understand, perhaps none except the Revelator. It is that attribute of Deity which is available upon earnest request and beseechment for help in trouble; and more valuably still, for aid in spiritual development. Its contribution to our spiritual progress may be compared to the contribution of sunshine and richness of soil to the growth of plants. By attracting the grace of God to us through prayer and meditation, we can make amazing progress in spiritual growth transcending the slow and tedious average.

It is the grace of God, this special outpouring of the Holy Spirit toward man's needs, that causes



those miracles of transmutation of human character which characterize the highest experiences of religious history. Through this power released by a Revelator we see men and women turn from evil or from selfish idle lives to become veritable saints. This power is especially potent in the early period of a great world religion. It is released in great waves upon the planet and becomes available for every earnest seeker.

The noblest fruits of human character have been achieved under the stimulus of devotion to religion. This relationship of man to God through the channel of a Revelator, with the eternal stimulus and inspiration of that perfect and noble Pattern held before him, has produced the most glorious and noble characters in history.

We are today, I believe, at the dawn of another great religious epoch. We must learn to avail ourselves of this tremendous power of the Holy Spirit and of the grace of God for attaining the utmost possible self-development and character growth. We need this aid not only for character but also for an intellectual development that shall be universal in its scope. We are not fulfilling our function as spiritual beings until we shine with a new potency in the midst of a materialistic and evil world. *Not until humanity awakens to this new plane and standard of self-development and self-perfection will an ideal social pattern for the world be achieved.*



“When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear, then enlightenment follows, a spirit is realized within, a new power descends and a new life is given. It is like the birth from the animal kingdom into the kingdom of man. When man acquires these virtues, the oneness of the world of humanity will be revealed, the banner of international peace will be upraised, equality between all mankind will be realized and the Orient and Occident will become one. Then will the justice of God become manifest, all humanity will appear as the members of one family and every member of that family will be consecrated to cooperation and mutual assistance. The lights of the love of God will shine; eternal happiness will be unveiled; everlasting joy and spiritual delight will be attained.” \*

## 13

Self-development is a lifelong process, not limited to youth. We grow eternally throughout this life and through future lives toward distant shining goals of power and glory of service which by no stretch of the imagination could we possibly conceive at this stage of our existence. Self-development, in its highest aspect, is divine development and has no end short of Infinity.

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá—“The Reality of Man.” Bahá'í Publishing Committee, New York.

## CHAPTER VI

# The Law of Duty

**I**NFANCY and childhood have no responsibilities. Youth has little responsibility beyond that of self-development and self-unfoldment through education. This is in itself a serious responsibility and should be so considered and acted upon by youth. They owe something to that provision on the part of the adult world which makes education possible for them. They owe still more to themselves in the way of developing to the utmost their intellectual capacity. But apart from this duty of intellectual training and the acquisition of knowledge and of skills for the future career, youth is practically free from responsibilities.

Thus youth should be and usually is a delightful period of growth, expansion, discovery of capacities and dawning use of personal powers. In this period of life, physical and mental recreation plays a larger part than in any other period; and deservedly so, for the budding powers of youth should not be strained by overwork or overstudy. The physical frame has not yet reached its peak of development and hardihood; the nervous system is still less developed than the physical and suffers perhaps permanent injuries



from overstrain during the 'teens. The present system of education tends to overstrain young people and may cause permanent injury to the nervous system. Five hours a day given to intellectual work is all that should be required of youth.

Youth should be a period of joyous self-expression, self-exploration and discovery. The youth's contact with the world about him should also be made harmonious and joyous. This is a duty which the world owes to childhood and youth. A happy childhood and youth builds into a wholesome mental hygiene in later life. Whereas an overstrained, unhappy childhood and youth builds up complexes which make for neurotic qualities in later life. Therefore the adult world is obligated to see that the early years of life on the part of the growing generation are made joyous and wholesome.\*

## 2

There comes a time in life, however, when responsibilities creep in upon the individual. As graduation from college approaches, youth begins to feel the weight of the future years upon it. Now is the time when life must be faced seriously. It is necessary to go forth from the cloistered halls of

\* Progressive Education, by putting this psychological principle into practice, is making an important contribution to the development of wholesome childhood and youth.



learning prepared to earn one's livelihood. Under normal economic situations, not to be able to earn a living at maturity is a sign of imperfection, weakness, irresponsibility.

The first responsibility which the individual is apt to incur, then, is that of earning a livelihood. Soon there ensues the choice of a mate and the responsibilities of married life. Now the individual has to buckle down to real work and duty. Marriage is a great discipline and training of character. It induces the individual cheerfully to accept responsibilities which he would have been apt to throw aside in the more free and untrammelled condition of bachelorhood.

Now that maturity is reached and married life engaged in, with children to support and bring up, the individual passes through the cycle through which his parents have formerly passed—the cycle of duty, of work, of responsibility; responsibility to the family, responsibility to the neighborhood and city, responsibility to one's country, and in the coming years responsibility to a World State.

Those adults who chronically avoid responsibility remain to that extent immature and imperfect souls. They may make alibis for themselves, and their family and friends may accept these alibis. But God does not. The order and equilibrium of the universe must be maintained. That mysterious

equilibrating Force—the attribute of God called Justice—causes pain and suffering to attend as consequence of every chronic neglect of cosmic law and order. *Those souls who fail to mature here will have to mature in other existences, at an even greater price than they should have paid here.*

## 3

All religions inculcate the fundamental virtue of duty and powerfully motivate the performance of duty. When individuals accept and adequately perform their responsibilities to family and mart and country, society prospers and government has equilibrium and security. When, on the contrary, religion wanes and with it disappear the sanctions of authoritative truth and the compunctions of conscience, then duties fail and disorder and insecurity spread throughout society.

*The great central law of the universe is responsibility.* Everything in the cosmos, animate and inanimate, must obey this law. It is the foundation of order and equilibrium and harmony. Man cannot escape this law. Here is a form of character development which existence thrusts upon us. Every human being has to acquire and practice responsibility or pay the price in a chaotic and unhappy if not eventually tragic existence.



The Universe is an expression of immutable law which applies on every plane of being—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual. We cannot fool this law. We cannot cajole it. We cannot plead exceptions to it or escape its punishment if violated. In this respect the Universe is a stern reality—impersonal, unforgiving. God as Law is a stern judge. It is this attribute of Deity and this understanding of phenomenal existence which gave rise to the saying, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."

## 4

"Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

"Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy and the evil way, and the



froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

“I love them that love me: and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

“*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by*

him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.

“Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.*” \*

Thus spake the wisest man who ever lived upon this planet, Solomon, who chose wisdom from the Lord above riches and honor and because of this choice was given in addition great riches and great honor.

Solomon apostrophizes Wisdom, almost personifies it, sees it as a principle of occult value. By it he means not the wisdom of the market place, but the perfect understanding of those immutable laws of the cosmos violation of which spells disaster.

## 5

Apparently life is free, elastic, mutable; the universe is at our beck and call as the instrument of our self-expression. In reality, our freedom lies between very narrow walls. If self-expression becomes self-

\* Proverbs, Chapter 8.



ishness and egoism, the universe begins very soon to shut down upon us and to imprison us. Like criminals against society, we eventually find ourselves living within those prison walls which immutable law creates for the wrongdoer.

Christ made this plain in describing the spiritual law of cause and effect. "What ye sow, that shall ye also reap." There is a certain harvest for every kind of sowing.

When we understand this great law of spiritual cause and effect, then right action and morality become simply an expression of the higher intelligence and wisdom. Unrighteous action, on the other hand, is a symptom of gross ignorance of the essential moral and spiritual structure of the universe. Those who conceive that by wrongdoing they are going to advantage themselves are simply blind to the essential truths of existence and are laying up for themselves black tragedy.

*Wrongdoing does not depend only upon a legal system to bring it to task and punishment. The Universe is automatic in this respect. Unlike human justice, Divine Justice cannot be evaded.*

It is this moral aspect of existence which Theosophists describe as karma, a concept upon which their whole structure of ethics is built. It is, in fact, the teaching of all the Prophets who come to warn human beings of the dangers and consequences of



evil doing and of the beneficent rewards of right doing.

The words of the Prophets are not all milk and honey. Many of them sting like scorpions. They wish to bring before humanity all the harshness of punishment which sin entails, thus warning in language so vehement as to stimulate reform.

The dire aspect of cosmic punishment is apt to fade away from the human consciousness in epochs of irreligion. The very concept of sin fades away in such an age, as it has faded away today.

That men may be unaware of God as Ruler and Judge and blind themselves to the consequences of sin does not in any way change, however, the nature of the universe nor enable humans to escape the individual or collective disaster which unrighteousness entails.

On the other hand, a knowledge of these laws and a full understanding of the beneficence which righteousness brings to life is one of the most powerful incentives for moral living and for the perfecting of character. It is, in fact, the most powerful incentive commonly current and available to human beings.

I wish that all people could realize the mathematical severity and simplicity of this Cosmic Moral System. It stands inviolate above the self-seeking

will of man, crushing that will inevitably into submission through agony and abasement.

The knowledge of this Law is the most important step in the growing mental and moral development of a human being. It is far more important a law to understand than any law of physics, of chemistry, of mathematics or of the social sciences; a law so simple that even in one's early 'teens one can realize it effectively as a guide to conduct.

The ethical system of Socrates and Plato was based upon this principle of Law. Wisdom, understanding, intelligence would, according to Socrates, be sufficient to inspire goodness. To practice evil is simply to be unintelligent. Therefore, said Socrates, teach youth to understand the cosmic laws and they will modify their behavior towards goals of righteousness.

Plato developed this idea into one of the most glorious intellections which humanity has evolved: that Goodness, Truth and Beauty are but three aspects of one central Essence; that to live the Truth is to express Righteousness and enjoy Beauty.

## 6

One could give many examples of the peculiar exactness and detail with which this law of spiritual



cause and effect operates. "*As ye measure out, so shall it be measured out to you.*"

This does not mean that a generous man will necessarily become rich, or a mean man remain poor. The ancient Hebrews interpreted the spiritual law of cause and effect a little too literally. Worldly events do not fit such an interpretation, so the author of the Book of Job discovered—and the thesis of his drama is that good men may suffer misfortune through no fault of their own. Such misfortunes, perhaps, are in the nature of a spiritual test or purification.

Yet it remains mathematically certain that haphazard, irresponsible, unrestrained lives cannot long thrive in a Universe the center and core of which is order.

If the reader will begin to note the lives of those about him, and the lives of men and women of the past available to us in the form of biographical material, he will find significant dramatic and philosophical values in the moral correlations discoverable therein. And these values are not merely theoretical. They should be a vivid and concrete aid in our own character development.

Many such examples might be given. But I will cite only one—the life of Jack London as graphically delineated by Irving Stone in "Sailor on Horse-



back." \* Here is a man of volcanic temperament and power irrupting at the age of twenty-five into a literary success that for ten years held the world at his feet. Wealth, fame, and women flowed to him. Like many geniuses he was careless about these things, and his life was a chronic disorder.

In separating from his first wife he lost one of the best friends he ever had, and the love of his two children. In the later years of his life this result was felt by him as a great loneliness.

In financial affairs he blundered along with complete lack of self-restraint, so that large as his income was he always outran it and was constantly and desperately in debt. His grandiose schemes for becoming a patriarchal agriculturalist and ranchman met with tragic disappointments at every hand.

In the last years of his life disaster piled upon disaster—each disaster traceable not so much to any definite material cause as to the inner spiritual cause of his moral disorderliness. His ambitious castle, Wolf House, on the day following its completion but before occupancy was discovered at midnight in flames. Jack was awakened. When he reached the spot Wolf House was a roaring inferno. There was no water "He could do nothing but stand

\* "Sailor on Horseback," Irving Stone, Houghton Mifflin Co., originally published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Both the author and the magazine deserve great credit for this superb literary production.

with tears running down his cheeks and watch one of his greatest life dreams be destroyed." It was never ascertained what caused the conflagration.

Other disasters overtook him with a Nemesian inevitability worthy of the pen of a Euripedes. His prize registered pigs all caught pneumonia on newly built stone floors and died. His prize short-horn bull broke its neck in a peculiar and unpreventable accident. His herd of Angora goats all died from disease. His Shire blue-ribbon stallion was found dead in the fields one day. Other expensive agricultural investments proved a complete failure.

Worse still, his health began to fail, his writings deteriorated, his friends proved worthless, he fell a prey to dipsomania; and to cap the climax his life came to a sudden end at the age of forty from a suicidal overdose of morphine and atropine.

Here was a man of great intellect, superb genius and noble impulses. He was not a selfish man. He was not even a self-seeking man. He had high ideals for the good of humanity to which he unselfishly devoted much of his time and energy at the risk of his career. He was a generous friend and patron of rising or would-be genius—a Maecenas "par excellence."

Why did Destiny so persecute him? Because he was too supremely the egotist. Like Napoleon he had to be crushed. He blazed through the firma-



ment of fame in a path more spectacular and eccentric than that which comets show. *Disorder was the key-note of his life.* No permanent happiness, no stability, no ordered prosperity could have been prognosticated for such a personality. His career at every turn illustrates and vindicates the great spiritual law of cause and effect. Read "Sailor on Horseback." It will do you more good than a sermon.

## 7

In a small city where I once taught, strife and hostility arose through the jealousy of two women who struggled for control of an Arts Club founded by one of them. Both women were of the dominating, all-conquering type. They made acrimonious attacks upon each other, not hesitating even at slander spread over the telephone and on all possible social occasions.

What was the result? One of these women came down with a severe case of grippe, which kept her ill a month. In the other family, the woman and her two children were ill for weeks. Such were the results of disharmony and psychic cruelty in a Universe devoted to the great Law of Order and Harmony. Anyone knowing this Law could have foreseen such results and predicted them, as surely as an astronomer can predict an eclipse.



How important it is, then, to realize the great spiritual laws. How infinitely more important for us in the present stage of civilization to be able to predict the results of moral or immoral actions than to be able to analyze or synthesize the chemical elements of nature or to discover new constellations and new universes.

## 8

We have certain definite responsibilities as individual units of the family and of social and political groups. No individual is an isolated unit of existence, just as no sun or planet or atom even is isolated in the Universe. Everything in phenomenal existence is integrated; connected by invisible links, one with the other. It is these necessary ties linking us one with another that create our responsibilities. To come to appreciate and satisfy these social and spiritual obligations is but the part of wisdom.

Responsibility is not equivalent, on the spiritual scale, to altruism. It is but a debt we owe to the existence we are staged in, a debt that must be paid if we would live a free and wholesome life. It is a law of nature and a law of fulfillment. A law which we are destined fully to realize, if not in this life then in the next.

Perfect freedom on the part of the individual, in the sense of untrammelled expression of his egocentric will, is an impossibility in a universe dedicated to harmonious order. True freedom is attained by submitting one's self-will to the Cosmic Will, so that one's life flows in universal channels. Only thus does one find that life becomes untrammelled and unimprisoned. Those iron doors which shut upon the evil doer exist not for the righteous.

The greatest mistake a spiritually aspiring person can make is to conceive that any exercise of spiritual zeal can absolve him from the material and secular responsibilities of life. Even zeal in working for God cannot condone the violation of life's necessary obligations.

## 9

The doctrine of karma as expounded by the Theosophists has one most important omission—the "grace of God."

Prayer and repentance for wrong action, leading to actual reform, can attract the Divine forgiveness. There is a certain amount of cosmic grace available to an individual or a people who have done wrong. As in the world of nature there is usually a lag between abuse of the body and the natural suffering which follows it, so on the moral plane there may be considerable leeway between a series of wrong acts

and their moral and spiritual consequences. This is illustrated in the maxim, "The mills of the gods grind slowly."

But this cosmic elasticity, grace, or forgiveness cannot go beyond a certain point. When that point is reached, the universal law becomes a grim reality to us. There is no avoiding the penalty. When we have used up our last bit of credit we become spiritually insolvent. Nothing but suffering and catastrophe can ensue at this point. Therefore it is wise to avoid the ultimate point of wrong-doing, as in fact it is wise to avoid any wrong-doing.

## 10

That attribute of Deity which we call Justice is the equilibrating force of the Universe. When an individual or a people depart too far from the natural orbit of law and order, they are pulled back with a terrific corrective force. The suffering which ensues from such a cataclysm may be looked upon not so much in the light of punishment as in the light of a stern guidance. "Calamity is my Providence to thee. In appearance it is fire and vengeance, in reality it is light and mercy."\*

"Wisdom is manifested in the operation of the principle of Justice. This principle, as exhibited in

\* Bahá'u'lláh, "Hidden Words."



the lower departments of nature, acts as a *regulator* among the essences, elements, and forces that operate in all substances. In other words, it seeks to equalize all the agencies of activity, and aids in combining the different elements into harmonious forms and beautiful proportions. Justice is the great balancing-power of the Universe; it seeks to balance all accounts, to settle all difficulties, to harmonize all interests. It is God's peacemaker, fulfilling its mission in the various departments of nature, by properly adjusting all elements, and combining all forms according to their material qualities or spiritual essences. It seeks to harmonize man with his fellow-man, as the legitimate means of producing harmony with the great laws of his natural and spiritual being. Thus, by harmonizing man with himself, justice rejoices in having harmonized man with his Divine Author.

*"If in any department of nature a law is violated, Justice sees that the violation is followed by a corresponding effect, in order that the violator may be induced to desist from his course, and that the wonted harmony may thus be restored. Thus, 'chastisement' is inflicted for the purpose of causing the transgressor to return to right relations and their accompanying enjoyment."*\*

\* R. P. Wilson, "Discourses from the Spirit-World." New York, Part-  
ridge and Brittan, 1875.

## 11

Everything in existence obeys two forces. One is the centrifugal force of self-expression; the other is the centripetal force of law or duty.

Self-expression is always joyous, for Destiny has generously associated pleasure with wholesome functioning. Duty seems to be made of sterner stuff. But this forbidding appearance of duty is not its real aspect. For duty is the natural corollary of self-expression, and when willingly performed becomes also a source of joy. Self-expression without duty would be aimless and in time vapid.

Responsibility is the fruit of the tree of life, of which self-expression is the blossom. For a tree to blossom without culminating in fruitage is to fail of its destined mission. So also for man to be seeking always his satisfaction in egocentric forms of self-expression is to negate his spiritual and creative station.

Duty is the track upon which the creative will of man makes effective progress. Its purpose is beneficent. Its proper functioning is spiritually joyous.

## CHAPTER VII

### Altruism

**H**E WHO performs his necessary duties in this world, who works industriously and efficiently, supports his family, and carries out all of his responsibilities—he is a man we call a model citizen. Yet he has reached but one stage of the upward climb toward the Perfect Man. Above that stage is the stage of Altruism.

It is to raise man's actions to a plane where they are motivated by love for others that the Prophets incarnate and reveal their great message to humanity. Religion calls upon all men and women to rise to the plane of altruism in their daily living.

Without the inspiration and the support which religion and the spiritual life give, it would be difficult for man to turn his egocentric self-developmental urges into altrocentric or altruistic motivation. If this transition were not difficult, it would not be so necessary for the Revelator to appear upon this planetary plane. History has proved that without revealed religion altruism does not appear in any large extent.

2

It is true, Nature provides certain urges toward



altruism. Biologists point out that altruism first developed in the course of normal evolution with the mammal bearing its young within its body, suckling it and caring for it tenderly after birth.

Even in the animal world, the mother will protect its young at the risk or cost of its death. In the human world, marital life and parenthood produce in the average individual a certain inevitable degree of altruism. This altruism gradually extends to the complete extent of the family life, including the clan as the unit of society as has been the case in China up to date.

This family fealty and altruism, which was characteristic of all patriarchal peoples, has come down from the Mosaic Dispensation into the life of modern Jewry and is one of the important factors in the commercial success of Jews to this day. All within the family must be helped. One for all and all for one is the ideal which generally prevails.

In feudalism the loyalty to clan enlarges into loyalty to the feudal group. And in modern times we have seen the rise of nationalism, in which loyalty and altruism have grown to include all of the national group.

Outside of these natural or political groups, however, altruism has not prevailed. For instance, in China the stranger outside the clan is allowed to drown when simple aid would save him. The sense

of general altruism in that country is so feeble that supplies contributed from the Red Cross of this country to China some years ago for the starving famine-struck populations were seized by the war lords through whose provinces they had to pass and diverted to their own selfish uses. Finally our Red Cross, in disgust at this futility, ceased to render such aid to China.

Even within the Christian commonwealth of nations, altruism ceases upon national borders and hatred and cruelty begin.

## 3

Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed man's duty to the world at large. His world message implies an altruism as wide as the planet itself. "Pride not yourself in this that you love your country, but rather this, that you love mankind." Every child is to be brought up to realize his spiritual obligation to love all humanity and to work for the benefit of all races and peoples.

"All the divine messengers have come to this earth as specialists of the law of love. They came to teach a divine love to the children of men; they came to minister a divine healing between the nations; they came to cement in one the hearts of men and to bring humanity into a state of unity and concord.

“The object of the dawn of the Morn of Guidance and the effulgence of the Sun of Reality have been no other than the inculcation of the utmost love among the children of men and perfect good-fellowship between the individuals of mankind. Therefore, in the beginning the foundation of this love and unity must be laid among the believers of God, and then permeate through the nations of the world. Therefore as much as you can be ye kind towards one another, and likewise to others.

“There is the family bond which is the cause of love. There is the patriotic bond which is a basis for love. There is the racial cause which is a source of love. There is the political one which is the cause of love and unity. Partnership in business is one sort of connection.

“But there is no bond like the love of God, for the love of God is the bond eternal, and outside of it there are only temporary ones.” \*

## 4

Where and how shall we express this altruism in daily life? Opportunities for good deeds do not occur at every moment, but the attitude of good will and of universal love can go out from us in all the events and encounters of life bringing happiness to

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Divine Art of Living."



other human beings about us, shedding a ray of that celestial light which a Savior concentrates upon humanity.

This general, pervasive spirit of altruism or universal love when permeating the whole social group establishes a marvelous atmosphere of harmony and happiness. The absence of it, on the other hand, creates an atmosphere of submerged complexes, bickerings, inharmonies and consequent unhappiness. We can make our own heaven or hell upon earth by the kind of social atmosphere we radiate and attract.

We are not asked to love everyone equally—that is impossible. “There are two kinds of love, one universal and one individual. You must love humanity in order to uplift and help humanity. Even if they kill you, you must love them. *Individual love cannot be forced and you are not called upon to love everybody personally, but if they are in your lives see to it that they are means of your development and that you are means of their development through your universal love for them.*

“How can one love another whose personality is unpleasant?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked, and he answered: “We are creatures of the same God. We must therefore love all as children of God even though they are doing us harm. Christ loved his persecutors. *It is possible for us to attain to that*

love. God manifested his love by creating man in his own image. Man must manifest his love by developing himself and others more and more in the image of God. The true fruit of man is, therefore, love. The purpose of a tree is to produce fruit. Man is like a tree; his fruit should be love." \*

This preachment of love and harmony sounds very delightful. It is easier to say, however, than to do. As a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult for the average individual to transform his egocentric urges into altruistic urges. Here we are wrestling with primitive instincts and impulses of human nature, and the task is not easy. We should not be discouraged if the process is slow. And as pointed out in the previous chapter, we greatly need for this transformation of our motives the aid of prayer and of the Holy Spirit.

Undoubtedly the greatest force for achieving this universal love on the part of the individual is first the achieving of attachment of the heart to God. Through that attachment, the Cosmic Love is caused to stream into the human heart spontaneously, expressing itself toward other individuals in a manner that is not forced or artificial. In fact, it is doubtful if the spiritual love which is enjoined upon us by the Prophets can be attained by us in any other way.

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Divine Art of Living."

## 5

Can we carry altruism into our business affairs? Yes, we not only can, but must. All our work should be done in the spirit of service. Then it is equivalent to prayer. We should do our work with love, praying that it may be a means of benefaction and happiness to others.

The commercial world in its secular pattern of today, so dominated by materialism and greed, is a difficult place in which to express this attitude of service in one's work. Yet we must somehow make a beginning, even now and today. In a later and more ideal civilization this spiritualized motivation will invade all business, and it will be easy for the individual to fall into the then prevailing altruistic current of thought and practice.

Even today in the secular world it is apparent that all business transactions are an exchange of services and are built upon a foundation of mutuality. Both parties to a transaction must derive mutual benefits and advantages from it.

It is only a matter of spiritual psychology, therefore, to transfer our motivation in business transactions from one of profit to one of service. *The transaction remains the same, the profit remains the same, our living still accrues to us. But the psycho-*



*logical basis is far different when the spirit of service dominates than when the spirit of profit dominates.*

## 6

When the spirit of service or altruism motivates our business or professional life we shall find a new mysterious tide of prosperity and success. For we shall be operating on the plane of the Kingdom, of which Christ said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." On this plane, we rise above the jungle life of brutal economic competition into a coöperative world where prosperous living is assured for all.

Even now in the midst of a greed-motivated world the assertion of altruism in all one's acts can be counted upon to assure material success, provided other factors of success are also present such as energy, persistence and efficiency.

There is a mysterious tide which can be counted upon to bring to us that which we send forth. "Cast your bread upon the waters and it shall return after many days." He who sows generous measures of good will upon the fields of life will never fail to reap abundant harvests. One is thus building up a body of friendship and good will which is actually a working capital for success in life.

In another and better world where society is

operated upon a more coöperative basis and where service is the prevailing motive, prosperity will flow in greater abundance to all humanity. This will be a different planet then. Want or poverty will be unknown either to the individual or to groups of society.

Altruism, therefore, or the centering of one's motivation upon our fellows rather than upon ourselves, is in reality a feasible working basis even on the material and practical plane. Altruism is not synonymous with self-effacement. It does not call for undue sacrifice. *It is a practical law—the great law of mutuality which binds all existence together.*

“Love your neighbor as yourself,” said Christ. And this, you notice, is a fifty-fifty proposition. It does not call for neglect of self-needs. This is altruism: a kindly consideration of others jointly with ourselves. “Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you.” There is a still loftier plane of human character-attainment, the plane of sacrifice, which will be described in the ensuing chapter.

## 7

What a wonderful world it would be if the golden rule applied throughout the business life as well as through the social and family life of man upon this planet. “The law to love one another is the law of



service," says Henry Demarest Lloyd in "Man, the Social Creator." "And service calls for service. The Golden Rule cannot be applied to human life in any other way than to call upon everyone who receives the results of labour to labour in his turn. Mazzini said, 'Let labour be the basis of civil society.' It must also be the basis of religion. It is such; what remains is that we so recognize it. The labourer is the creator; the labourer is the lover. He is the re-maker of man, nature and society; he is the one who comes to serve, who does the things that he would have done to him, who makes possible life which is love incarnated, who is the Prince of Peace. . . .

"As labour is creation, by labour men do unto each other as they ought and enter heaven. Love for the people has one of its roots, though not the greatest root, in the fact that the body of the common people is the reservoir in which is gathered up the creative energy of society, and that out of it flow the streams of power and progress. . . .

"It is only by labouring that man can fulfill his function as creator. When man works creation is under way. Labour as the exercise of faculty is the greatest happiness, and as the fabricator of nature, man and society is the highest prerogative of humanity. All faculty demands expression, and the work of creation is infinite. *Labour with love is the divine*



*in action at its highest power.* This divine service is the true worship, and was prefigured by the sacrifice by primitive man of fruits and yearling kids, the doves and first-born of every flock. . . .

“The task set for love for today is as clear and concrete as that of any previous moment of social creation. It is determined by the new circumstances of our time, which are incontestably the new wealth and the new multitudes it has brought together. The history of love is the clue to follow if we would understand the earthquaking power with which men are moving toward each other to establish peace, happiness and prosperity in the now desolated fields of the new Industry. Poverty is to be abolished, and with it the crime and disease caused by poverty. Every man is to be made a master—the master of all because he and all serve all. More wealth than has ever been known is to be created out of the manhood and earth now waste. The rewards of the leaders as well as the people are to be made indefinitely greater than now. The dependence of individuals or communities on the will or greed of others is to be brought to an end.

“The present hatreds, anarchies, waste of good will and waste of wealth are but passing phenomena of the transition into a new social order. In its previous creations of organized love to rule men in the territories of contact mankind has been doing

laboratory work. The family, the nation, have been experiments on a small scale with the forces which are now to be applied universally. The family, the nation, are true facts and will be eternal; but they are members of a series which will express its highest term in a still greater fact.

“The mission of the individual and the race is to create. Individuality and association are means; each of equal dignity, each indispensable. Once man and men see the grandeur of the destiny before them, life will never again seem cold or narrow, discouraging or uninspired. This is an aim which makes life divine. Infinite are the allurements, the joys, the problems, the solutions, the prizes of life thus lived. Ours is the era of the new Newton who will work out the attraction of men for each other as the gravitating force which explains the position, motion and relations of the social atoms and the social masses.” \*

## 8

There is a paradoxical claim which life makes upon

\* Henry Demarest Lloyd, “Man, the Social Creator.” Doubleday Page & Co., New York, 1906.

This posthumous book, the result of Lloyd's researches in this country and Europe, especially regarding human relations in industrial and governmental fields, is deserving of republication. The spiritual fervor of his ideals of economic cooperation and brotherhood has an inspiration as fresh and necessary today as in the epoch for which he wrote.

us. On the one hand it demands of us a struggle for self-existence. Destiny plants deeply in us the egocentric urges for this necessary end. On the other hand, Destiny demands of us as spiritual beings, made in the image of God, a development toward altruism.

How, then, can the transition be attained? It cannot adequately be attained except through the mission of the Revelator, through His teachings, His exhortations, the example of His own life; and most important of all, through the streams of love which He lets loose upon humanity and in particular upon every individual who turns to Him and to the Holy Spirit for aid in this process.

Character for adequate and successful self-expression, character adequate to meet the responsibilities of life, may be attained without revealed religion. But the character of altruism needs the light and heat of the Spirit for its development and fruition. The seeds of altruism lie within us. But their potentiality can become actual only through the action of that great Sun of Truth whose rays can nurse these seeds to life.

One of the great struggles one faces in life is this constant chronic struggle to sublimate egoism into altruism. Youth starts life with egoistic urges and ambitions. This is but natural. The more powerful these urges, the better is the prognostication for



ultimate success. Somewhere in the process, however, these urges must be restrained, modified, transferred into altruistic urges. And that is not easy.

The process is all the harder for those who have strong creative gifts demanding expression. The genius, the creator, is prone to self-centeredness, to egoism, to selfishness. Yet these are the salt of the earth, these are the great achievers, the ones who move the race forward and cause it to progress. Is it possible for them also to transfer their center of motivation from egoism to altruism?

Certainly it is possible. And the history of religion proves that it can be done. But because the capacity and degree of power is greater here than in the ordinary individual, the efforts toward sublimation and spiritualization must also be greater.

*The possession of genius can win no exemption from the spiritual law of altruism. One of the main weaknesses of past human society has been the fact that its leaders in achievement have been too much motivated by egocentric aims. Not until the world's leadership becomes altruistic can human society hope to attain to ideal patterns.*

## 9

Every person is capable of expressing kindness and love in the daily life. No matter at what stage

of spiritual development we happen to be, we can at least begin to motivate our deeds with the spirit of helpfulness.

"Try Giving Yourself Away," urges an anonymous writer in "Forbes." \* "People have different things to give. Some have time, energy, skill, ideas. Others have some special talent. All of us can give away appreciation, interest, understanding, encouragement. I get my compensation out of feeling that I am a part of the life of my times, doing what I can to make things more interesting and exciting for other people. And that makes life more interesting and exciting for me, and keeps my mind keener. As if this were not enough, I find that friends multiply and good things come to me from every direction."

That man has attained to the habitual expression of altruism who radiates kindness and good will in all his human contacts and who does all his work in the spirit of service. It is just as easy to live this way, once one forms the habit, as to live a self-centered money-motivated life.

"Work done in the spirit of service," says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "is equivalent to prayer."

One has to work, anyway. Why not adjust one's necessary actions to this great law of altruism, which is cosmic in its foundations and scope? Work done

\* "Try Giving Yourself Away." Forbes, June 1, 1938.

as duty may be disagreeable. Work done with love is joyful.

“For those we love, we venture many things,  
The thought of them gives spirit flaming wings.  
For those we love, we labor hard and long,  
To dream of them stirs in the heart a song.  
For those we love, no task can be too great,  
We forge ahead, defying adverse fate.  
For those we love, we seek life’s highest goal,  
And find contentment deep within the soul.” \*

## 10

Altruism—or in its more ardent aspect, love—is the creative and sustaining force of the universe. God created man not by accident but by the Will-to-Love. It is that same force of love expressed on the phenomenal plane which causes coherence in life-forms, the law of attraction, the affinities of chemistry and the affections of the human world.

To live outside this Law of Love is to be an outcast from the Kingdom. One who habitually practices love lives thereby in heaven. One who knows not how to give or attract love lives in pur-

\* “Those We Love,” Agnes Carr in the “Boston Traveller.”



gatory. One who gives forth and attracts to himself the opposite of love, hatred, lives in hell.

Love is the atmosphere of paradise. When it reigns amidst earth-bound groups it makes these groups tiny replicas of heaven. We do not need to wait until death in order to taste the glories and joys of celestial life. And we cannot expect, if we have not learned the taste of heaven here, to gravitate later to the Heaven-over-There.

“Love is primarily not a subjective emotion, but an expansion and a deepening of life, through Life setting itself in the other, taking the other up into itself; and in this movement life itself becomes greater, more comprehensive and noble. Love is not a mere relation of given individuals, but a development and a growing in communion, and elevation and an animation of the original condition. And this movement of love has no limits; it has all infinity for its development; it extends beyond the relation to persons to the relation to things; for things also reveal their innermost being only to a disposition of love: again, the striving after truth in science and art cannot succeed without love and an animation that proceeds from it, without inwardly becoming one with the object. . . .

“This increasing spiritualization of human life never becomes a sure possession that calls for no toil;

ever anew it demands our attention and activity; it has continually to be won anew as a whole. For the spiritualization of human life a longing rooted in the whole being is primarily necessary." \*

## 11

The stage of altruism, or cosmic love, is a height that must be eventually achieved by all who would make spiritual progress. At present, human society is so constructed as to make the daily practise of altruism difficult.

But this will not always be the case. Collective humanity, like individual man, is called upon to reach these heights of altruism in its destined progress toward perfection. A cooperative world is in the making. Those who cling to the husks of selfishness will discover what empty treasures they possess. For nothing is certain in the way of human possessions or human security. Nothing is more certain in our planetary life today than that the predominantly selfish motives of humanity are hastening it toward a sure and inescapable destruction.

Just as certain is it that those who today are expressing ideality in their thoughts and deeds are building for a better world that is sure to come.

\* Rudolf Eucken, "Love in Creation."

*They are architects of the future. No idealism is lost or wasted.*

Altruism is the world's greatest need today—on the part of statesmen, industrialists, financial leaders, educators, professional men of every type, and every humble citizen.

In spite of the negative and chaotic conditions of society today, that individual who boldly and courageously asserts the will-to-love in the midst of a world of fear and hate will create for himself and for those who love him a magic realm of serenity and peace.



## CHAPTER VIII

### The Stage of Selflessness

**A**S LIFE moves on it requires more and more of us. A man who has faithfully and successfully striven in the path of self-development and self-training, who fulfills his responsibilities to family and state, and who practices altruism in the daily relationships of life—has he reached the ultimate goal of human character? No, he has not, for there are still loftier goals to which humanity must attain.

The path of character-building, of spiritual progress must ultimately lead, through valleys of self-sacrifice and renunciation of personal ambition, to lofty heights of selfless consecration.

The valley of sacrifice seems indeed, as the Psalmist puts it, "the valley of the shadow of death." *In reality it is a stage of development freed from the limitations of personality and under the guidance and protection of the Universal.*

This is a definite and final stage of character-building which relatively few individuals reach in this life. It is the final and essential maturity of the human soul, and as such is demanded by Destiny of everyone.

If human personality were flawless, one would not need to abdicate it in order to attain to the supreme station of human perfection.

But man's personality is not perfect. On the contrary, it is a most imperfect and kaleidoscopic miscellany—a composite of man's inner gifts and desires as responding to and modified by environment and experience.

Personality has little consistency and no unity or coherence within itself. Worse than that, personality as expressed by millions of separate human entities is antipathetic to that organic unity which the Universe requires.

It is evident, then, from a merely material and scientific point of view that personality, at first a necessary pattern of life, becomes later an obstruction to spiritual progress and to lofty achievement.

In the beautifully fitting allegory of the "Chambered Nautilus," Oliver Wendell Holmes counsels us to leave our low-vaulted past, discarding old forms and crystallizations in order to attain to the larger self.

The personality is this shell which we must discard. At first an essential function of growth, it becomes finally an obstacle to growth.

It is necessary at some point, then, to drop the impedimenta of self-consciousness and egotism and free ourselves for the stiff upward climb which the



greater heights require. This is what is meant by sacrifice. It is the giving up not of something that is worth while, but of something less valuable for something more valuable. Seen in this light, self-sacrifice is but the way to the supreme attainments of character and of life.

Great achievement is predicated upon the sacrifice of little things and requires complete devotion of one's abilities to the task at hand. This quality of consecration is common to all great achievers. They lose themselves in the great goals for which they strive. Every creator must sacrifice self in the white heat of his vision. Genius is the quality of infinite absorption in the creative work.

## 2

However patent be these conclusions as to the necessity for attainment to the plane of selflessness, few people will of their own accord go through the intellectual operations necessary to conceive this great law of character. And fewer still would undertake the arduous task of actually putting this law of sacrifice into practice.

Therefore it is necessary that the great Educators of humanity awaken men to the lofty requirements of the law of selflessness. A central part of the message of Christ lies within this all-important,



great, and even to this day little understood theme. This is the station described by Christ as the *second birth*, or attainment to the plane of *eternal life*. It is the very flower and fruitage of religion, the highest and ultimate peak of character.

Salvation, as intended in these terms, is not a sudden process. Moral and religious convictions may start it, but they do not accomplish it at one stroke. It is a matter of development. A slow and steady process of gradual transference of desire and allegiance, from material things for the satisfaction of self, to universal and spiritual objectives. It is the sublimation of natural or carnal man, with all his native faults, into spiritual man characterized by divine attributes.

This is the attainment of the loftiest station of which man is capable—the fulfillment of the saying: "Man is made in the image of God." It means a subordination of the ego to the Whole, the overcoming of self, and complete habitual submission to the Will of God.

Winning through to eternal life means functioning predominantly on the plane of the spirit. It is a state of being, not a condition in time. It is a life independent of all save God—the daily expression of the consciousness that all things live and move by His desire. Thus eternal life can be attained even in this world. And if not attained here, there

is no magic in Death capable of guaranteeing it hereafter.

## 3

This evanescence—this abnegation of self-will and self-desire—is the necessary path to higher spiritual planes of existence. In a Universe which offers immortality to the individual how could it be possible for countless billions of souls to go forward and upward, infinitely increasing in intelligence and power, if these gifts were to be used in the direction of self-will and egoism? From such a situation would result an impossible warring chaos of Titans.

No! In order to reach the celestial plane one must renounce self-will and sacrifice the ego on the altar of the Universal. The sublime harmony of the celestial spheres, mirrored forth even on the lowest material plane in that harmony which Nature knows, results from the unobstructed expression of one potent and divinely intelligent Will.

Not even on shipboard can order be maintained without the subordination of every will to the will of the captain. How then can one expect the Universe to be managed with harmony unless all wills are effectively subordinated to the Great Executive?

This necessary surrender of self, this attainment to



evanescence, is not a virtue deserving of any special praise. It is merely the expression of wisdom and intelligence on the part of man—the perception that not otherwise can he attain to immortality.

It is not *demand*ed of man by Deity that he thus abnegate his will. Man may hug his self-will as long as he so wishes and desires—hug it to himself eternally if he pleases. But by this foolish process he will miss nine-tenths—no, ninety-nine-one-hundredths of existence. For in that World which lies on the other side of death the self-willed individual cannot function. He is born into that other World blind and dumb, crippled of limb, helpless. In fact his existence there is as tragically limited in comparison with the transcendent life of those who have attained to immortality as is the existence of a stone in this world in comparison with the existence of a human being.

Attainment to the plane of sacrifice and evanescence, then, is not a duty thrust upon us by Deity. It is merely the scientific and necessary step toward the attainment of man's highest potentiality. This attainment is of no gain or advantage to Deity, but only to us.

God can dispense with our perfecting, but we cannot. God does not need our love, but we need His. And His love can never reach us while we are filled with love of self.



God does not need that we should discard the self. But we need to if we are to advance. This is only the part of the higher wisdom—the fulfillment of our lofty destiny as Sons of God. This is the highest station to which man can attain upon this planet. On the part of the individual, it may be called salvation; as expressed collectively by humanity, it is the achievement of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

## 4

It has not been expected that all humans can attain this plane of immortality, this perfect submission of self-will to the Will of God. The attainment to holiness and sanctity has been up to the present the rare achievement of the few who stand out as glittering golden peaks of character-perfection.

But Bahá'u'lláh astoundingly calls upon all the world to strive for and attain the station of celestial purity and power. No one is to be exempt from this requirement. Character is not complete if it falls short of this.

The successive dispensations demand of humanity higher and higher attainments. The Mosaic dispensation attained to a stern and drastic sense of responsibility and duty. The Christian dispensation, in response to the message of Christ, has mani-

fested and expressed many beautiful forms of altruism. The New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh expects all humanity to strive for and attain to evanescence, selflessness and sanctity.

This is the final and consummate attainment for this planet, *the attainment of a culture which is the expression of spirituality*. Humanity will never again be called upon to undertake so gigantic a task as the present one which confronts it, of sublimating its instincts into one great emotion of world-brotherhood and unity—the expression on the outer plane of that inner spirituality which constitutes man a true Son of God.

## 5

One of the most important expressions of evanescence is a wise and serene humility. This quality is hard to understand and even harder to achieve. At first thought humility suggests weakness; a giving in to others; a lamblike submission to the more obstreperous forces and entities of the Universe. But humility is something quite different from this. *I should define humility as the realization on the part of the individual that he is but an expression and beneficiary of the Universal, from which alone all power is derived.*

Humility is merely the result of a scientific evalua-

tion of existence—the realization that God's will is potent everywhere and that all existence is but an expression of His power. As we achieve through life, it is of the highest importance that we realize ourselves to be a channel only. To ascribe power and glory to ourselves—this pride is the beginning of downfall. It was, as the allegory of the Bible informs us, the cause of Lucifer's destruction—Archangel Lucifer, Sun of the Morning, cast down to the station of Satan.

Humility assures us safety in the expression of large powers and the execution of great enterprises.

Humility is a rare and difficult and a most precious attribute of man. It is difficult because the more we become aware of the expression of powers in or through us, the more difficult it is to practice absolute humility.

Pride, the opposite of humility, is a constant test and temptation endangering a rising career. For growth attracts power, and this is as it should be. Every individual should be developing greater and greater powers of achievement. If, however, he is self-conscious regarding these achievements and becomes stuffed up with pride he is to that degree choking up his channels of inspiration. Little by little he will degenerate. The greatness delegated to him for purposes of service will be taken from



him by Destiny because he is using it for the glorification of self.

Angels, Swedenborg tells us, are a type of being who know no other will than the Will of God. They are incapable of self-will or of self-conceit. Man, who in reality inherits a potential station even higher than that of the angels, has always the power of self-will and the danger of self-conceit. Therefore pride is a fault which ever menaces the upward spiritual climb. It may bring down the soaring soul of man as the hunter brings down the bird.

Meister Eckhart, one of the greatest mystics of the Middle Ages—whose sermons crammed the great cathedral of Cologne—suddenly failed one day in the midst of a sermon, grew pale, descended from the lectern and left his congregation. He did not preach again for a period of two years. This space of time he spent in completely overcoming the ego and that sense of pride which had been gradually gaining ground upon him. Then he returned to his pulpit, greater than ever in his spiritual power, never again failing in the expression of a constant and true humility.

Humility is so important a spiritual attribute that the statements and devotional writings of the world Saviors are full of language designed to stimulate and develop that quality in worshippers. The only

prayer which Christ gave us begins with attributing fatherhood to God and closes with the majestic phrase, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory." The Koran is full of ringing phrases asserting the universal power of God and its effective rule in human lives. The obligatory daily use of prayer by Moslems—prayer which ascribes all power to God—is one of the great factors of the true piety which characterizes their daily life. The prayers of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are strongly impregnated with this verbal power to arouse reverence and humility.

Humility is the keynote of Lao-tze's spiritual philosophy. The sage, he says, is characterized by a humility as sweet and lowly as that of a little child. (How similar is Christ's injunction: Unless ye become as one of these little ones, ye cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.) The more one knows, says Lao-tze, the more one realizes the immensity of one's limitations in comparison with the infinity of life.

The ruler, Lao-tze states, must be non-assertive. When the leadership of a people practise harmony, the people themselves practise harmony and a nation is at peace. When rulers express humility, the people express loyalty. But when rulers express pride, a nation's peace and order disintegrate.

Everything flows to the man who knows this



great and too - little - understood art of humility. "The ocean, by lying low, receives all things into it," says Lao-tze—*one of the ten most truth-pregnant sentences in all the world's literature.*

I advise every one to memorize this phrase and meditate on it daily. Like all Chinese wisdom, it is both profound and practicable. If rulers practised it, many a throne would be saved. If executives practised it, their concerns would run smoothly. If scholars practised it, their scholarship would remain always virile and explorative.

## 6

Another important aspect of selflessness is the ability to make oneself a receptacle or channel for inspiration. Every true artist knows this secret. It is in these moments or hours of self-effacement, of self-immolation in the furnace of inspiration that the artist creates his magic forms of art. Others who miss this white heat—this utter merging of the self into the creative vision—remain but imitators of the Real. Their work may partake of talent—it lacks that pure gold of genius from which all dross has been purged away.

The reason why Chinese art, in almost all its phases, has achieved an inimitable supremacy is because Chinese artists for millenniums have known



how to put into practice this profound creative secret.

The nobly spiritual attitude of the Chinese artist, his reverential approach to the creative task, is largely the result of the teachings of Buddha and Lao-tze which have so deeply impregnated Chinese thought and action. The Chinese know how to lose themselves in the contemplation of Nature. And through Nature they see the Universal and the Infinite. That is why, when they depict a lonely crooked pine upon the mountain side—or a reed, butterfly-laden, on the river-bank—we see expressed not the objectivity of Nature but its subjectivity, its soul, its infinite essential beauty. It is not an old man that we see in the bit of Chinese carving but old age itself. Not a tiger painted on a screen but the spirit of ferocity.

This is genius. How is it attained? By submerging the self in the Ocean of Life.

Laurence Binyon, writing of the theory and practice of art in China and Japan, says: "Of Wu Tao-tzu it is said that it seemed as if a god possessed him and wielded the brush in his hand; of another master that his ideas welled up as from a power unseen. It was felt that the true artist, working when the mood was on him, was brought into direct relation with the creative power indwelling in the world; and

this power, using him as a medium or instrument, breathed actual life into the strokes of his brush.”\*

“K’ing, the Sculptor, carved a belfry for a peal of bells. The harmony and beauty of it astonished everybody. The Marquess of Lar, having come on purpose to admire it, asked K’ing how he went to work. ‘When I had received the commission to execute this belfry I began to coil up all my vital powers, to gather myself unto my own source. After three days of this exercise I had forgotten the praise and payment which would accrue to me for my work. After five days I no longer hoped for success—also I no longer feared failure. After seven days, having lost thought of everything, even to the motion of my body and limbs—having entirely forgotten even your highness and the Court, every faculty being swallowed up by my object—I felt the moment for action had arrived.

“‘I went into the forest and set myself to contemplate the natural forms of trees—the bearing of the most perfect among them. When I felt thoroughly penetrated with this inspiration, then at last, I set my hand to work. It was that which directed my labour. It was by this fusion into one, of my nature of that with that of trees, that this belfry acquired the qualities which makes it so much admired.’” †

\* Laurence Binyon, “The Flight of the Dragon.” London, John Murray.

† A fragment from the Chinese. Authorship unknown.



## 7.

In every creative work be it of art or of engineering, of business or of government, that man achieves most nobly who can best empty himself and become an abundant channel for inspiration.

The inventor or the discoverer of new truth must lose himself in his great quest. Thus Edison passed days and years in supreme consecration to his supreme objective, that of creating more light for the world.

Charles Holmes Herty, recently deceased, devoted the last ten years of his life to an important goal—that of converting the various species of Southern pine into white newsprint. Overcoming one after another apparently insuperable obstacle, he finally achieved his goal—a discovery which will ultimately add billions to the wealth of the South. He succeeded because he was working selflessly for universal rather than for personal ends.

In one of his recent statements Dr. Herty revealed what the development of this new industry for the South meant to him as a human being. "I don't think of this thing in terms of dollars and cents," he commented. "The development of this industry is going to mean the elimination of one-room houses for families, better food for those who are living on corn bread, and occasional meat, better clothes for those who go in rags today. On the great coastal plain,



a great mass of the population in the midst of the finest paper material have for generations endured the bitterest sort of poverty. Use of Southern pine will change this."

To work avidly for self assures a limited success in life, but it is a selfish kind of success which imprisons the soul as in a tomb. To work selflessly for humanity assures life's supreme success, the results of which radiate out infinitely into life upon this planet and at the same time promote the spiritual progress of the individual who so achieves.

## 8

To seek individual salvation may seem a selfish goal. It is not. For all humanity must strive hitherward. *To achieve eternal life is the supreme goal of earthly existence.* Selflessness is the portal through which one passes from time into Eternity, from place to the Placeless.

Eternal life is a state of being which we must strive to gain in this life. Death does not initiate us into immortality. We carry over with us from this planet just that character which we have attained up to the point of death. This is the keynote of the message of every Prophet—*to attain salvation here and now.* Postponement is disastrous!

The plane of eternal life is a plane of existence consciously under the directive Force of the Holy

Spirit, which is the governing aspect of Deity. All existence is in reality under this directive Force. But man in his unregenerate and carnal state is not only unaware of this Force but is able to and frequently does assert his own will in opposition to It, thus incurring conditions of inharmony and disaster.

The kingdom of nature below man, while also unconscious of this Force, exerts no will of its own, hence is a passive and wholly harmonious instrument and expression of Super-Control.

Man, more fortunate than the animals, is capable of realizing the power of the Holy Spirit. This realization is due entirely to the teaching of the Prophets. Without that teaching, man could not himself, by the power of his native intelligence, attain to this supreme and cosmic discovery.

When man conceives and lives this truth—that the Holy Spirit is the creative, sustaining and guiding force of the Cosmos—he is acting on a plane of universal and cosmic harmony. His own will is not egotistically and obstreperously assertive but is submissive to the Divine Will as expressed through the Holy Spirit. Hence all such individuals are existing and operating on a plane one step above the plane of phenomenal existence. They are living on the plane of the Kingdom, the plane of Eternal Life. Such existence is controlled by forces of invisible harmony and is above the plane of the jungle law of



cruel competition which characterizes ordinary mundane existence.

While on earth individuals are permitted to live and act outside the plane of celestial harmony. They can, if they so desire, create here a hell for themselves. As a matter of fact most humans do, both individually and collectively.

*But in the life after death no activity can exist outside the plane of Eternality.* Hence those individuals who die without having attained to that plane here are in a state of suspended or imperfect animation over there. Such maimed existences have to be nursed into normal condition, and the process is long and unpleasant for the individual. Hence the vital importance of attaining salvation—or the ability to function on the plane of Eternality—during one's life upon this planet.

## 9

This life of self-abnegation is really not a giving up and loss of something worth while. We are simply exchanging lower for immensely higher values. It is a miraculous process of transubstantiation. The symbols used by Christ are those of the seed dying unto self in order to become the ripened ear of wheat. This is a perfect figure, adequately describing the process which takes place in the human being in changing from carnal man into spiritual man.



The seed when placed in the ground has to die unto itself to become a plant. It apparently goes through all the processes of death, giving even its body to feed that marvelous growth which pushes up through the soil to blossom in a new and sunlit world. This lovely and fruitful plant, blossoming in the face of heaven, is the same entity which once was a tiny hard seed but has now reached its station of fulfillment. *This, Christ would have us understand, is the nature of the transformation intended by Destiny for all human beings, but attained in actuality by very few.* I do not know how long the seed can continue to exist as seed if it forever rejects the opportunity of growth and proper functioning.

I do not know that Destiny guarantees immortality to every individual. Certainly immortality is something that has to be attained, it is not a gift of nature to us. He who would save his life shall lose it, and he who would lose his life for My sake shall save it unto life Eternal—this is the immortal Message of world Saviors.

“The seed that is to grow must lose itself as seed;

And they that creep may graduate, through chrysalis, to wings:—

Wilt thou then, O mortal, cling to those husks which falsely seem to you the Self?” \*

\* Wu Ming Fu, “Patterns in Jade.” Avalon Press, Washington, D. C.

“The meaning of Eternal Life is the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the flower receives the gift of the season, the air, and the breezes of spring. . . .

“Entrance into the Kingdom is through detachment, through holiness and chastity, through truthfulness, purity, steadfastness, faithfulness, and sacrifice of self. . . .

“The Life of the Kingdom is the Life of the Spirit, the Eternal Life. . . .

“Morality is the governing of oneself. Immortality consists in the governing of the human soul by Divine Spirit.” \*

## 10

It can readily be seen, if one contemplates the subject with scientific and inspired intelligence, that the celestial plane of Evanescence is not a plane of weakness but a plane of power. The individual in attaining to that plane becomes a channel for the Universal. He puts off the limitations of personality and becomes endowed with the quality of Universality.

“Let us yearn for the Kingdom of God, so that our works may bear eternal fruit. Then from day to day you will become more enlightened; day by day your efforts will increase; day by day your work

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “Life Eternal.” Roycroft.



will become universal, and day by day your horizons will broaden until in the end they will embrace the universe. Glory be upon the people of glory." \*

When our will is submitted to the Will of God and we become sensitive to guidance, the problems of life for the most part disappear from before our path and we are saved many of the pitfalls into which blind feet are apt to stray. The life of sanctified man knows a harmony and happiness which are transcendent. Inner doors open to him—giving access to new avenues of action and achievement, new possibilities for growth.

In fact, joy is a natural quality and expression of the truly spiritual life. Joy is so innately connected with spiritualized existence that it may be said that all truly spiritual people are joyous; and conversely, that people who are not joyous are missing something of spiritual perfection.

## 11

In conclusion, let it be realized that the spiritual climb is not in reality a harsh and painful journey. It is an ascent, like mountain-climbing, full of upper sunshine and of joy.

Nor is it necessary that we wait to finish one step

\* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Divine Philosophy." The Tudor Press, Boston.



of progress before we begin the next. Four chief stages of character growth are in this book isolated one from the other merely for purposes of elucidation. In reality, development should go ahead somewhat on all these lines at one and the same time.

Development of self, the training in responsibility, the acquisition of altruistic motivation, and the glorious attainment of evanescence—these four processes should be carried on throughout our lives. We shall never finish with them here, but we may make a good beginning.

The Saviors come to earth in order that human beings may be imbued with greater power for this celestial struggle, this striving for perfection. And all who turn to Them will be aided into a miraculous growth of spiritual potency.

The inner experience of Discipleship—of the quest and discovery of the Holy Grail—is exquisitely expressed in the following poetic rendering of an episode in the life of Bab:

“Ah, no,” answered Abbas, “if men have not glimpsed of the dawning.  
A difference lies here: The gods give of mercy and patience;  
Our Allah is kind to souls that see not, yet temper  
Each nerve of their beings to find some link with Perfection,  
Some hidden and loving rapport with all that existeth.  
Suppose on the morrow we find when we meet Husayn-Ali,  
A seer, or the Promised of Ages; not frail finite teacher,  
But Prophet, whose knowledge transcendeth our leader’s,  
Whose grace reflects God and whose claims seem truly well-founded—

"What then be our action? Forget our old fealty and follow?  
 Would I give my life's blood to completely surrender? No, not  
 To one who now is my teacher, though great is his learning,  
 And much I admire him. My soul is my own! and I'm loyal  
 As you to the center of glory, the master within me . . .  
 But beloved! I'm suddenly shaken! What means this enchantment  
 That lures now our spirits on tides of volition and power  
 Beyond our own choosing? With consciousness light and ecstatic  
 We move, as it were, toward a vortex of Truth and of Beauty!"

"Man's mystery I show," Ab'ul heard in sacred Communion,  
 When later he knelt at the feet of the Teacher whose chanting  
 Illumined his reason and woke him,—as harps in high chancels  
 Might summon the angels to singing—then tuned his whole spirit  
 To godly emotion. Tears rose to his eyes and swift-flowing,  
 Revealed his submission, a well-spring of reverence within him.  
 "Return to the Mulla, I cannot," he told his companion;  
 "I stay here to learn, not to question, the Truth that long we were seeking;  
 The Light that we yearned for together I find here is burning."

"Assurance uplifts me," cried Abbas. "I worship! I praise Him!  
 To return were a sign of my pride and explicit rejection;  
 My teacher no longer, the Mulla of Abad, who led me  
 To seek this bright goal, but refuses to come to the Ridvan . . .  
 We are true to ourselves and our mission, when true to All Beauty.  
 We give up the sceptre of will when thus we attaineth  
 Such ransom as flows to our hearts from this Master of Guidance:  
 He standeth within us! and we are gold beams with His Sunrise,  
 Clear drops of the stream that grows sweet when fed from this Fountain."\*

\* Alice Simmons Cox, "The Prophet of Nur." World Order Magazine, May, 1938.

## CONCLUSION





## CHAPTER IX

# Progress Onward and Upward Forever

**W**E HAVE traced the scientific and religious foundations for character, and seen that character is the very structure of life. To be without character is to remain deprived of that noble ascent which planetary life began when it left the mollusk stage and which culminates not in man the thinker but in Man the Son of God..

Lack of character spells failure for all of life's demands. It is the only real tragedy of life. How many frustrated careers and bitter lives are traceable to this cause! Maturity and the experiences of life bring cognizance of this colossal cosmic truth. Could this lesson be acquired early in life it would avert many sorrows and many corroded hearts.

### 2

If failure to achieve character leads to suffering, success in character-development is the open sesame to success in life-achievement and to that serenity which all noble souls know.

As soon as the individual becomes conscious of

self, so soon should he begin the conscientious training of his character. Fortunate is he whose personal and cultural environment are such as to inspire and sustain aspiration toward perfection! Yet even in the lack of such an environment souls can become stimulated, by the law of opposites, to struggle out from chaos into Order.

No one is condemned by Destiny to a characterless life of failure and futility! Because life is ever creative and the spirit alone is causal, every individual has the potentiality of perfection. No one can offer alibis to Destiny on the score of native endowment or of environment. Whether it be ten talents or one which we possess—whether we live in the midst of want and degradation or of culture and plenty—there is no point conceivable in human experience at which the upward climb cannot begin. Mary Magdalene began it from a life of prostitution, and climbed so swiftly that she outpassed even the glorious devotion of Peter and the sinless purity of John.

## 3

To falter, then, upon this cosmic task of character-building is childish—an evidence of not yet having come-to-age. To halt when once one has begun the climb is a sign of weakness, of a decrepitude which



has no end in Reality. For the spirit of man is ageless and unaging. It obeys a divine and infinite law of continuity. Moral effort, then, should be continuous. To stop progressing means spiritual death! For there is no stopping still in the Universe. One progresses, or one retrogresses.

From a rich self-development to a noble sense of responsibility; from functioning on the plane of responsibility to a loftier and more loving functioning on the plane of altruism; from altruism that still has some degree of self-motivation into a spiritual state of existence that attains to selfless and cosmic greatness,—such is the spiritual climb as we may vision it upon this planet. If other stages of the soul still loftier there be in the Beyond-World, we shall learn of them in due time.

## 4

And finally, let it be said that religion is not only the chief guide to character but the chief aid in the upward climb. Would that everyone could say of God, as David learned to say, "Thou art my rod and my staff."

Religion is not a restraint put upon life. It is an added power offered to man. "I came that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." As foolish to neglect this Cosmic Power for our spiritual

needs as to refuse the power which steam, electricity and gasoline bring to the material life of man. Religion means greater speed in character-building, greater power for soul-growth.

Amidst the various aspects of religion, the aspects of devotion to a Leader and of aspiration toward the perfection of the Great Exemplar are by far the most potent for the arduous process of self-perfectioning. Unfortunately few know how to avail themselves of this potent aid without the obstructions of fanaticism and of personality worship. As humanity advances, however, to greater maturity of intellect and of vision it will be able to see the Light rather than the Lamp, and to experience the Celestial on the plane of that Horizon where earth and Heaven meet.

## 5

We have endeavored to keep these pages free from the didactic. We urge no one to be good. We exhort no one to accept our statements. But we should rejoice if the thoughts presented upon these pages—thoughts of Truth as the writer visions it—could stimulate the reader to himself make search and effort and gain enhancement for himself in that great inner field of achievement which must forerun all achievement on the outer planes of life.

Character is destiny. May your destiny, reader, be blessed with the successful building of that great edifice housing human life upon this planet—an edifice eternal, and ever expanding like the Chambered Nautilus—the edifice of CHARACTER.