

LETTER 21

Box 863, Johannesburg  
South Africa  
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My dear friends:

I am writing this on the voyage from England to South Africa. We shall reach Cape Town on Nov. 12th, and I rejoice at the prospect of seeing my friends in South Africa once more. I have been away for two and a half years and I expect I shall see many changes. From all accounts the S. African Section seems very much alive. They now issue a beautifully printed Course of study for the newly-joined members which they are advertising all over the country. The last time they put a little notice about Theosophy in the papers they received hundreds of replies, and this time they will send the Course to all who write in. I hear that many young people have joined in Pretoria and Johannesburg. S. Africa has always been fortunate in the number of its young members. At the coming Convention, held this time in Johannesburg at Easter time, they will specially celebrate the Jubilee of the Johannesburg Lodge.

I have had such a wonderful two and a half years, perhaps the most wonderful in my life. And one aspect of it was specially pleasing to me, for, after many years, in both America and England, I found again everyone I had known and loved. One was dying, but I saw her and stayed with her before she passed. My own passing cannot be too far distant, but I shall go with joy in my heart that I found all my friends again. I think often of those words in Macbeth: "I count myself in nothing so happy as in remembering my good friends."

I had a birthday just before I left England, and for the first time since we were young, all we sisters met, even my sister in Hungary managing to come over. One birthday present they gave me is a book I am reading on board. I want to recommend it to all of you. It is by my favourite lecturer, Professor S. Radhakrishnan. In a language not his own, Radhakrishnan gives the most eloquent and entrancing lectures, always on the subject of the spiritual life. The first time I heard him, twelve years ago in Adyar, he lectured on "A Hindu View of Life." This latest book of his is called "An Idealist View of Life." With a lucidity and clarity which provokes my most profound admiration he outlines the religious changes of the present, the modern substitutes for religion, and the enduring Reality which lies behind life. He quotes a saying of Baron von Hugel, the famous writer on mysticism, which I must pass on to you: "Religion is an is-ness and not an ought-ness." Writes Professor Radhakrishnan: "It is concerned with what is actually environing and penetrating us and we are saved if we recognize it. Religion insists on the apprehension of what already is and not on the achievement of what is not. The realization of goodness is not a future contingency, but an eternal and necessary reality."

I have pondered on this a good deal. I can see its truth. Religion is a life, a dwelling within, not a system of ethics. It is only the human mind in man that considers it a system of ethics. The spirit knows it is life itself. Perhaps that is what the Christ meant when He spoke of the letter which killeth as against the spirit which giveth life. It is what we are that matters, not what we ought to be. If we place too much emphasis on "ought" we shall create dividing lines between our souls and other men's, we shall begin to create that peculiar



hardness of heart called self-righteousness. When I look back over life I can see that most injustice, unkindness, etc., that I have been guilty of arose from the sense of "ought." There is no ought in the universe, certainly no ought which applies to others. If we are too proud of performing our own oughts, we shall inevitably disparage those who do not the same. God is not a system of ethics, but if we dwell in the Divine Light we shall inevitably radiate justice, mercy and truth. Any system, any rule, unless we are very careful, can generate hardness in our souls. I feel that is what the Master meant when He told Krishnaji that he must realize that no ceremonies are necessary, otherwise he would somehow think himself better than those who do not perform them. Yet they are useful and a great inspiration to those who use them, like guiding lines whilst we learn to write. But one day we must write without guiding lines and know God beyond the symbols of Him which abound on all hands. Religion is not works. It is a faith, and indwelling Light, the "light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." That faith the Master called "the soul's unlearned knowledge," and bid us trust to it as a bird trusts itself to the air, undoubtingly.

Krishnaji once said something similar to me. I was having a talk with him, and he looked at me very straightly and said: "This is not a conception one mentally arrives at; it is a life that has to be grown into." Realization, not obeying rules, useful as these are for personal self-discipline (I would like to write on this next time), is religion. I once heard a wise old lady say: "Realization is making Reality real," and this is done by the consecrated imagination and the devotion of all ends to the supreme Goal.

It is our "is-ness" that matters. Our "ought-ness" is a secondary matter. A Master once said: "He who does what he can, does enough for us." So God, the Supreme Life, asks of us no more than we are, and that in faith and trust we should grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, yet eagerly anxious to open its soul to the light and the air. And to Him the rose and the daisy are equal, their way of growth the same, though the outer appearance differs. In the loveliest story in the Bible, our Lord said to the repentant Peter: "Feed my sheep," and then He added: "Feed my lambs." Do let us be careful that our sense of oughtness does not make us hard and lacking in understanding towards His sheep, particularly His lambs.

I am anxious, as I always am, that a true spiritual life shall always be developed in our members. And spirituality is not a set of rules, a system of ethics, but a dawning sense of "otherness," of that Beauty, Loveliness, Truth, Reality, which now and forever remains the One Reality. Let us seek for it and humbly await its coming, for it is the root of all wisdom, which again is the root of all true and kindly relationships with our fellow-men. Always the best of good wishes to you all. I know what I hope for each one of you, my friends, and something tells me it will one day come true.

A very happy Christmas to you all.

Your affectionate friend,

Clara Codd

P. S. And best wishes from your Secretary for a happy Holiday Season.

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