

February-March, 1951  
Box 863, Johannesburg  
South, Africa

My dear Friends:

We had such a peaceful, happy Christmas-time here in S. Africa. Six of our members were at Adyar, and we are all looking forward eagerly to their return and to their news. I still feel that however dark the clouds are over the world that we shall not have world war. I think one factor that is a little overlooked is the revolt of Asia. The day of the white man's dominance over the East is passing. The East must now manage their own affairs. I think I am right in remembering that Pandit Nehru was once one of Dr. Besant's boys. He is a noble and splendid man.

Once more I am going to quote you almost in full a splendid article by Mr. Boris de Zirkoff, who, I feel sure most of you know is a grand-nephew of H.P.B. It appears in his little journal "Theosophia," and is entitled "Ethics as a Living Power." It is so much in accord with my own thoughts that I cannot forbear quoting it to you, although I will promise not to do this again to such an extent for a long time. "The greatest loss of our present century," he writes, "is the loss of basic and abiding ethical standards, upon which life must of necessity be founded, in order to be constructive, integrated, and whole. The generation of which we are an integral part is a generation which has become confused, bewildered and unbalanced, primarily because it has lost its grip upon those moral and spiritual ideas which, however imperfectly, formed the background of former generations and infused into their lives and their collective behaviour a strength which can never be replaced by any amount of intellectualism, material attainment, or political power.

"In many respects this state of affairs is reflected in the work and function of the Theosophical Movement. Students of Theosophy individually, and Theosophical organizations collectively, have become too much engrossed in the intellectual presentation of the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom to the disregard of the far more important aspect, namely, the spiritual, devotional, and ethical. It is of paramount importance never to lose sight of the fact that Theosophy is a Way of Life, a spiritual method of living, and a discipline of conduct and self-directed evolutionary growth. The intellectual teachings of Theosophy, if dissociated from the grand Ethics of this system of thought, are not only useless, but definitely harmful, and can be construed to mean almost anything that the lower mind desires them to mean to achieve one or another of its personal ambitions.

"Theosophists only too often are defined these days as individuals who believe in this, that, or the other, who study reincarnation, karma, cycles, rounds, root-races, psychic powers, elementals, after-death states, and the like. We are far indeed from a state of affairs when Theosophists could be defined as a group of men and women scattered in various portions of the earth, who practise self-restraint kindness, mutual understanding, abiding sympathy for all men, impersonal love for all that lives, strict responsibility, devotion to truth, unswerving loyalty to the noblest interests of others, magnanimity, fearlessness, courage, helpfulness and self-forgetfulness. What a wonderful thing it would be if we could be sure of the fact that Theosophists were people who never upheld any questionable political movement, who never lent any support to organizations or pressure groups intended to psychologize the people into this, that or another course of conduct, and who, under no circumstances, held jobs in industrial or other enterprises founded upon one or another form of mutual exploitation or extortion... There is a 'split' between the teachings we believe in and the actions, feelings, attitudes and reactions we manifest in daily life.

"The net result is very simple and quite obvious. The Society does not provide that spiritual incentive and ethical inspiration to millions of people which



the very nature of the ancient precepts and teachings would imply... Certain postulates of the Ancient Wisdom are now proclaimed by modern science... What is lacking, and is imperatively needed, is an ethical awakening from within the spiritual centre of man, whatever may be his beliefs; and such re-awakening can never come about by the mere study of books... only through an inner change of consciousness, a movement of the spiritual will, a re-orientation of the entire thinking and feeling apparatus. How difficult this achievement is, and how unwelcome it is to the lower personal man of each one of us, is not hard to prove... People will read books and attend lectures... But ask them to undertake a thorough search of their own consciousness and mind, to cleanse their emotions, to control their passions, to purify their minds, to eliminate from their lives wasteful occupations clogging their mental vision--and they will either run away or lose interest... Only long ages of evolution will produce any radical change in the majority of mankind. For the few, such change can conceivably take place in a very short time, by means of that inner spiritual awakening which has nothing to do with time or space, and can never be described in any finite terms. It is the voice of the Inner God, the inrush of its potent fluids into the sphere of the lower man when the latter has been conditioned by suffering, aspiration and devotion. Others have attained it in all ages and in all climes. And if others have, why not you and I?"

This is all in line with another very wonderful book I have just come across: Morals since 1900, by the scientist and mystic, Gerald Heard. Its grave message is that we shall survive only if we can develop a morality equal to our new physical powers. "So rapid has been the process of change that there is a general acceptance of debased standards which would have been outlawed fifty years ago."

One of the greatest Theosophists who ever lived was Dr. Annie Besant. She lived up to the hilt everything she taught us. She was fond of quoting to us the saying of the Christ that if any man will do God's Will he shall know of the doctrine. And it was Dr. Besant who gave me a special message when at her direction I set out to be a Theosophical lecturer. I asked her: "What shall I teach the people?" She looked away from me in thought for a minute, then said: "Teach them the Ethics of Theosophy." And that I have tried to do ever since.

We have noble Theosophists amongst us who are channels of divine grace to us all. But what a power we would be in the land if most of us, according to our measure, could also be steady channels of that grace. For it is what we are that always counts, not what we say. I think I have quoted to you before the famous saying of Emerson: "What you are speaks so loudly to me that I cannot hear what you say." Theosophy is a Way of Life, a Grace of God in our lives. By our purity, unselfishness, loyalty to truth, courage and steadfast principles, shall we be known of men and help them, far more than by all the books and lectures and meetings in the world. Not that these are to be despised. But it is the Life and not the Letter that is full of power. Patanjali says that once a Yogi becomes truth itself all his words and deeds are full of power. Once a man has become "one with God" he can change the face of continents, and save even those men he has never personally seen.

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD