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MONTHLY LETTER

Devoted to Spiritual and Philosophical Problems -- by Manly P. Hall

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QUESTION—There are many different schools of mysticism and occultism in the world. How can a student discover with certainty the system best suited to his individual needs?

ANSWER—Philosophic religion has existed among men from the earliest recorded periods. No age has been without a spiritual revelation sufficient to its needs, no race has been left godless, and no nation has risen to power without religious institutions flourishing in its midst. The religious instinct is one of those fundamental impulses which all men share together, and the history of religion is in substance the history of civilization itself. Nor have the fundamental principles of religious life and purpose been greatly modified by the passing of centuries. True, the more barbarous practices of savage peoples have been modified by the cultural impulses which have developed in the race. But the essential values of the religious factor in individual and collective existence remain practically unchanged. The theories of religion in vogue today are the same theories which governed spiritual institutions of the ancient world. Therefore we may properly interpret the needs of the modern truth seeker in the light of those codes and principles which have survived the vicissitudes of countless ages.

Certain facts have been justified by the experience of ages. Chief of these facts is the inevitable inequalities which exist in the reasoning capacities

of men. There has never been a time in recorded history when the inhabitants of even one community were all of equal spiritual achievement. The several races which together inhabit the earth constitute an innumerable inequality of abilities. The social systems which exist within races or form parts of nations and communities are themselves divided into numerous strata according to the mental, spiritual and physical differences which are present throughout humanity.

In all times then, and among all peoples there are few capable of great perfection of thought and action, and the vast majority is lacking in the capacity for exact and inspired thinking. It has always been necessary, therefore, to consider these inequalities when founding or promulgating a religious doctrine. This condition, beyond immediate remedy by man, has forced religious and philosophical systems to grade their teachings, presenting only the simplest part of their doctrine to those of immature intellect, and reserving the most profound of their wisdom for the discerning and qualified few.

If we realize with St. Paul that all men are not equally qualified to receive those esoteric traditions which are the very soul and substance of religion, we can understand the origin of those numerous cults which must inevitably spring up to serve the spiritual needs of a greatly diversified humankind. There must be "milk for babes" and "meat for men." There must be simple revelations suitable

to minister to the needs of the spiritual peasantry, and more complicated and profound traditions to satisfy the mature thinking of enlightened persons. There is no evil in a diversity of cults; the evil arises from the failure of these cults to realize that they are all part of one spiritual program.

There has never been but one religion among men but this religion, which Mohammed termed the natural faith of mankind, has been variously interpreted by various peoples in various ages. In recent times these various interpretations have lost the realization of their final identity and have come to regard themselves as superior and distinct revelations. From this error has arisen the competitive theory which has unfortunately permeated most of the religious institutions of the earth. The result has been a confusion of tongues and the phenomena of hundreds, yes thousands, of religious sects and isms laboring under the delusion of difference, each claiming superiority over the others, and attempting to discredit the tenets of all cults save its own.

The enlightened student of metaphysics who has come to realize the fundamental unity of all life and purpose is not to be deceived by the contention of factions but recognizes all the faiths of man as fragments of a universal religion which is part of the very existence of all living things. Freed, therefore, from an unphilosophical addiction to creeds and dogmas, the honest and earnest seeker after the spiritual truths of life can examine dispassionately all beliefs and can claim as his own the good which he finds in each. Thus we may pass over the issue of religious authority and, with an enlightened tolerance towards the beliefs of all men, examine the second factor in our problem.

The great religious systems of the ancient world, which have descended to us as the bases of our present beliefs, were greatly influenced by the factors of race geography. Race determined the profundity of the revelation and geography influenced its symbolism and interpretation. Races are the rung-levels on the ladder of evolution and each race is divided into sub-races which represent quality levels within the racial structure itself. No two types or clans or communities in the world today are on precisely the

same level of evolution. Each of the material divisions of the social system represents a level of unfolding consciousness, and furnishes an environment for the attainment of certain vital experiences necessary to the final perfection of man. It naturally follows that souls evolving in each of these levels must have a spiritual interpretation of life suitable to the experiences of these levels. This is one of the reasons why missionary activities are so generally unsuccessful. It is profitless, yes finally impossible, to convert any man to a spiritual code beyond his awareness or inconsistent with his present cycle of experience. Missions have therefore succeeded where they ministered to health or carried on educational work, but when they seek to deflect the individual from the course of his own consciousness they accomplish more harm than good.

Each of the great racial divisions of mankind received at its inception an interpretation of religion consistent with the purpose of the racial consciousness. These revelations were all derived from the same ancient and ageless source that we may term for practical purposes the Wisdom Religion of the world. Not only did each race receive its own tradition but each race as it unfolded developed and specialized its tradition until the racial faiths took on distinct individualities. It is these individualities, now for the most part crystallized and inflexible, which we term the religious systems of the world.

To classify a few of them:

1. BRAHMANISM. This was the religious system of the primitive Aryans, built up from a tradition which has been individualizing for nearly a million years. Brahmanism is the fundamental religious impulse of India and has gradually been broken up into numerous dependent systems such as Yoga, Vedanta and Tantric philosophy.

2. CONFUCIANISM. This is really the comparatively modern crystallization of the ancient traditions of the Atlantean Chinese, reformed and restated by the great philosopher Confucius. Numerous Chinese sects are derived from the fundamental tenets of Confucian authority.

3. TAOISM. This philosophy, which also developed in the Chinese racial consciousness, repre-

sents one of the migrations of Brahmanic philosophy, thus mingling with Chinese thought this Hindu tradition, ministered to a certain level in the unfolding Mongolian consciousness.

4. ZOROASTRIANISM. Several prophets known by the name of Zoroaster rose up to minister to the spiritual needs of the Irano-Aryan migrations. As the Persian civilization rose the Magian cult of Zoroaster came to power and was finally reformed and restated some 600 years before the Christian era by Spitama, the last of the Zoroasters. Under the name Mithraic the Persian cults reached Rome to serve a certain level of Roman thought, and finally the Persian stream mingled with the waters of Christianity.

5. BUDDHISM. This ancient faith, also rising in India, was one of the first to branch off from the Brahmanic tree. It retained individuality for thousands of years, to finally emerge as a great world religion about B. C. 500 under the leadership of Gautama Buddha. Buddhism broke into several parts, migrated to most of the Eastern nations, where its influence has been felt from Ceylon and Java on the South to Tibet and Japan on the North.

6. THE ORPHIC THEOGONY. This philosophic system, also a branch of the Brahmanic tree, developed in the classical civilizations of the Near East, becoming the spiritual power behind the cultural supremacy of the Greeks. Orphic philosophy was revealed by Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato, and mingled with the Mithraic in Rome, the Egyptian Mysteries in Egypt, and also Christianity. This mingling resulted in Gnosticism, and also influenced Jewish metaphysics through the Essene and Nazarene sects.

7. OSIRIS WORSHIP. Also of Eastern origin, this faith was successfully transplanted to Egypt where it flourished for more than 5000 years and finally disintegrated with the collapse of Egyptian culture, and continues now only as an impulse in Christian thought.

8. JUDAISM. Technically speaking we must accept Judaism as rising among the Egyptian, Chaldean and other ancient peoples in the Mesopotamian area. Under the leadership of Moses the great mi-

gration of the Jewish nation took place which finally individualized the faith which has continued to the present time with very few modifications.

9. CHRISTIANITY. The decadence of the pagan mysteries, due to the demoralizing effect of the disintegration of old peoples and the military era inaugurated by Rome, necessitated a restatement of the Wisdom Religion some 2000 years ago. This restatement, under the name of Christianity, constitutes the spiritual urge behind the development of the European and American culture.

10. MOHAMMEDANISM. The last of the great world religions to come into being was the faith of Islam, the strongest branch to come from the tree of primitive Christianity. From the sixth century A. D. on Islamism has increased in strength, and at the present time represents the most powerful rival to Christianity in the religious world. It has converted most of the Near East and penetrated far into Asia. Strangely enough, in the form of Islamism, some of the earliest of the Brahmanic theological doctrines return as a stranger to their own country.

In addition to this panorama of religious motion in the world, it is necessary to recognize the numerous cults which have sprung up combining factors from two or more of the great religious movements. These major schools have been subject to innumerable reformations and their doctrines to numerous interpretations and reinterpretations. To the average person of the Western World Christianity is the familiar example of religious growth. The hundreds of sects which have sprung up in this religion alone are typical of similar divisions existing in other world faiths. Each of these sects claims precedence over the others for accuracy of interpretation, and sublimity of purpose. It is not surprising therefore that the layman in religious matters, when confronted with the complexity everywhere present in matters of faith, should wonder which way to turn in order to secure spiritual knowledge in its most nearly pure and unadulterated form.

But even this picture of existing conditions is not the whole of the story. There is yet a third factor to be considered, and this is the individual truth

seeker himself. Although today millions of persons are born together in a great nation like America, they should in no way be regarded as similar in capacity or interests merely because of the circumstance of birth. This country, but a few centuries old, has received into it egos whose previous lives have taken place in numerous other civilizations, and who bring with them religious impulses and spiritual predilections from all the great faiths of the ancient world. Five sons born into one family may have locked within their subconscious selves the religious convictions of five different world religions. These differences are plainly evident to the trained observer and very often have stamped themselves upon the appearance of the individual. Thus children born of centuries of Anglo-Saxon ancestry may have about them the impression that they have come from some far Eastern country.

Therefore, side by side in any gathering of hundred per cent Americans are souls whose spiritual experiences bind them with the faiths and cultures of the world's most distant places. A man may be born an American and yet be, by spiritual thought and moral code, a Greek, a Brahman, a Buddhist or a Mohammedan.

In harmony with the consistent course of Western life, all these people may be nominally members of the Christian faith in this present life. But a man, though christened a Baptist here, remains religiously what his soul is. If in previous lives he has been a Brahman, he is bound to interpret Christianity in terms of Brahmanic philosophy. A good example of a Western man with an Eastern soul is America's one great philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson. When, therefore, a person living in this century, in this civilization, asks the question—what are my spiritual needs?—it is a large matter to decide this. It is impossible to establish an interpretation of religion which suits the needs of all people because these people bring with them out of the deathless past impulses and attitudes which must be ministered to individually and intelligently.

This explains the reason why many faiths and many interpretations flourish together among nearly all progressive peoples. Here also is revealed the absurdity of attempting to establish state faiths and

creeds or to regiment human religious instincts. This is also the reason why each truth seeker, in his search among faiths for the solution to his problem, finds at last some one belief that more than any other is suitable to his needs.

Having thus traced the general course of our problem, we must next examine what may be termed the anatomy and physiology of religion. It was customary among the enlightened theologies of antiquity to distinguish grades of interpretation suitable for the numerous classes which exist within any society. From this comes the fashion of dividing all religious instructions into two general parts, termed EXOTERIC and ESOTERIC. This division was not arbitrarily determined by the priesthood but arose from a phenomenon evident everywhere in society. The majority of humankind are incapable of understanding, applying or appreciating the more profound aspects of a philosophical religion. Thus faiths were simplified to human need. The great body of each religious system consisted principally of moral doctrines, commandments and injunctions to propriety and honesty. These simple codes regulated the body of society and gave ordinary persons a protective character-building code of life. The Golden Rule became the standard of human relationships in over forty great faiths, nor can any man deny today that this code, if applied, would solve most of the problems of empire. Nor can any man hope to ascend to the higher mysteries of spiritual existence who has not mastered and applied this simple formula of integrity.

The majority of humanity neither questions nor enquires beyond the narrow circumference of creature comforts. To live honestly and comfortably and to die with the hope that the future will prove benevolent approximately epitomizes the spiritual problems of the multitude. In fact many well educated and informed persons believe that this is all the religious knowledge that any human being needs and that all the rest is fancy and illusion.

There is always, however, a certain class in society not so easily satisfied. These demand a more inclusive and mature religious understanding. They perceive, even though but dimly, that the spiritual problem of life is far greater than merely a moral

code. This does not mean that they reject the simple truths of honesty and right living, but rather that out of ages of evolution the soul within has come to realize that life is not a material but a spiritual experience. Religion is not merely a part of existence, a series of arbitrary moral codes. Religion is the whole of existence. Spiritual facts are the only facts and the whole material universe is merely a tiny spiritual particle vibrating in a vast measureless, unknowable sea of spirit. This realization brings with it an irresistible desire to investigate the divine world which surrounds and interpenetrates what we have come to call the material world.

This impulse to spiritual investigation comes only to the soul somewhat matured in spiritual values. History records that these truth seekers have existed in every civilization. They have always been in the minority as to members but they have been pioneers of progress and most of the world's advancement in fineness and character has been due to their efforts and their ideals.

What we term a truth seeker today is one of this small group who, dissatisfied with physical existence even under moral law, desires to explore and understand the worlds of mind and soul and spirit extending beyond the limits of our material perceptions. It was for these more advanced types that the esoteric doctrines of the ancients were evolved, and an inner tradition suitable to the needs of these advanced types is present in the structure of every great religion. All faiths have their inner or esoteric schools into which they accept as students those who have outgrown the outer and more evident interpretations of religious knowledge. The Brahmins had their Mystery Temples at Ellora and Elephanta. The Egyptians had their crypts of initiation under the Island of Philae. The Buddhists established their Mystery School in the Saptaparna Caverns even during the time of Gautama. All the great world religions, though divided by the superficial differences of their exoteric creeds, unite in their esoteric knowledge. It is this Secret Doctrine which all the faiths of the world share in common that interests all sincere students of religion. The quest of essential wisdom is the great work of life. In our letter

next month we shall attempt to set forth certain simple rules and directions which will help students in determining the path to truth most suitable to them.

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QUESTION—Please give your version of the idea of a person being divinely protected. We so often hear someone say that they have no fear of anything because they are divinely protected. Does not the law of cause and effect render this idea untenable?

ANSWER—Most exponents of the cult of "divine protection" derive their ideas from one of several systems of mental metaphysics which seek to make man right with his world by surrounding him with a wall of mental or autosuggestions. It would be folly to deny that mental attitude is capable of producing a marked effect upon the external life of the individual but effects that are inconsistent with the spiritual facts of the individual's life are impermanent and consistently disastrous. All enlightened systems of philosophy and mysticism agree that it is impossible in the long run to fool the law of cause and effect. If by mental processes we attract to ourselves things which are not our own by merit, our very possessions become our misery and everything we gain is a loss to ourselves. No person under any condition can be divinely protected from the effects which he has set in motion by his own causations. He may build a mental wall of defense by which he temporarily deflects the thunderbolts of Karma but this is not divine protection—this is mortal will defying divinity. In the old fables mortal will under the name of Satan and his angels defies the edict of heaven and sets up its kingdom in the Abyss. Mental metaphysicians have much in common with the fallen angel. When we resist that which we have caused to come to us, when we refuse to acknowledge the debts which we have made, when we surround ourselves with a wall of mental electricity, we are not divinely protected—we are simply resisting for a little while those consequences which must ultimately catch up with us. Worse than this, our attitude towards destiny being wrong, we usually are extravagant in our desires and unreasonable in our attitudes, thus bring-

ing the sum of our debts much higher than it would normally be. The only protection with which we can safely surround ourselves is the invincible armor of our own integrity. Man is not protected by the gods but by the honor that is within him.

QUESTION—Please give the names of the best works to read on the interpretation of the Grecian myths.

ANSWER—The mythological writings of the Greeks are founded for the most part upon the secret traditions of the Orphics. According to the old records, Orpheus, whose name means "dark of skin" brought the ancient Wisdom Religion from India to the progenitors of the classical Hellenes. It is impossible to interpret Greek mythology philosophically without the Orphic keys. The writings of Homer and Hesiod were derived from the initiation pageantry of the Orphic cult, perpetuated in the Eleusinian and Dionysian Mysteries. Books dealing with this obscure subject in an enlightened manner are few and for the most part rare. Of particular importance are the translations and writings of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist. His MYSTICAL HYMNS OF ORPHEUS is important, also his DISSERTATION ON THE ELEUSINIAN AND BACCHIC MYSTERIES, and his ESSAY ON THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER which serves as an appendix to his translations of the four books of Plotinus ON ABSTINENCE FROM ANIMAL FOOD. Of more recent writers probably the most reliable is G. R. S. Mead whose splendid little work ORPHEUS is derived in some parts from original Greek sources. In other parts it is a summary of Thomas Taylor's researches.

QUESTION—Has the sixth root race started to appear upon the earth?

ANSWER—According to the metaphysical philosophy of the Brahmins, human life upon the earth manifests through seven out-pourings which are called races. The first of these races is called the Polarian and inhabited a vast polar continent hundreds of millions of years ago. The second was the Hyperborean referred to by the Greeks as a semi-divine race dwelling in the land north of the winds.

The third was the Lemurian, a dark civilization existing upon a continent involving what is now the Indian Ocean and the Australasian Archipelago. The fourth was the Atlantean whose great island-continent filled a considerable part of what is now called the Atlantic Ocean, extending from Greenland on the North to a southern latitude approximately parallel with Brazil. The fifth, to which we now belong, is called the Aryan and had its origin in North Central Asia about a million years ago. The sixth and seventh races are yet to come. The sixth race will be derived from the highest types produced by the fifth race and may spring up among several progressive peoples simultaneously. The application of the term "sixth root race" personality to describe a precocious or unusual type of human being is a figure of speech rather than a scientific fact. I question very much if true sixth root race types are as yet appearing, as many thousands of years must pass before the advent of the sixth race. It is quite possible however that tendencies which will later develop into sixth root race qualities are beginning to appear as progressive impulses in our present society. Some believe that the sixth root race will emerge from the chemistry of inter-racial minglings in America. Others feel that Russia is the logical cradle inasmuch as great social experiments are being carried on there. Australia has also been advanced as a possible field for sixth root race activities. It is my opinion that pioneers from the several subdivisions of our present race will form the nucleus for the future human type and that when the time comes for the sixth race to be objectified from the physical world a new continent will rise, probably in the Pacific Ocean, to serve as a theatre of action for the new race.

QUESTION—Please give a practical definition of mysticism.

ANSWER—There are three terms in common use among metaphysicians which should receive exact definition. Exoterically speaking, occultism is the intellectual approach to truth; mysticism is the emotional approach to truth; and psychism is the physical approach to truth. Esoterically the occultist desires to possess wisdom; the mystic desires to be

possessed by wisdom; and the psychic, incapable of impersonalizing wisdom, seeks to achieve a spiritual state by permitting his own metaphysical organisms to be controlled by other entities, by this process hoping to benefit by the experience of others. Practical mysticism may be defined as the intuitional grasp of reality. The practical mystic is one whose outer life is regulated by the beauty, gentleness and sublimity of inward conviction. Mysticism is the sublimation of emotion. The Buddhist would define it as the transmutation of passions into compassions, the elevation of attachments from a level of particulars to the level of impersonals.

QUESTION—The expectation of the coming of a World Teacher seems to be wide spread, being as common in Asia for example as in this country. Is there a justification for this expectation?

ANSWER—Among the better informed students of the esoteric traditions there is no immediate expectation of the advent of a World Teacher. This does not mean that heroic personalities will not appear to aid the progress of the race. There is seldom a time when emissaries of the Great School are not at work in the world. The fifth race, our race, has already received its spiritual revelation and no other major revelation can be expected until we have applied the wisdom that has already been given to us. About the year 1975 the next emissary of the Great White Lodge is expected but this representative will not be regarded as a World Teacher but merely as one of a long line of instructors who appear in the closing quarter of each century. The Lord Maitreya, whose coming is awaited in Asia, and who, in terms of Tibetan metaphysics, has already "lowered one foot from his throne of the golden lotus," will be the World Teacher of the sixth root race and his coming cannot be expected until the nucleus of the sixth root race is fairly well integrated. In the meantime disciples of the Ancient Wisdom receive their instruction from the "ever-coming Lord" within themselves.

QUESTION—What part does nationality play in Reincarnation? Does a person incarnate into a different nation each time he is reborn?

ANSWER—For practical purposes we may regard nations as parts of races. They are rungs in the ladder of racial evolution. Nations offer specialized environments for the lives evolving within a racial consciousness. The nation into which an individual is born is determined by evolution and Karma. The ego is not necessarily reborn each time into a different nation. It often requires many lives to outgrow national environments. National consciousness can hold egos to national programs for several lives. The present tendency towards internationalism is reflected in the short lives of nations whereas ancient national institutions used to exist for thousands of years. Few nations today retain their essential characteristics for more than from three hundred to five hundred years. This itself is an indication of the speeding up of evolution, a tendency consistent throughout nature. As consciousness unfolds nationalism must give way to internationalism, and evolution itself will finally bring about the condition of men living together in equity and peace.

QUESTION—Please tell us what sorcery really is?

ANSWER—Sorcery is black magic. In the ancient Atlantean world a division took place in the occult arts. This resulted in what was called the two paths—white and black magic. White magicians were designated Masters of the Right, and black magicians Masters of the Left. The difference between white and black magic is essentially the difference in motive. White magic is founded upon unselfishness, black magic upon selfishness, and a student of the Ancient Wisdom is white or black according to the merit of the impulse which urges him to accomplishment and action. Sorcery is the use of occult knowledge for selfish personal purposes at the expense of others. When we use superior wisdom to gain advantage over those more ignorant than we are, then we are sorcerers. When we use superior knowledge to aid and perfect others, then we are white magicians. There is a third term—natural magic—that is used by aboriginal peoples who are able to control the elements of nature, as in the causing of rain, the practices of the medicine man, and the Shaman Natural magic, like the mar-

vels of science, is impersonal, but the moment moral factors are involved, it becomes white or black according to its constructive or destructive use. Metaphysics today has in its ranks thousands of little parlor sorcerers—"thinking prosperity," meditating for power, and scheming occultly for superiority over each other.

QUESTION—Are there any other records of Jesus than the four Gospels?

ANSWER—The principal sources of information concerning the life and teachings of Jesus are the four so-called Gospels. In addition to these records there are Apocryphal Gospels, still regarded as uncanonical, containing fragments of history and some material evidently legendary. The Jewish Talmud mentions a Jesus who preached and healed in Nazareth and Galilee, and was stoned to death for his heresies. It would seem however that the Jesus of the Talmud (Jehoshua) lived about 100 B. C. The writings of the ante-Nicean fathers contain some traditions presumably derived from first century sources. The most important of the ante-Nicean records are found in Irenaeus. There is a brief statement in Josephus but this is regarded by most authors as a forgery. Fragmentary mentions of Jesus are to be found in many third and fourth century Christian documents, but he is ignored by all the important historians of his time. Taking it all in all, the Gospels remain as the only systematic exposition of his life and works. The most important records outside of the Gospels are the Gnostic writings, but in these Christ is treated as symbolical rather than historical, and they are not contemporary.

QUESTION—What is the best way to overcome an obsession?

ANSWER—The word obsession has two meanings at the present time. Occultly speaking, an obsession is a form of possession in which a living person is over-shadowed or dominated by the intelligence of another entity. Most often the other entity is decarnate. Psychologically speaking, an obsession is

a fixation in which the natural flow of the intellect is deflected or perverted by some idea or notion which has come to dominate the reasoning processes. In the case of true obsession it is my observation that certain physical derangements are usually present. Persons of normal mental attitudes, well directed emotions and healthy physical bodies are seldom obsessed. Obsessions most generally occur as the result of dabbling in occult sciences, years of emotional excess or repression, and a condition of anemia in the body chemistry. It follows that if the obsessed person has periods of lucidity and self-control they should be set to work normalizing their lives. Where the obsession is continuous and the patient can offer no personal assistance, those treating the obsession must do everything possible to normalize the patient without his assistance. The resistance of the physical body must be brought up, but at the same time it is dangerous to feed an obsessed person animal foods. Obsessing entities are usually of a lower moral and mental caliber than the person whom they attack but in order for the obsession to continue there must be a negative link of sympathy between the entity obsessing and the person obsessed. This link of sympathy must be sought for and removed. A serious case of obsession will not generally respond to amateur treatment, but must be worked on by a person experienced in occult therapeutics. Mild cases arising from mediumship can generally be remedied by the sufferer himself if he will reorganize his spiritual life and place it on a strong individual foundation. Thought power is a great force in working with obsessions and constructive thought regularly directed to the sufferer by a group of sympathetic people has been known to work wonders. In no case however should these thought impulses be sent forth in a destructive way even against the obsessing entity, for we do not fight evil with evil, but evil with good.

Yours very sincerely,

Manly P. Hall