

Some Spiritual Essays

- **What is Truth?**

by Nargis:

It is recorded in the Christian Scriptures that Pilate asked Jesus: "*What is Truth?*" but received no answer.

Many people in all ages and climes since Pilate's day have asked the same question, and some are bewildered because their questioning is unanswered. They say: "*Tell us the Truth about God, that we may believe.*" The reason why these questions are not answered is because they cannot be. No man can *tell* another the Truth about God; each man must seek and find for himself. He can never be *told*, and even if he could, the mere telling would not satisfy.

If God is everywhere He must be sought everywhere. What makes the search so difficult for many people is that, when they have found something which they think is *The Truth* and afterwards find it unsatisfying, they discard it and look elsewhere. This may happen several times; but, as all aspects of Truth are necessary before it can be seen as a whole, not one should be discarded as being useless or outlived; every one will be needed before the search is ended.

To try to resolve spiritual realities into material facts is not possible, and words are not very helpful; suggestions only can be offered. An analogy is sometimes of use if not taken too literally. Most people are fond of solving puzzles; there is one called a jigsaw puzzle. A picture is painted on a board which is afterwards cut out by a saw into numerous small pieces, all of different sizes and shapes; some are very odd looking and some appear to have no part of a picture on them, but every one is necessary to complete the puzzle, even the ugly dark pieces, also those which only form the background. When each piece has been fitted into its right place—and it can fit into no other—then once again the picture can be seen as a whole "*as it was in the beginning*" and the subject of it understood. The solver who has put each piece into its rightful place has had the joy of a completed work. This is a very crude illustration; it is also paradoxical because Truth must first be seen within before it can be recognised without; but anything that will urge a man to think for himself may be useful if he is sincerely seeking God as a Spiritual Reality.

"The Truth cannot be spoken, and the spoken word is not necessarily true." - Inayat Khan
(*Bowl of Saki*).

- **Free Will**

by Nargis:

"Man proposes but God disposes: therefore free-will is absence of self-will." - Shams-i-Tabriz.

Man has free will, but within limits.

The limitation he has himself created by his thoughts and actions in the past; he must reap what he has sown. "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6. 7). But by altering his thoughts, which he is always free to do, he can sow for a better reaping. If this were not so, all men would be puppets instead of actors in Life's Drama.

Complete freedom of will is attained only when man has voluntarily given up his personal will and is ready to do the Will of God at all times and in all circumstances.

When this can be done, then at the time of reaping there are no debts to be paid off and man can reap the full reward of his later sowing: the ability to be of further service and "*stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*" (Gal. 5. 1), "*and be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"—Romans 12. 2.

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23. 7).

by Sri Sathya Sai Baba:

Only the Divine has the free will. Man is endowed with a will but not a free will. When the Divine Free Will moves, the human will also operates. There are a myriad leaves in a tree but not a leaf will move in the absence of wind. The leaves have no free will, but they have a will that can be swayed when a breeze blows. In the tree of life, human beings are like leaves. When the Divine Will blows the human will begins to move. Thus there is need for the coming together of Divine Will and the human will. Then, there will be blossoming of human nature. Man can never achieve anything by his own efforts. There is something which a man accomplishes without much effort on his part. There are other things which he is unable to accomplish even with his best efforts. What is the reason? It is on account of the play of Divine Will.

- **The Purpose of the Physical World**

by Max Heindel (in '*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*):

As there are people who are quite unable to understand that there must be and are higher Worlds, so there are some who, having become slightly acquainted with the higher realms, acquire the habit of undervaluing this Physical World. Such an attitude is as incorrect as that of the materialist. The great and wise Beings who carry out the will and design of God placed us in this physical environment to learn great and important lessons which could not be learned under other conditions, and it is our duty to use our knowledge of the higher Worlds in learning to the best of our ability the lessons which this material world has to teach us.

In one sense the Physical World is a sort of model school or experiment station to teach us to work correctly in the others. It does this whether or not we know of the existence of those other worlds, thereby proving the great wisdom of the originators of the plan. If we had knowledge of none but the higher Worlds, we would make many mistakes which would become apparent only when physical conditions are brought to bear as criterion. To illustrate: Let us imagine the case of an inventor working out his idea of a machine. First he builds the machine in thought, and in his mind he sees it complete and in operation, performing most beautifully the work it is designed to do. He next makes a drawing of the design, and in doing so perhaps finds that modifications in his first conception are necessary. When, from the drawings, he has become satisfied that the plan is feasible, he proceeds to build the actual machine from suitable material.

Now it is almost certain that still further modifications will be found necessary before the machine will work as intended. It may be found that it must be entirely remodelled, or even that it is altogether useless in its present form, must be discarded and a new plan evolved. But mark this, for here is the point: the new idea or plan will be formulated for the purpose of eliminating the defects in the useless machine. Had there been no material machine constructed, thereby making evident the faults of the first idea, a second and correct idea would not have been formed.

This applies equally to all conditions of life--social, mercantile, and philanthropic. Many plans appear excellent to those conceiving them, and may even look well on paper, but when brought down in the actual test of utility they often fail. That however, should not discourage us. It is true that "we learn more from our mistakes than from our successes," and the proper light in which to regard this Physical World is as a school of valuable experience, in which we learn lessons of the utmost importance.

- **Love**

by C. W. Leadbeater:

There is one [kind of affection], hardly worthy of so sublime a name, which thinks always of how much love it is receiving in return (for its investment of attachment, which is ever worrying as to the exact amount of affection which the other person is showing for it, and so is constantly entangled in the evil meshes of jealousy and suspicion. Such feeling, grasping and full of greed, will work out its results of doubt and misery upon the plane of desire, to which it so clearly belongs.

But there is another kind of love, which never stays to think how much it is loved, but has only the one object of pouring itself out unreservedly at the feet of the object of its affection, and considers only how best it can express in action the feeling which fills its heart so utterly. Here there is no limitation, because there is no grasping, no drawing towards the self, no thought of

return, and just because of that there is a tremendous outpouring of force, which no astral matter could express, nor could the dimensions of the astral plane contain it. It needs the finer matter and the wider space of the higher level, and so the energy generated belongs to the mental world.

Just so, there is a religious devotion which thinks mainly of what it will get for its prayers, and lowers its worship into a species of bargaining; while there is also a genuine devotion, which forgets itself absolutely in the contemplation of its deity. We all know well that in our highest devotion there is something which has never yet been satisfied, that our grandest aspirations have never yet been realized, that when we really love unselfishly, our feeling is far beyond all power of expression on this physical plane, that the profound emotion stirred within our hearts by the noblest music or the most perfect art reaches to heights and depths unknown to this dull Earth. Yet all of this is a wondrous force of power beyond our calculation, and it must produce its result somewhere, somehow, for the law of the conservation of energy holds good upon the higher planes of thought and aspiration just as surely as in ordinary mechanics. But since it must react upon him who set it in motion, and yet it cannot work upon the physical plane because of its narrowness and comparative grossness of matter, how and when can it produce its inevitable result? It simply waits for the man until it reaches its level; it remains as so much stored-up energy until its opportunity arrives. While his consciousness is focussed upon the physical and astral planes it cannot react upon him, but as soon as he transfers himself entirely to the mental it is ready for him, its floodgates are opened, and its action commences.

So perfect justice is done, and nothing is ever lost, even though to us in this lower world it seems to have missed its aim and come to nothing.

by Nargis:

Love is the greatest thing a human being can ever know.

But really to know Love means a long pilgrimage and much suffering. It cannot be felt, or experienced, except through a cover, or form. Humanity, knowing so little of Reality, associates Love with the form it uses for its expression; so when the form breaks and a loved companion is lost, it is difficult to understand that *only* the form has disappeared, not the Love; also, what is perhaps more difficult to realise is, that the same Love can use another form.

It is like electricity transmitted from a power plant to places prepared to receive it. A bulb is put into a lamp, the current turned on, and you have light. If in time the bulb breaks there is apparently no light; but if another bulb is put into the lamp, there is again light, the same light—the light that has always been available. It is the same with Love.

If you can accept this teaching and endeavour to understand that there is only one Love, which can reach you through many forms, you will not feel all is lost when the form breaks. The same manifestation of Love may return using another form for its expression, as the electric current uses another bulb to give light. You must believe this, or it cannot happen. Unless you believed you could get light from the same electric current by replacing a broken bulb with a fresh one, you would not do it, and consequently would remain in darkness. Faith is needed to realise that the physical form, however dearly loved, is but a cover for Love given and received. Yes, it is a difficult teaching, but a true one nevertheless.

"Many waters cannot quench Love, Neither can the floods drown it."

by Peter Russell (in his *'From Science to God'*):

Love is another quality frequently ascribed to God. This love is not to be confused with what generally passes for love in our world, which, more often than not, has its origins in the same materialist mindset that runs many other areas of our lives. We believe that if only other people would think or behave as we want them to, we would be happy. When they don't, we may find ourselves feeling upset, angry, frustrated, or some other less-than-loving emotion. When we meet someone who we think will satisfy our deeper needs—someone, that is, who matches our image of the perfect person—our hearts are filled with warm feelings towards them. We say we love them.

Such love is conditional. We love a person for their appearance, their manner, their intellect, their body, their talents, their smell, their dress, their habits, their beliefs and values. We love

someone whom we feel is special; someone who matches our expectations, someone who will satisfy our deeper needs, someone who will make our life complete.

Such love is also fragile. If the other person gains weight, develops some annoying habit, or does not care for us as we think they should, our judgments can flip from positive to negative, and the love vanish as quickly as it came.

The love of which the mystics speak is a very different form of love. It is an unconditional love, a love that does not depend on another's attributes or actions. It is not based on our wants, needs, hopes, fears, or any other manifestation of the ego's thought system. Unconditional love is the love that springs forth when the mind has fallen silent, and for once we are free from fear, evaluation and judgment.

Like the peace we seek, this unconditional love is always there at our core. It is not something we have to create; it is part of our inner essence. Pure consciousness—consciousness not conditioned by the needs and concerns of an individual self—is pure love. I, in my true essence, am love.

by V. K. Pillay (in his '*Quest for Divinity*):

Love (*Prema*) is one of the five pillars of what is called Hinduism but which religion is more properly referred to as *Sanatana Dharma* - the eternal laws of righteous living: the other four pillars being Truth (*Sathya*), Righteousness (*Dharma*), Peace (*Shanti*) and Non-injury/non-violence (*Ahimsa*). *Ahimsa* extends to the whole animal kingdom and explains vegetarianism. Of all forms of attachment which is interpreted as Love, the attachment to the Divine (God) is considered supreme. Man is attached to wife (woman), children, material objects (wealth), kith and kin, power and pomp (position) etc. The way to spiritual evolution is detachment from the lower forms of attachment and the development of spiritual love.

It should be easy for the Hindu to "love his neighbour as himself." The fundamental concept of God in Hindu thought is that He/She is Spirit without name, form or attribute or *Brahman* - also called the Universal Self, the Over-Self etc. "Man" is considered to be the spark of the Divine: the individual Self or *Atman*. God is therefore transcendent and immanent (in 'man'). When a Hindu meets another Hindu he/she holds his palms together in a manner similar to prayer. This indicates: I worship the Divinity within you as you worship the same Divinity within me, i.e. you and I are one and we are one with the Father ("I and the Father are One"). Mankind is all one: though, because of ignorance and illusion (*Maya*), appearing as separate. The biblical exhortation makes good sense to the Hindu - Love Thy neighbour as Thy Self (the Divine in man).

Divine Love is portrayed in many ways. God though Supreme can be regarded as friend, husband, wife, child and so forth. Hence in addressing "Him" (It), He is brought down to human levels to show our affection for It (God to the Hindu is neither male, nor female - yet both - and is often referred to as "It"). The love Radha, a cowherdess, had for Krishna (one of the Hindu Incarnations of God [; an *avatar*]) is often depicted as sensuous love - the pining of a maiden for her lover. There is nothing sexual about this love as far as the Hindu is concerned.

- **Life after Death – Is there any certainty?**

by C. W. Leadbeater

THIS subject of life after death is one of great interest to all of us, not only because we ourselves must certainly one day die, but far more because there can scarcely be any one among us, except perhaps the very young, who has not lost (as we call it) by death some one or more of those who are near and dear to us. So if there be any information available with regard to the life after death, we are naturally very anxious to have it.

But the first thought which arises in the mind of the man who sees such a title as this is usually, "*Can anything be certainly known as to life after death?*" We have all had various theories put before us on the subject by the various religious bodies, and yet even the most devoted followers of these sects seem hardly to believe their teachings about this matter, for they still speak of death as "*the king of terrors*" and seem to regard the whole question as surrounded by mystery and horror. They may use the term "*falling asleep in Jesus*" but they still employ the black dresses and plumes, the horrible crape and the odious black-edged notepaper, they still surround death with all the trappings of woe, and with everything calculated to make it seem

darker and more terrible. We have an evil heredity behind us in this matter; we have inherited these funereal horrors from our forefathers, and so we are used to them, and do not see the absurdity and monstrosity of it all. The ancients were in this respect wiser than we, for they did not associate all these nightmares of gloom with the death of the body—partly perhaps because they had a so much more rational method of disposing of the body—a method which was not only infinitely better for the dead man and more healthy for the living, but was also free from the gruesome suggestions connected with slow decay. They knew much more about death in those days, and because they knew more they mourned less.

The first thing that we must realize about death is that it is a perfectly natural incident in the course of our life. That ought to be obvious to us from the first, because if we believe at all in a God who is a loving Father we should know that a fate which, like death, comes to all alike, cannot have in it aught of evil to any, and that whether we are in this world or the next we must be equally safe in His hands. This consideration alone should have shown us that death is not something to be dreaded, but simply a necessary step in our evolution. It ought not to be necessary for Theosophy to come among Christian nations and teach that death is a friend and not an enemy, and it would not be necessary if Christianity had not so largely forgotten its own best traditions. It has come to regard the grave as "*the bourne from which no traveller returns*" and the passage of it as a leap in the dark, into some awful unknown void. On this point, as on many others, Theosophy has a gospel for the Western world; it has to announce that there is no gloomy impenetrable abyss beyond the grave, but instead a world of light and life, which may be known to us as clearly and fully and accurately as the streets of our own city. We have created the gloom and the horror for ourselves, like children who frighten themselves with ghastly stories, and we have only to study the facts of the case, and all these artificial clouds will roll away at once. Death is no darksome king of terrors, no skeleton with a scythe to cut short the thread of life, but rather an angel bearing a golden key, with which he unlocks for us the door into a fuller and higher life than this.

But men will naturally say "*This is very beautiful and poetical, but how can we certainly know that it is really so?*" You may know it in many ways; there is plenty of evidence ready to the hand of any one who will take the trouble to gather it together [...]

- **The Heaven World**

by C. W. Leadbeater:

ALL religions agree in declaring the existence of heaven and in stating that the enjoyment of its bliss follows upon a well-spent Earthly life. Christianity and Muhammadanism [Islam] speak of it as a reward assigned by God to those who have pleased Him, but most other faiths describe it rather as the necessary result of the good life, exactly as we should from the Theosophical point of view. Yet though all religions agree in painting this happy life in glowing terms, none of them have succeeded in producing an impression of reality in their descriptions. All that is written about heaven is so absolutely unlike anything that we have known, that many of the descriptions seem almost grotesque to us. We should hesitate to admit this with regard to the legends familiar to us from our infancy, but if the stories of one of the other great religions were read to us, we should see it readily enough. In Buddhist or Hindu books you will find magniloquent accounts of interminable gardens, in which the trees are all of gold and silver, and their fruits of various kinds of jewels - and you might be tempted to smile, unless the thought occurred to you that after all, to the Buddhist or Hindu our tales of streets of gold and gates of pearl might in truth seem quite as improbable. The fact is that the ridiculous element is imported into these accounts only when we take them literally, and fail to realize that each scribe is trying the same task from his point of view, and that all alike are failing because the great truth behind it all is utterly indescribable. The Hindu writer had no doubt seen some of the gorgeous gardens of the Indian kings, where just such decorations as he describes are commonly employed. The Jewish scribe had no familiarity with such things, but he dwelt in a great and magnificent city—probably Alexandria; and so his conception of splendour was a city, but made unlike anything on Earth by the costliness of its material and its decorations. So each is trying to paint a truth which is too grand for words by employing such similes as are familiar to his mind.

There have been those since that day who have seen the glory of heaven, and have tried in their feeble way to describe it. [...] We do not speak now of gold and silver, of rubies and diamonds, when we wish to convey the idea of the greatest possible refinement and beauty of colour and form, we draw our similes rather from the colours of the sunset, and from all the

glories of sea and sky, because to us these are the more heavenly. Yet those of us who have seen the truth know well that in all our attempts at description we have failed as utterly as the Oriental scribes to convey any idea of a reality which no words can ever picture, though every man one day shall see it and know it for himself.

For this heaven is not a dream; it is a radiant reality; but to comprehend anything of it we must first change one of our initial ideas on the subject. Heaven is not a place, but a state of consciousness. If you ask me "*Where is heaven?*" I must answer you that it is here—round you at this very moment, near to you as the air you breathe. The light is all about you, as the Buddha said so long ago; you have only to cast the bandage from your eyes and look. But what is this casting away of a bandage? Of what is it symbolical? It is simply a question of raising the consciousness to a higher level, of learning to focus it in the vehicle of finer matter. I have already spoken of the possibility of doing this with regard to the astral body, thereby seeing the astral world; this needs simply a further stage of the same process, the raising of the consciousness to the mental plane, for man has a body for that level also, through which he may receive its vibrations, and so live in the glowing splendour of heaven while still possessing a physical body—though indeed after such an experience he will have little relish for the return to the latter.

The ordinary man reaches this state of bliss only after death, and not immediately after it except in very rare cases. I have explained how after death the Ego steadily withdrew into himself. The whole astral life is in fact a constant process of withdrawal, and when in [the] course of time the soul reaches the limit of that plane, he dies to it in just the same way as he did to the physical plane. That is to say, he casts off the body of that plane, and leaves it behind him while he passes on to higher and still fuller life. No pain or suffering of any kind precedes this second death, but just as with the first, there is usually a period of unconsciousness, from which the man awakes gradually. Some years ago I wrote a book called "*The Devachanic Plane*", in which I endeavoured to some extent to describe what he would see, and to tabulate as far as I could the various subdivisions of this glorious Land of Light, giving instances which had been observed in the course of our investigations in connection with this heaven-life. For the moment I shall try to put the matter before you from another point of view, and those who wish may supplement the information by reading the book as well.

Perhaps the most comprehensive opening statement is that this is the plane of the Divine Mind, that here we are in the very realm of thought itself, and that everything that man possibly could think is here in vivid-living reality. We labour under a great disadvantage from our habit of regarding material things as real, and those which are not material as dream-like and therefore unreal; whereas the fact is that everything which is material is buried and hidden in this matter, and so whatever of reality it may possess is far less obvious and recognizable than it would be when regarded from a higher standpoint. So that when we hear of a world of thought, we immediately think of an unreal world, built out of "*such stuff as dreams are made of*," as the poet says.

Try to realize that when a man leaves his physical body and opens his consciousness to astral life, his first sensation is of the intense vividness and reality of that life, so that he thinks, "*Now for the first time I know what it is to live*." But when in turn he leaves that life for the higher one, he exactly repeats the same experience, for this life is in turn so much fuller and wider and more intense than the astral that once more no comparison is possible. And yet there is another life yet, beyond all this, unto which even this is but as moonlight unto sunlight; but it is useless at present to think of that.

There may be many to whom it sounds absurd that a realm of thought should be more real than the physical world; well, it must remain so for them until they have some experience of a life higher than this, and then in one moment they will know far more than any words can ever tell them.

On this plane, then, we find existing the infinite fullness of the Divine Mind, open in all its limitless-affluence to every soul, just in proportion as that soul has qualified himself to receive. If man had already completed his destined evolution, if he had fully realized and unfolded the divinity whose germ is within him, the whole of this glory would be within his-reach; but since none of us has yet done that, since we are only gradually rising towards that splendid consummation, it comes that none as yet can grasp that entirely, but each draws from it and cognizes only so much as he has by previous effort prepared himself to take. Different individuals bring very different capabilities; as the Eastern simile has it, each man brings his

own cup, and some of the cups are large and some are small, but, small or large, every cup is filled to its utmost capacity; the sea of bliss holds far more than enough for all.

All religions have spoken of this bliss of heaven, yet few of them have put before us with sufficient clearness and precision this leading idea which alone explains rationally how for all alike such bliss is possible—which is, indeed, the key-note of the conception—the fact that each man makes his own heaven by selection from the ineffable splendours of the Thought of God Himself. **A man decides for himself both the length and character of his heaven-life by the causes which he himself generates during his Earth-life;** therefore he cannot but have exactly the amount which he has deserved, and exactly the quality of joy which is best suited to his' idiosyncrasies, for this is a world in which every being must, from the very fact of his consciousness there, be enjoying the highest spiritual bliss of which he is capable—a world whose power of response to his aspirations is limited only by his capacity to aspire.

He had made himself an astral body by his desires and passions during Earth-life, and he had to live in it during his astral existence, and that time was happy or miserable for him according to its character. Now this time of purgatory is over, for that lower part of his nature has burnt itself away: now there remain only the higher and more refined thoughts, the noble and unselfish aspirations that he poured out during Earth-life. These cluster round him, and make a sort of shell about him, through the medium of which he is able to respond to certain types of vibration in this refined matter. These thoughts which surround him are the powers by which he draws upon the wealth of the heaven-world, and he finds it to be a storehouse of infinite extent upon which he is able to draw just according to the power of those thoughts and aspirations which he generated in the physical and astral life. All the highest of his affection and his devotion is now producing its results, for there is nothing else left; all that was selfish or grasping has been left behind in the plane of desire.