

# On the Meaning of a New Dispensation

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This morning I wish to give expression to some thoughts on the subject of dispensation. First of all, to understand what is meant by dispensation, we'll take certain examples. Christ was said to have established a new dispensation, and that means a replacement of old rules by new ones. Considered in contrast to the preexisting Hebrewism which taught the doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, Christ said forgive thy enemies; love thy neighbor as thyself; do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you. Also, in another respect, a new dispensation is here involved. Hebrewism was a racial religion. And, indeed, it would appear that all of the religions prior to the time of Gautama Buddha were racial—Hinduism is racial; Hebrewism is racial; both Confucianism and Taoism are racial—which would imply, in modern psychological terms that this was an emergence from the collective unconscious of the different races. But in contrast, Buddhism, as well as Christianity, were interracial. Buddhism was in addition “intercastal,” if I can use such a term. In other words, what he said was available for all regardless of caste and regardless of race. And we have seen how Buddhism, though found originating in India and founded by one who was a born royal East Indian, nonetheless became established most effectively outside of India in places such as Ceylon, Southeast Asia, in China, Tibet, and Japan. The same is true of the religious movement that starts with the Christ. It was for all men regardless of class. It is a mistake to say that Christ came only to the poor and the unsuccessful. He came to all. However, it does appear that he was not too effective in meeting the needs of the wealthy and higher classes, and the same was true in the case of Buddha. So we do have, in both cases, a second appearance: Buddha, as Shankara, came to the Brahmins; and, again, Buddha, who came as Christ, also came again some 50 years later as Apollonius of Tyana who dealt only with the upper class people. But the implication is that here is a religiosity in both cases that is interracial and ignores the limitations of caste. This, thus, is an example, or a group of examples, of what we mean by a new dispensation.

There is reason to believe that today the impulse has gone forth to establish again a new dispensation. Now, there are certain things characteristic of a new dispensation that are difficult, at first, to appreciate and understand and accept. First of all, there are certain apparent contradictions between a new dispensation and that which preceded before, as in the cases I've already considered: as, for example, the shift from a racially oriented religion to a humanity oriented religion. Typically, this means that those who are oriented to that which preceded will have real difficulty in accepting that which comes later, for it undermines the basis upon which they have been functioning, and living, and orienting in the past. The new comes apparently as a heresy for that reason and may arouse persecution. This is understandable. And yet there is a law underlying this. It's not real contradiction; and that I will have to illustrate.

Superficially, one might think that an expression of a further truth as contrasted to that which has gone before would be a continuation in the same direction, yet there are

excellent reasons for viewing this as not being the case. You must bear in mind that in the progression of Realizations, for example, we have in an ascending series of steps a process of inversion, not development in the same direction, but an inversion to another direction. This would seem to parallel what is known as the Hegelian triadic dialectic, namely, that any thesis, at least in the dualistic world, implies its antithesis, and the combination of the thesis and the antithesis implies a further synthesis, and that this is an ascending process, the process known as the triadic dialectic—a zigzag form. No doubt there is an eternal truth, a truth that is timeless, but this truth we cannot express in our concepts except by negative definition such as the word ‘infinite’ which means not finite. But for the most part, the truths that concern us in our actually experienced life are time conditioned truths, truths that are valid for a cycle, and when that cycle is completed they lead on to other truths that are not simply continuations in the same direction, but involve the principle of inversion, a movement into a different sense. Assuming that this is so, then the structure of a later or latest dispensation would be discernibly different from the structure of that which went before, and yet it is possible only because of that which went before. This is important. Being possible only because of that which went before, it is not a negation or contradiction of that which went before. It is built upon that which was there before. A figure that may help is taken from the building of coral reefs. The polyps that build these structures are of several orders. There are those that live deep in the sea upon the rocks, and they build structures as high as they can go and then they die and other polyps take over of a different sort and build upon this earlier foundation, and so on until finally the coral reefs may rise above at least the lowest levels of the sea. The final polyps could not build their structures above the sea if there had not been the polyps that built the reefs below on the rocks and in the intermediate zones.

Now, there is reason to believe that we are in a cycle when a new dispensation is coming forth when certain truths that were concealed before now become available to humanity insofar as that humanity can understand them.

Now, I would like to bring in at this point a certain distinction that appears to me as valid between the “Initiate Adept” and the class of the “Redeemers” or “Saviors.” The Initiate Adept, we are told, and have every reason to believe it, that know through initiation truths that ultimately will be available for humanity but know them before humanity has reached the point where they are available for its conscious use. They know these truths under the pledge of secrecy. Therefore, strictly we can speak of their knowledge as a matter of initiation, pledged, secret knowledge, not eternally secret, but to be preserved until the time comes when humanity has attained the right to these truths.

Now, how does humanity attain that right? In that connection, this thought has come to me: when the cycles have struck, that some individual or individuals without the benefit of initiation succeed in making a breakthrough by their own resources to some portion of the hidden truth. To be sure, such individuals may have been initiated in past lives into the secrets, may have been, thus, Initiate Adepts in those lives, but in the incarnation when they would serve as the ones that would make the breakthrough, they’d be incarnated with an obscuration, hiding from them the resources of those past lives. They would be born into a culture and become identified with that culture; and then out of the resources of that culture, not the resources of ancient cultures, but of that specific culture, reach through to new truth, freed from the pledge of secrecy. And insofar as this

can be done, they render available the next step in the progression of truth for the human whole, insofar as that human whole can assimilate it. Having established such a trace, or blazed trail, as it were, others who are most prepared to follow in the footsteps can assimilate this; and so it can filter down into the human mass as far as that human mass can assimilate it. It may be that a large portion of the human mass cannot assimilate it; and then it may well be, as we are told in *The Secret Doctrine*, that that portion will not be able to continue in the evolution with the more advanced portion of humanity, but will be forced to enter a state of *Pralaya* until there is another dwelling place prepared where they can continue from the point they have reached. So I suggest that the class of the Redeemer Saviors are pioneers in rendering the next step in the development of time-conditioned truth available to humanity, rendering it essentially exoteric, since it is a knowledge that is no longer secret, available if it can be understood. In one sense it may remain more or less occult, just because for many individuals it would still be beyond understanding, but there would be no formal or arbitrary occult or pledged barrier insofar as these specific revealed truths are concerned.

Now, this has a bearing upon things that I have said already concerning the function or office of *Nirvana* in relationship to *Sangsara*. You will no doubt remember that the teachings which we have studied build a picture of a certain separation between the *nirvanic* consciousness and the *sangsaric* implying that if you are a dweller in *Sangsara*, or the evolution, then you cannot participate in *nirvanic* values; and vice-versa, if you are in the *nirvanic* state, you cannot participate in *sangsaric* development. That has been the teaching on which we have been brought up, yet there's certainly one exception, for the teaching does say in certain places that the Great Buddha, though dwelling in *Nirvana*, still is a living, conscious force within the world. I think we have missed the significance of this statement, for it implies that one individual, at least, has been able to cross the apparent barrier between *nirvanic* and *sangsaric* consciousness. And if one individual can do it, then we know that it is in principle possible. No individual can do anything whatsoever without thereby proving that that which he has done is in principle possible, and therefore a possibility for others. That's the one exception in the statement.

Now, it has been impressed upon my consciousness that the relationship between *Sangsara* and *Nirvana* is not necessarily a closed separated state, but there can be an interplay between the two; furthermore, that the meaning of *Nirvana* is not simply a withdrawal into an extremely blissful, quiescent consciousness, but that it is an energetic level that is the complementary opposite of the *sangsaric* level; that the two are complementary and that the two, in principle, are capable of interacting; further, that the meaning of *Nirvana* is not simply that of an inconceivable bliss, it is also a source of refreshment and of purification. If, then, from the *nirvanic* level a stream could go forth into the chambers and interstices of the *sangsaric* realm, it would be a purifying force, a transforming force that would so alter the consciousness of the dwellers in the *sangsaric* realm that the problems, the difficulties, that we face, and which even with the best of will we seem unable to solve, would become resolvable; that man could find a way to live with man in an essentially cooperative, complementary sense without the clash of war and enmity. It becomes possible because of a transformation of the consciousness of the dweller in *Sangsara* so that that which was impossible now becomes possible.

And this has a further bearing upon those who perform the function of Redeemers. You are all familiar, of course, with *The Voice of the Silence*. You know the picture as it developed at the end implying that he who would serve the liberation, the transformation, of the human being must renounce the *nirvanic* state and become a *Nirmanakaya* and that this renunciation is final and for a Great Age. But it has occurred to me that no one could endure a separation from *nirvanic* consciousness, say for a million years, without exhaustion and that participation in something of *nirvanic* consciousness is necessary for the function of the Redeemer to be performed. If, then, an individual could make, in his own psychical depth, the participation in *nirvanic* and *sangsaric* consciousness at the same time a realized fact, then a bridge would be established and across that bridge the current which flows from *Sumeru* may penetrate into the whole of humanity and lead not alone to the redemption of mankind or the redemption of all creatures, but to the redemption of *Sangsara* itself so that *Sangsara* becomes a transformed and purified zone of action necessary to the evolution, necessary to the unfoldment of consciousness on the surface that preexists beneath the surface, necessary for this purpose, therefore something not to be abandoned, as it would seem is suggested in vulgate Buddhism, and the Vedanta of Shankara, and in the teachings of Christ, who said my kingdom is not of this world.<sup>1</sup>

The new dispensation, then, would not repudiate other-worldliness. It would add to it this-worldliness, so that it would be both other-worldly and this-worldly. With this goes certain implications among which the most important would be that the mundane and the supermundane would no longer be radically separate so that one would have to abandon the mundane to know the supermundane, but rather that he could abide in both the mundane and the supermundane and participate in a consciousness that is composed of both components. No doubt, relatively obscuring one to penetrate more deeply into the other and vice-versa, but available for participation more or less at the same time or in succeeding periods chosen consciously and voluntarily.

This is the primary meaning I attach to the conception of the new dispensation. I am well aware of the fact that there's a certain parallelism in the teaching of Sri Aurobindo approached from a different angle and more God oriented; whereas, what I'm now saying is Buddha oriented. And there's an important difference between these two. I have covered this ground in other places but I will briefly sketch it again. The God

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<sup>1</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Co., 1928), 72-73:

Would'st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?

If thou would'st have that stream of hard-earn'd knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should'st not leave it to become a stagnant pond.

Know, if of Amitabha, the "Boundless Age", thou would'st become co-worker, then must thou shed the light acquired, like to the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all three worlds.

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya be poured forth into another bed.

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.

oriented religions are oriented to the conception of the primacy of an entity. Now, in my own inner experiences this is a truth valid up to a certain point, that there is an experience in which one finds an Otherness that's extremely delightful, that has the value of an entity, which one would be inclined to call the Divine, and upon which one can rest, upon which one can, as it were, drop all his burdens of maintaining a self-determined, individual consciousness, and that it is a very attractive experience. But it is also true that one can advance in the hierarchy of Realizations to a position of *identity* with this Otherness where it is not now a matter of dropping a load, but taking on a load. The first is a childhood state. The latter is an adult state. But here we have the idea of entity as the root from which all comes. There are still more advanced Realizations where one finds that the concept of entity is derivative—it is relatively valid, but only relatively valid—that the entity is a function of pure, self-existent Consciousness, of pure, self-existent, Primordial Wisdom. But pure, self-existent, Primordial Wisdom is none other than that which has been represented by Adi-Buddha. In other words, entityhood and selfhood, two conceptions that are complementary and interdependent, are realized as derivative from pure Consciousness and that pure Consciousness, pure nonphenomenal Consciousness, is the Source of all, is the Substance of which all things are composed, and this is orientation to Buddha, not now Gautama Buddha a personality, but Buddha in the sense of Enlightenment and that this transcends all God oriented religions and philosophies.

That is the picture, given in a quick abstract form and repeating what has been said before, but needing repetition until the idea catches hold and it is realized that this is to be taken seriously.

I think that'll be enough for this morning.