

THE RELATIVE STATURE OF SAVIOURS

A stranger traveling up Owens Valley, knowing that he is in the vicinity of the highest peak in the United States, will, when he approaches Lone Pine, note a high and conspicuous mountain peak which seems to rise above all others. Rather naturally he will, in general, conclude that this must be the famous Mount Whitney, but upon inquiry he will learn that it is only Lone Pine Peak which is less than thirteen thousand feet high. Then a rather inconspicuous mountain in the background will be pointed out to him and this, he will be told, is the highest of all. The error was due to perspective. If the traveler later climbs to the top of one of the higher peaks he will then have a perspective from which he can correctly evaluate the relative altitude of the high points surrounding him.

Nature has given to us here a simile which illustrates the difficulty inherent in the evaluating of the relative stature of men if they rise far above the station of the one who attempts the evaluation. Men are of different statures in the physical, intellectual and spiritual senses. It is relatively easy for almost anyone to recognize physical superiority, and to determine who among the superior is supreme. On the other hand, only a relatively small number can recognize and evaluate correctly intellectual superiority. This is for the reason that it requires a fair degree of intellectual unfoldment to appreciate outstanding intellectuality. When we come to the problem of evaluating spiritual stature among the men who are spiritually great only a very few are qualified to give an

objective judgment. And these few must, themselves, stand upon a comparable spiritual altitude.

Any man who is spiritually awakened is, in principle, capable of serving as a Light for those who are living in darkness, or are at least, less awake than he is. Naturally, one who has been helped out of his spiritual darkness by a Teacher, Guru or Saviour, will feel a high regard for the latter. For such a student, at that time, the latter may very well seem as the spiritually greatest of all. Again, this is a matter of perspective. The student or devotee is closer to his spiritual Teacher than to any one else, and this tends to obscure other great souls who stand at a greater distance from him. Psychologically this belief in the supreme greatness of his Teacher may be a great help to the student for a time, as it may lead to a greater strength of devotion, and a more intense effort to progress. But this value applies only to the kindergarten stage of spiritual development.

Overvaluation of one's own Teacher, particularly if combined with an insistence that others shall agree with him has been, in the religious history of the world, a fruitful source of evil. It has even served in considerable degree to defeat the purposes of the Spiritual Brotherhood. Mohammedan has fought Christian because each claimed the superiority of his Saviour or Prophet, and insisted that the other should agree with him. The Christians have fought the memory of Apollonius of Tyana; Brahmins have fought Buddhists, and so on. In all these cases, not the purpose of Love, but of Hate was served. Every spiritual Teacher is one with all other

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spiritually realized men, and They all stand united against the
heresy of separateness, the great cause of the suffering of man.

Think how They must feel when They see Their respective followers
at war with each other! Is not this a kind of continual crucifixion?

To offset this tendency among men there have been movements,
notable among them the Theosophical, the Bahai and the Sufi movements,
which have endeavored, among other purposes, to induce as many people
as possible to give recognition to all the various scriptures and
spiritual leaders of the world so far as known. As a result of this
many know today that there is not one unique son of God but that
there is a plurality of such, though relatively not many when Their
number is compared with the totality of all human souls evolving
in this world. It is also known, theoretically at least, by a grow-
ing number of men that every human being is potentially a Son of
God in the sense that Jesus and every other God-realized man is.

The members of this Order should have advanced beyond the
spiritual kindergarten, but at least, if they have not, they should
aspire to do so. Beyond the kindergarten there is no longer an
asserting: "My Teacher is greater than any other, and you, my brother,
must agree with me or I will not work with you." The students are
not qualified to judge the relative stature of Spiritual Leaders,
and it does not help the Great Work to have controversies on this
subject.

It should be known by any occultly informed student that
there is a Guruparampara line of Buddhas or Christs that extends

indefinitely into the past, and that each individual Mahatma (Great Soul) who fills this office holds that position for a cycle of at least some thousands of years duration. The One who was born in India as Gautama in the sixth century B.C. is the present Buddha, or Christ, of that line, and will continue to be so for an undetermined period. Since then He has appeared in a limited number of major avatara incarnations, of which those of Shankara, Jesus, and Apollonius of Tyana are instances. Of minor, temporary and partial incarnations the number is unknown. He overshadows the human race at all times. It is possible to rise to His level of consciousness and feel His presence, though this is not often done and recognized for what it is. Now is it not absurd to insist that Jesus is greater than Gautama when, in a profound sense, these two are one and the same Being incarnated? The spiritual Light of the two being identical, naturally It is equal to Itself. Gautama could say more to the Hindus than Jesus could to the Hebrews simply because the metaphysical sense of the former was more awakened. Through Shankara, the Buddha could write and speak still more completely because in this case He was dealing only with the Brahmanical caste, which with all its faults, had and still has the highest metaphysical training of any group in the world. All of this simply means that Buddha was and is a great spiritual Teacher regardless of whether He was dealing with the kindergarten, the intermediate, grades or with college classes. His spiritual stature remains the same in all cases. So let there be no quarreling about relative stature here.

The central core of the message of all God-realized men is the same, and this part each student should seek out and make his

own. In the manifestations of the current Buddha or Christ there is an additional similarity in the form and emphasis that is a result of the peculiar individuality of that One. But in every case there are differences of emphasis, of form and even material, which grows out of the needs and capacities of the public addressed. New reformulations of the Message are continuously necessary because of the differences attaching to different peoples, times and cultures.

In view of the changing intellectual and emotional contexts of the different cultures, if the significance of the Message is to remain unaltered, the formal statement must undergo complementary changes. The same words, phrases and sentences do not carry the same meaning when read by representatives of cultures distant in time and racial background. The result is that an unchanging form involves a changing meaning, and it is precisely the latter that must remain constant at the core of all spiritual outpourings. It is the form, therefore, that must be transformed in the appropriate manner.

The words of Jesus, spoken to and for the Hebraic world of Asia Minor nearly two thousand years ago cannot possibly today mean for us what they were intended to mean then. This is, probably, the most important reason why the West, in spite of its profession, has never been really Christian. Jesus never spoke to and for the West of the present day. The combination of our dynamic will, outwardly polarized with our commanding science, has radically changed our relationship to circumstance as compared with that of the people of Jesus' time and setting. It is useless to talk of

renunciation and of acquiescence to the will of God, as expressed in the circumstances afforded by nature, when dealing with the typical western man. He is far too accustomed to conquest of nature.

The great Avatar for the West is not to be found in the past. Fore-runners have appeared upon the scene. Prophecy of His coming exists. But we must look for Him either in the future, or, perchance in our own day. There has been a preparing of the field for Him. In part this consists in a broadening of the philosophico-religious perspective through the extensive teaching of all religious philosophies as well as the Christian. This serves to broaden the base of understanding and open the way for discrimination between the essential and the non-essential of any spiritual message. Naturally this broadening has come largely from the peculiarly rich metaphysical philosophies of India. But this does not mean that the true Destiny of the West is to be found in a grafting on of Indian thought and method in place of the Christian. The fact is that both are alien to the Western Spirit.

The main current of Life now lies in the West. There is certainly now a "resurrection of vice and an insurrection of evil in the world." All signs indicate that the time has come when the wise student will look less to the past and more to the present for the dispensation that meets the needs of our day and culture. Let all, therefore, be alert to give recognition where recognition is due.