Humanity
by Christian Bernard, F.R.C. (Imperator 1990 - present)  

Rosicrucian Declaration of Human Duties

Importance of Rosicrucian Affiliation
by Ralph M. Lewis, F.R.C. (Imperator 1939 - 1987)  

What is Karma?
by H. Spencer Lewis, F.R.C. (Imperator 1915 - 1939)
Our vision of the world is very often ethnocentric and too narrow. We call ourselves Europeans, Africans, Americans, Asians, and so on, and yet we are all members of the same *humanity*. This notion of humanity has always been an abstract concept. According to history, it is referred to as “the gathering of all humans.” Victor Hugo imagined it as “radiant and reconciled.”

There was a growing awareness of the concept of humanity during the last few centuries. Particularly in the twentieth century an increased awareness of the concept of humanity really began to develop. There is no humanity without human beings, and what we call “human rights” is a common language of all humanity. To the idea of human rights is added the idea of human duties, made official by our Order a few years ago with the publication of the “Rosicrucian Declaration of Human Duties.” I am proud to see how this notion of human duties has become very popular, because not a day passes in the world without politicians, artists, or journalists addressing this subject.

Human rights concern all people. There should not be any cultural excuses, let alone any references to once taboo or so-called traditions that would hinder the application of these rights. In the divine order, there are no inferior beings, and all beings capable of reasoning are part of the same humanity. Any insult directed against an individual is also an insult to humanity as a whole; just as any wound inflicted on our immediate environment is also a wound inflicted on planet Earth.

On our planet, which is rather cramped today, we can no longer continue to ignore our neighbors. The fact that all people on Earth make up one community strengthens peace, and peace is the one fundamental choice that we must demand for the good of humanity. Universalism is the cradle of peace. Peace is universal, and humanity is the life force behind it. Peace will not be possible unless there is some humanistic change, and for this to take place, the utopian forces must mobilize their resources.
Let us try to understand this world and ourselves rather than seeing the world as confused and too full of mysteries. Let us no longer see humans as a danger to themselves and the planet. This is the only way we will be able to act and accomplish some good. To act in a good manner, we must be strong, and in order to become strong we need to enlist the help of others. On the other hand, it is only when we are strong that we are able to turn towards others. We must therefore become acquainted with this paradox in order to understand and to love humanity—a humanity whose history has been in constant conflict with God.

What if it were not God who made humans in God’s image, but humans who created God in our own image, seeing in God the reflection of our own nature?

However, whether worshiped or denied, God is still present in the human heart. Personally, I cannot separate God from humanity. Believing in humanity does not hinder believing in God or some cosmic forces. And yet, today, it often seems as though we believe only in ourselves, as though we are blinded by our ego and are moving forward without paying any mind to the almighty creator. Some think that they have freed themselves from God; others think that they are witnessing the “fall” of God. As innocent children, we believed that the world was about good and evil, and later in life we realized that things were not always black or white. The principle of Yin-Yang is always present and manifests itself everywhere. But the thin line that separates good and evil is ever present, whether it is visible or invisible; and too many people walk on that razor edge without being able to take a step to the good side. There is always some mistrust, some hesitation, and some doubt!

As I pointed out before, we must strive to understand and become acquainted with our world, in order to estimate our true value as human beings. Isn’t our humanism gauged more by the love that we give than by the love that we receive? As we have been advised before, let us love our neighbors; let us accept them as they are, even though they may be different from us. Let us accept the fact that we can become part of a land or a history, even if it is not the land where we or our ancestors were originally born. One often belongs to the place that one likes and where one feels accepted. Let
us accept the hand that is extended to us, and let us learn how to extend our hand to others so that they may be friends and not enemies. To understand and accept others is to also understand and accept ourselves.

Let us accept our human condition with confidence. Let us not allow fear of the future to add to the problems of the present; and let us take time to discover from where the stream runs and to where the river flows.

A noble human quality consists of hoping for and working toward the realization of a project or goal that we may not necessarily see completed or live long enough to enjoy. But far from being discouraging, this ideal should help us to build a better world without thinking of the time it will take for this to happen.

Should we trust the things that are easy to accomplish? Difficulty is often a sign that something good has been accomplished. It is said that eternity is timeless. Therefore, let us act as builders, and when we leave behind this life, which is ruled by time, and join eternity, where the spirit of nothingness and the infinite rule, and where we will be accompanied by the “Great Watchmakers,” the “Masters of the Hourglass,” who tirelessly guide the path of humans from birth to death and vice versa, we will leave this plane with complete peace of mind and with the feeling of having been useful. I arrived at this practical sense of purpose by accident one day as I was taking a walk. My gaze fell on an inscribed epitaph which read: “The one we leave here under these leaves has been useful.”

This “encounter” led me to reflect on the feeling of being useful that every human being carries within. How often do we hear people say, “I am worthless, I am useless to my family and to society, etc.” This feeling of failure, weakness, and regret, which is very often unjustified and unfounded, is proof that human beings have a natural desire to build and to be useful to others.

We can be useful; let us be the light, and let us be a voice in the service of humanity!

As a human being, let us accept our human condition. And when the time comes for us to depart this plane, let us not deny our humanity. Let us not leave dissatisfied with life, and let our last glance be directed toward happy and smiling faces.
Since this message is about humanity, I would like to conclude with a passage from a lyric written by Jacques Brel, an artist and humanist, who enjoyed defying God with his tender look on humanity.

You, you if you were the good Lord
You would light up parties for the beggars

You, you if you were the good Lord
You would be more giving of blue skies

But you are not the good Lord
You, you are better than that, you are a human!

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ROSICRUCIAN DECLARATION
OF HUMAN DUTIES

PROLOGUE

As soon as humans became aware of the need to live in organized societies, they created diverse forms of government in order to assure the administration of these societies. To date, it appears that the interests and aspirations of individuals – and more generally nations – are best expressed through democracy. In fact, even though democracy is not perfect and includes many weaknesses, democratic societies are currently those that best protect Human Rights such as they are defined in the Universal Declaration.

Respect for the rights of all is certainly the basis of any democracy. However, any democracy that does not encourage respect for the corresponding duties bears in itself the seeds of decadence and fosters the emergence of a dictatorship. As history has shown, a society’s good governance depends on the proper balance between every individual’s rights and duties. When that balance is lost, whether at the level of the citizens or of those who govern them, the most extreme totalitarianism takes advantage of the situation and plunges those nations into chaos and barbarism.
At the dawn of the 21st century, we note that in many countries that have enjoyed democracy for a long time, the rights of the citizens are emphasized over the duties that are incumbent on them as human beings, and thus the balance between the former and the latter is, if not lost, at least quite threatened. Being concerned that this imbalance could increase and lead to a deterioration of the human condition in those countries, we submit this Declaration of Human Duties to all those who share our concerns:

**DECLARATION**

**Article 1:** It is each individual’s duty to respect without reservation Human Rights such as they are defined in the Universal Declaration.

**Article 2:** It is each individual’s duty to respect him-or herself and not to debase his or her body or conscience through behaviors or practices that jeopardize his or her dignity or integrity.

**Article 3:** It is each individual’s duty to respect others, irrespective of race, gender, religion, social status, community, or any other apparently distinctive element.

**Article 4:** It is each individual’s duty to respect the laws of the countries in which he or she lives, being understood that such laws should be based on the respect for the most legitimate rights of individuals.

**Article 5:** It is each individual’s duty to respect the religious and political beliefs of others, as long as they do not harm human beings or society.

**Article 6:** It is each individual’s duty to be benevolent in thoughts, words, and deeds, in order to be an agent of peace in society and an example to others.

**Article 7:** It is the duty of each individual who is of legal age, and in a fit condition to work, to do so, whether it be to support his or her needs or his or her family’s needs, to be useful to society, to grow personally, or simply not to sink into idleness.

**Article 8:** It is the duty of each individual who is responsible for raising or educating a child to instill the child with courage, tolerance, non-violence, generosity, and more generally, the virtues that will make the child a respectable and responsible adult.

**Article 9:** It is each individual’s duty to assist anyone in danger, whether by direct action, or by doing everything necessary so that qualified or authorized people can act.
**Article 10:** It is each individual’s duty to consider the whole of humanity as his or her family and to behave in all circumstances and everywhere as a citizen of the world. This means making humanism the basis of his or her behavior and philosophy.

**Article 11:** It is each individual’s duty to respect others’ goods, whether private or public, individual or collective.

**Article 12:** It is each individual’s duty to respect human life and to consider it the most precious good existing in this world.

**Article 13:** It is each individual’s duty to respect and preserve Nature, so that present and future generations can benefit from it on all planes and consider Nature a universal heritage.

**Article 14:** It is each individual’s duty to respect animals and to truly see them as beings that are not only alive; they are also conscious and feeling.

**EPILOGUE**

If all humans carried out these fundamental duties, there would be few rights left to demand because everyone would benefit from the respect due to him or her and could live happily in society. This is why any democracy should not confine itself to promoting a “State of Rights,” otherwise the balance mentioned in the Prologue cannot be maintained. It is also imperative to advocate for a “State of Duties,” so that every citizen expresses what is best in humans in his or her behavior. Only by resting on these two pillars can civilization fully take on the status of humanity.
IMPORTANCE OF ROSICRUCIAN AFFILIATION

by Ralph. M. Lewis, FRC

Our reasons for affiliation with the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, are numerous. At first some of us, at least, were curious. Something someone said, or a leaflet or booklet published by AMORC, may have aroused our curiosity. We may have affiliated to shop about, attracted superficially by the appeal of the subjects of the teachings, just as we would be attracted to a display of merchandise upon a counter.

If the basic reason why we become members is merely curiosity, unless it is soon converted into serious interest, we drift out of the Order. In fact, most failures in life are caused by our inability to find something sufficiently provoking to dominate our thought processes. A real interest becomes a mental desire or craving. Such desire develops an emotional impetus that puts behind it the force of will power by which we are determined to pursue our interest in the face of any obstacles that may arise.

Something we love brings us satisfaction every time it is realized. The experience of that love, the pleasure derived from it, surmounts displeasures, inconveniences, or the labor spent in realizing it. For analogy, the person who enjoys woodworking will spend hours in his or her shop sawing, planing, and sanding—acts which, to another, would be very tedious labor. The ideal to be realized, the finished product, is the incentive that causes the woodworker to concentrate will power upon his or her labors.

There is quite a psychological distinction between mere curiosity and genuine interest. Curiosity is that which arrests attention only because it interrupts a more or less uniform pattern of perception. Change is vital to an active state of consciousness. If our consciousness does not vacillate or vary, it becomes dormant. In fact, the basic principle of inducing a
hypnotic state is to fix the attention upon some one stimulus, as, for example, a shining object, or the repetition of certain words. Eventually, the objective consciousness is suppressed by the repetition of the similar stimuli. Therefore, any change in a more or less uniform pattern of impressions immediately attracts our attention. As you walk down the street, the largest building, or the most intensely lighted neon sign, or the most rapidly moving vehicle will be the one that will attract you. Psychologically, then, the greatest elements of attention may be said to be motion or change, extensivity or that which is prominent in size, and intensivity or that which is the loudest or brightest.

Unless that which arouses curiosity can be related to the subjective self, or to our talents and sentiments, its attention value diminishes. Once the largest structure on the boulevard has been observed by us, it soon loses its curiosity-stimulus, unless there is something in its form or design which corresponds to an intellectual interest or to a talent which we may have. Thus, many who are drawn by what to them is the unusual or different nature of the Rosicrucian Order soon find their interest waning. Unfortunately, at that particular period in their lives the nature of the Order, its true purposes, and its teachings, do not correspond to some intellectual interest which they may have, or it does not arouse an emotional response. For this reason, we have often said: “One must be ready for the Rosicrucian teachings.” When someone is ready, he or she finds joy in their discovery. It is like the great satisfaction that the thirsty find in a cool drink.

All those who are curious at first about AMORC, and who go no further, are not forever disinterested. Many persons who years ago were curiously drawn to the Rosicrucian Order only to terminate their membership a short time later, because of lack of interest, are now enthusiastic Rosicrucians. Within five years, or a decade of time, their personality went through an evolvement; latent faculties were awakened. There was a growing interest in aspects of life which, when they were younger, meant nothing to them. Upon contacting again the Rosicrucian teachings, their response was immediate. Such members relate that if they had only remained as members from the time of their
first association with the Order, they would not have lost all those years of opportunity. Actually, however, those years in the Order would have been of little avail to them until there was a sympathetic accord between the Self and the teachings of the Order.

How long should we remain members of the Rosicrucian Order? Should we complete our studies in ten, twenty, or in thirty years? Are the teachings of the Order to be compared to a course in law, accounting, or medicine, for example? Actually, some members are impatient. They feel that by now, after several years, all of Rosicrucianism should have been made available to them. But there is no actual end to the Rosicrucian teachings. As a Rosicrucian you are seeking: first, to learn of the principles of life and of the Cosmic; second, you are seeking to learn how to apply these to your personal development, the continual expanding of your consciousness and the awakening of the powers of Self; third, you are ever to apply the knowledge and wisdom you acquire as the result of the application of the teachings, to the furtherance of humanity. Can you think of any time when you should stop learning the cosmic laws? Is there ever a time when you should cease your personal development? Further, is it right that you should ever discontinue to promote the welfare of humanity? If the Rosicrucian Order can and does help you to do these things, should you not always remain a member of it?

Suppose that within a given number of years the actual extension of the teachings—that is, the monographs, charts, diagrams, exercises, and the like—were to cease coming to you. Just suppose there was an end to the intellectual aspects of the Order. Would that be sufficient reason for terminating your membership? You could continue your personal development by the application of the principles extended to you—that is quite true. Your personal progress would not be completely checked. You would, however, by discontinuing your membership, be doing an injury to the cause of the Order.

The Rosicrucian Order has as its objective the enlightenment of humanity. This does not alone mean education or intellectualism. It means, as well, the awakening of the psychic powers of the individual,
the expression of the spiritual self. It also means taking a militant stand against illiberalism, intolerance, and it includes the advancing of self-dependence and initiative. If ever the world was in need of a fearless organization, one having no political or religious affiliations, no biases nor prejudices, one that is honest, and serving humanity for altruistic purposes, most certainly this is the time! It is the duty, then, of every Rosicrucian, for the reasons set forth here, to champion the Order, to be responsible for its continued existence and growth. One should not measure the Order alone in respect to its advantages to oneself as an individual. Society can be no more noble or progressive than the plane of consciousness of the average individual composing it. The Rosicrucian Order seeks to elevate the individual consciousness. From that achievement is derived greater vision and the circumspection necessary for the advancement of humanity.

Even if, for the rest of your natural life, you were to continue the nominal monthly support of the Order in the form of dues, it would be a small contribution on your part to the welfare of society and the advancement of humanity generally, would it not? After all, would it not pay increasing dividends in peace, in harmony among peoples, if not in our lifetime, then in the life of our children? You are not a mere student, nor even just a member of a beneficent order. You are, we repeat, a champion of a cause.

The value of your affiliation with the Rosicrucian Order must not be measured solely in terms of personal benefit, but must include the support of an important part of the foundation upon which society must stand.

Without such organizations as AMORC, civilization would be doomed to failure. All other interests you have will stand or fall upon whether or not humans, as individuals, keep spiritually abreast of their intellectual and technological achievements.
WHAT IS KARMA?

by H. Spencer Lewis, FRC

One of the subjects of mystical, metaphysical, or Eastern philosophy, which seems to puzzle the Western mind, is that of karma. The word itself appears to be so mysterious and indefinable that it creates the impression that karma is an indefinite something that is the cause of all of our suffering, unhappiness, and misfortune. The free manner in which misinformed students and readers use the word to explain all the personal events of life has led to a greater misunderstanding of the real law than of any other principle in the field of mystical philosophy.

Let me review the traditional and doctrinal meaning of karma. The word is of Sanskrit origin and means “deed” or “to do.” As we think or act, there follow from such thought and deed certain results. Thus karma is the law of causality. Each motivation, acting upon our environment or upon the lives of others, or as it may invoke natural and cosmic law, will produce certain effects. There is nothing supernatural or arbitrary about it. Natural law is karma. A stone thrown in the air is acted upon by gravitation, and the effect is the return of the stone to the earth. A harsh word is a cause. The effect upon the one to whom the word is directed and his or her reaction to it is likewise karma. Kindness shown someone and his or her reciprocation toward the doer is another example of karma. We must reiterate that karma as cause and effect is not all adverse. It can be, and often is, salutary as well.

Karma is the law of compensation, which represents that form of spiritual and worldly action by which the thoughts and deeds of human beings are balanced. This balancing may be likened to the familiar process of nature whereby one reaps what one sows. The law has efficiently demonstrated itself in the lives of millions of human beings and is a very definite principle made manifest by many experiences of every sincere student of mysticism. We bring upon ourselves the conditions which constitute our lot in life.

Karma is an immutable law and will work in the distant hereafter as well as in the present cycle of time. We create for ourselves in the future life many of the circumstances with which we will have to contend. Everything
that occurs in life is due to some cause, and every cause has its definite effect. We cannot do a kindness or an injury to another human being, or even to an animal, without some day in some way making just compensation or receiving just recompense for our act.

In carefully watching and analyzing events in the course of our lives many of us have learned that we create for ourselves events and conditions in the future by the thoughts we hold and express, by the motives behind our acts, and the acts themselves. We have learned also that there is no way of avoiding the law of karma except by making compensation either before the law forces us to do so or when the demand of the law is upon us.

No unkindness or kindness, no unjust or just thought or deed, unmerciful or merciful act ever escapes the karmic records or goes uncompensated. It may take months or years before the inevitable results of our acts are brought home, but the law is positive and sure in its working. The arbitrarily-created laws for the civic and moral conduct of peoples may attempt to compensate individuals for their acts, but such compensation is never as just, merciful, sure, and efficacious as is the inevitable operation of the law of karma.

We have said that the law is immutable. This means it is a divine principle or law created by God and is not contrary to the divine principles of mercy, justice, forgiveness, and love.

The law of compensation is not a blind, mechanical thing that demands an eye for an eye as humans demand in their law. Such a process is never wholly just, is never merciful, and most of all is never constructive or beneficial to the individual and to society. The law of karma naturally seeks to be constructive and beneficial to the individual and society.

For some strange reason—probably due to the misrepresentation of the true law and lack of understanding of it—many casual readers and students of mystical philosophies believe all suffering is karmic. This belief is undoubtedly based upon a logical fallacy often stated as: “All misdeeds lead to suffering; therefore, all suffering is due to misdeeds.”

If the law of compensation is just, merciful, and constructive, as we must consider it to be if it is a universal law of divine origin, it must make
compensation for good deeds as well as demand adjustment for evil deeds. The justice of the operation of the law appeals to our good sense and at once brings out the absurdity of the idea that the law of compensation is only a form of punishment for misdeeds.

The word *karma* is an unfortunately chosen word as a name for the law of compensation. To many students of Eastern philosophy the word implies only suffering, or the trials and tribulations of life. It is not a good term because, unless our good deeds were rewarded, we would not be inclined to live a noble life, to do good to others, and to contribute freely to the constructive progress of civilization. If we were only punished for the evil we did, we would neither be deterred in our evil actions nor motivated to do good in place of evil.

Most of the arbitrarily-made laws relating to our social, moral, and civic conduct provide forms of punishment for our evil acts. But a review of the history of civilization proves convincingly that the threat of punishment for evil acts has not lessened crime nor the amount of evil done by those who are inclined toward evil doing.

If we were to take out of our scheme of things all praise or compensation for the good that is done, we would soon find more evil in the world than good, despite any cosmic or human-made law of punishment for the commission of evil. The operation of the law of compensation alone would be sufficient reason for the individual to strive to do good. Our good acts, thoughts, and motives bring their rich rewards as surely as our evil acts and motives bring some form of suffering, chastisement, denial, or adjustment. This impresses upon us the fact that we cannot be unjust, unfair, and unkind to others and God without having the lesson or principle brought to our attention in that form and under those conditions when the correction will be the most impressive and constructive.

**The Cause of Suffering**

It is an absurdity to think that all suffering, illness, sorrow, and so-called bad luck are a karmic result of some unkind or evil act or intent on our part, or that all blessings, rewards, joy, and so-called good luck are also the karmic result of good deeds, kind acts, and constructive thoughts on our part.
There are many causes for our misfortunes that have no relation to any evil or erroneous act or thought, consciously or unconsciously performed or expressed by us, either in this life or any previous life. While it is undoubtedly true that our lot in life today is very greatly the result of what we did and did not do in previous years or times, on the other hand, life is daily fraught with unexpected and seemingly undeserved rewards and opportunities. Each day brings its incidental trials and tribulations from no cause that is remotely associated with yesterday, or any preceding year of our life, or any act or thought performed by us at any previous time.

The idea, for instance, that the three little girls who were brutally murdered in Southern California by an individual of criminal instincts and passions were victims of a karmic action and must have committed some acts in their present or preceding lives which brought upon them this unfortunate tragedy is an unsound idea. If we are to believe that all suffering which comes into our lives is wholly decreed by cosmic law operating as karma, then we would have to believe that the individual who so mistreated and murdered them was acting as an instrument for the law of karma and was a channel through which the law operated.

In other words, if we assume that what occurred to these three children was cosmically decreed through karmic law, then the man accused by the police is, after all, an instrument of the Cosmic through which one of the divine laws operates. Therefore, he should neither be punished by humanity for what he did, nor suffer from the law of karma for the crime he seems to have committed. Certainly, it would be unjust for the law of compensation to choose an individual to carry out a divine decree of karma and ravage, mutilate, and then murder three young children who could not have committed any crime in this incarnation to deserve such punishment and then punish the instrument which the Cosmic chose for carrying out its divine decree.

In other words, can you consistently believe that the law of karma is just if it selects and then causes and empowers a person to commit a horrible crime against life and society, and then punishes that person for fulfilling the divine mission that was decreed?

If, on the other hand, you should want to argue, as some unthinking students do, that since the man acted as an instrument for the fulfillment
of the karmic law, he should be allowed to go free of any human-ordained or cosmic punishment, then you would have to admit that there are crimes which an individual can commit for which the individual will never be punished and censored, and should not receive even condemnation at the hands of society.

God and the cosmic laws, working in accordance with God’s scheme of things, have the right and the prerogative of bestowing upon people certain rewards and unexpected advantages which will enable them to continue their mission in life or to help others. These advantages may come in this manner to individuals who have not earned them or deserved them through any definite act or thought in the past.

There is some cause, of course, for the results that have been manifest, but that cause need not be solely of a karmic nature. What the individual does with those blessings and opportunities may be the cause of future karmic action, but they are not always the result of some karmic action. The same is true of the unfortunate things that come into our lives.

Undoubtedly God often grants to us or visits upon us blessings and rewards, trials and tribulations for the sake of testing us, or giving us an opportunity to test ourselves, or contributing to the general scheme of things as a channel. Much good has come into the lives of many individuals through suffering, trials, and tribulations without the action of the law of karma. We grow in character and personality through the things we experience, both good and evil, both happy and unhappy.

To make all the experiences of life a direct result of previous acts would be to put the whole of life upon a purely mechanical basis and would leave no provision for the intervention of God, or the spontaneous expression of God’s rights and privileges. It would reduce the universal scheme of things to an unintelligent system of action and reaction, with no progressive outlook, no anticipatory consideration, no evolutionary factor, and no divine element of mercy and love.

Perhaps the Rosicrucian Order is the only mystical organization operating in the world today, which has the distinct and comprehensive
understanding of the law of compensation, but that is no reason why all Rosicrucians should not do their utmost to understand the matter thoroughly and spread a comprehension of it among those unacquainted with the facts and who do not have this correct understanding. We should all do our utmost to correct the false impression that exists in regard to the true nature and operation of the law of compensation.

The inevitable question will be asked, “How can one tell whether a condition that has come upon an individual, either good or bad, is the result of karma or of direct divine decree?” Let me add that the cause of any unexplained occurrence in our present lives is not so important as our realization of the lesson to be learned from the occurrence. If we receive a reward or an advantage, let us give thanks to God and the Cosmic for it and realize that, whatever may have been the cause that brought it about, our duty now is to unselfishly, lovingly, and constructively use it. If illness or disadvantage come to us, instead of searching into the remote past for a probable cause, we should strive to learn the lesson that the situation may include and do our utmost to overcome and master the conditions. By this, we strengthen our character, add to our wisdom, and determine to so live our lives that we shall not earn again a similar experience through karmic action, and thus be prepared to meet such a contingency in the future. In this way we shall be harmonizing with universal cosmic law in turning all of our experiences to good advantage for the benefit of ourselves and of humanity generally.

Can We Oppose Karma?

Certain questions are commonly asked in regard to karma, such as: If the assumption is correct that certain diseases, and especially those which are considered hereditary, may be caused by karmic conditions, would medical help interfere with the cosmic law of karma? Since karma is not arbitrary, that is, fixed and fatalistic, there is no reason why it cannot be countered or modified by other causes.

If we are, for example, aware of adverse karma, the result of previous conduct, why should we not adopt a pattern of behavior which would counter the karma? If we later want to live a charitable and impersonal life
in accordance with cosmic principles, we may. We thus set up a series of benevolent effects, which may mitigate the results of some previous wrong acts in the moral sense. If this were not possible, then there would be no reason for us ever to seek to improve our lives.

This does not mean that, when a series of causes has been engendered by our conduct, simply having a spirit of contriteness or new intention would stop the effects of the previous acts or thoughts. To use an analogy, we may have disregarded good judgment in our diet and have overeaten of rich foods. As a result, we acquire a digestive disturbance. Subsequently, the mere resolution to alter our eating habits is not going to relieve us of distress. We must actually establish counter causes. We will need to stick to a diet and seek various ways and means of rectifying the harm we have done to ourselves.

We are, in our daily life, constantly opposing and modifying karma, as we should. We learn a lesson from misfortune in business, health, or our domestic lives. If we are intelligent, we adapt ourselves to a new course of action so as to counter the previous effects. When, for further analogy, we have a severe toothache, it is karma. We have violated in some manner the natural health laws necessary to prevent the dental distress. Perhaps this is due to early parental neglect. When we go to the dentist for treatment, we are opposing one karmic cause by setting up, through the treatment method, a new series of benevolent causes. The principle of karma has thus been served by familiarizing ourselves with certain natural laws and making a more harmonious adjustment to life.

If a person is born with a hereditary disease that causes suffering, certain lessons have already been learned by that individual. He or she has experienced the pain of the ill or of the physically handicapped. It should make such a person humble and compassionate. Such persons can engage in therapeutic treatment, medical or otherwise, to alleviate their suffering and mitigate their karma. Let us suppose that such an individual takes such treatment and yet has no feeling of compassion for the suffering of others. The person is physically relieved of his or her own suffering without learning a lesson. Has the principle of karma been defeated? I think not. Such an arrogant attitude will only cause that individual eventually to violate the conventions and ethics of society which, in another way, will bring him or her detrimental effects.
War and Karma

Regardless of the extent to which wars in the world may grow, and to what extent they may affect individual human lives, war in itself is a karmic act, the consequences of which are difficult to measure in their effects upon the lives of individuals and nations.

If mystics are asked to give their interpretation of what constitutes an unpardonable sin, they must say that it is that sin which violates a sacred and spiritual agreement between the individual and God. A violation of a pledge made to God, a violation of a sacred ideal held within the soul of the individual as the most holy of all holy pledges, the violation of a cosmic law voluntarily adopted constitutes the unpardonable when such violation is deliberate, knowing, and conceived with full realization of its import.

The violation of a cosmic law or a divine principle by a person who is unacquainted with it, or by one who unconsciously or unthinkingly commits some act, may be forgiven when partially compensated for by repentance and a desire to make adjustment. But the violation of a law assumed voluntarily by the individual to be sacred, and knowingly proclaimed as their pledge of sincerity in religious belief and their guiding principle in their relationship to the cosmic laws and conditions, is unforgivable. It, therefore, carries with it an extreme penalty of karma.

What, then, are we to think of two nations of living souls who deliberately and knowingly cast aside the sacred principles of their religious beliefs, the ideals of their spiritual covenants, and the most important of their voluntarily adopted Ten Commandments?

We are not attempting to view the conflict from any political angle, nor are we giving any consideration to the worldly, material matters that constitute the questionable issues. We are not taking any attitude of bias or prejudice toward either nation or either side of the argument. Our heart bleeds for every individual involved who must suffer during the torments of war and in the hereafter. Our prayers to God are offered for the cessation of war and not for the victory of either side. We love the peoples of each nation involved. The most lowly of them in either country are our brothers and sisters, equal with all others in humanity. Each is in a different state of evolution.
All human experience proves that war is unjustifiable at any time. We boast of the scientific achievements which will enable a war to be more horrible and more efficient in the rapid and complete destruction of body and property. But we give little thought to the fact that science has likewise provided us with marvelous achievements which will enable us to settle all national and international disputes quickly, efficiently, and peacefully.

Certainly, our advanced state of civilization has taught us that the differences of opinions in the minds of leaders and nations are things that can be peacefully discussed and brought out of chaotic understanding into agreeable acceptance through careful, sympathetic understanding and analysis. We have learned that victory in any disputed matter does not belong to those who demonstrate might but to those who demonstrate right, and we know that it is unsound to believe that to the victor belong the spoils when the contest is one solely of brutal force.

We could use the modern scientific achievements of today to call a world council together in a few minutes. Through the technology of mass communication, the leaders of all nations of the world could remain in their individual sanctums, and through a microphone address the invisible round table and discuss with all others the problems that confront them. Through this same technology, the representatives of the people and their various associations and societies could petition this invisible council and speak in behalf of humanity.

Through modern scientific means, maps, documents, agreements, and other evidence could be submitted within a few minutes to all concerned. At no time in the history of civilization is the world better prepared for the peaceful discussion of international or national problems in so peaceful and convenient a manner. Yet, despite this fact, humanity illogically retrogrades and returns to the most primitive of methods of settling its differences and expressing its emotions.

Also, we as the people of the nation seem to forget that the greatest power lies in our own hands, and that through our attitude and the expression of that attitude we may prevent such conflicts as now threaten a portion of the world. We may insist upon a practical application of the theoretical doctrines of culture, civil society, and sympathetic understanding which we have been
preaching and teaching for the past century or more. Leaders of nations and propagandists in favor of war can only succeed in creating war through the tolerance of such on the part of the people.

Perhaps we are unmindful of the fact that in indulging in war, each nation establishes for itself a new page of karma. Perhaps we also forget that as individuals of such nations, the karma of the nation becomes our karma, and despite our individual efforts to live a life of advancement and achievement, the karma of the nation is as immutable and impersonal as the karma of the individual.

If we voluntarily remain citizens of a country, or arbitrarily take ourselves away from the place of our birth and associate ourselves with the citizenry of another nation, we assume for ourselves a portion of the karma of that country. Struggle as we may, study and master principles, make many sacrifices, strive to live according to the ideal principles of life, still we can never rise above that degree of karma which is allotted to the individuals of a nation. We, therefore, are not only the participants in the karma of a nation but the associate creators of that karma through our tolerance, and through our passive or active support of the nation’s policies and activities.

If such a country permits its leaders to indulge in war, tolerates a reversion to primitive instincts and a deliberate and willful violation of its religious and sacred ideals, a karma will be created for the country that will rest heavily upon it and its people throughout the present and next incarnations. No worldly victory, no palm of military success, no glamorous acclaim of physical powers can compensate for the years of suffering that will follow such success. Whichever country may win in the conflict will still be a sad loser in the face of all cosmic principles.

For this reason alone, we as mystics and lovers of humanity cannot pray for victory for one or the other nor for the defeat of any. Our sole thought, held in devoted concentration and sent forth from our minds into the cosmic space above, like a dove released from its prison, should be a thought and petition to the universal consciousness of the nations involved that they may see the greater light of peace and bring an immediate cessation to their warring actions and end the conflict.
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