

Love, Truth and Pain

by Eugene Halliday

We have said that every moment in our lives that we experience Love and Truth, and act upon these, that moment is an incarnation in us of the Divine Spirit, an embodiment of God, operating in us as Divine Love and Truth. How are we to increase in our lives the number of such operations?

In principle this is simple; we have only **to love** and **be truthful** and **act from these**. In practice we find that it is not easy always to act from love and be truthful in everything that we do. We see that there is a **war** inside us. The things that we know that we should do, we tend not to do; and the things that we know we should not do, we tend to do. We have good intentions, yet these good intentions are blocked by something inside us, some contrary thought or feeling or emotion. What is the source of such contrariness? It is **memory**, memory of past experiences, memory that may be conscious or unconscious.

Unconscious memory is probably the most difficult to handle. **Conscious memory** we can observe, examine, deal with, with our intellect and will. **Unconscious memory** we cannot see, yet it is operative within us and can work against our conscious intentions. Why should we have an unconscious memory which can operate against us? Quite simply we can see how this can be so by noting that we tend to **like** some things and **dislike** others. We say that this is "**natural**" for us.

There is something in us which tends to **prefer pleasure to pain**, "**naturally**" we say. Yes, nearly all the great thinkers have said that naturally we prefer pleasing experiences to displeasing ones. And they have also said that there is something inside us that says that we should not always pursue pleasure, but that sometimes we should **listen inside ourselves** to another voice that says **pleasure must give way to duty**, and even sometimes that we should do something that naturally we do not want to do. Sometimes we know that we are to face the possibility, or even the certainty, of pain. A sick child, crying in the night, may need attention, and its mother, already tired and needing sleep, may have to oppose her **natural** tendency to stay in bed, and force herself to get up and attend to the child. A mother who ignores the child's needs and cares only for herself, we tend to call "a bad mother", meaning that she prefers her own pleasure rather than her child's welfare.

We could give many other examples of such unsympathetic behaviour.

Every experience that we undergo leaves inside us a **record** of it. Some experiences are **pleasant**, some **unpleasant**, to some degree. Those that are so weak that their degrees of pleasure or displeasure does not force us to pay attention to them, we call "**indifferent**" because they do not

compel us to react differently to them; we can ignore them fairly easily. When an experience record is so strong that we cannot comfortably ignore it, we are not indifferent to it. It commands us to **react**; it makes us behave differently to the way we would react if this record were not inside us, or did not replay.

Usually we tend to replay the records of our **pleasant experiences** and to **suppress our unpleasant records**. We do this, as we say, **naturally**. We can say that **our nature is pleasure-preferring and pain-avoiding**. This is true not only of human beings, but also of animals. **Naturally** we prefer happiness to unhappiness, pleasure to pain. But we cannot live always in such preference, because the world is not only a **place of joyous action**, but also a **place of danger**. Some things in the world threaten our existence. Death strikes at thousands in an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. Floods can drown us; plagues bring painful ends to what were before happy lives. And not only natural events may destroy our pleasures. **Human beings may act against each other**, individually or in groups. Members of the same family may struggle against each other. Fathers and Mothers, sons and daughters, brother and sister, the elder and the younger, may engage in damaging conflicts of no profit to any one. Why do such **conflicts** arise?

When pleasures are being pursued, **impedance** to these pleasures may come. Not everyone likes the **same things**, or likes them to the **same degree**, and where there is a difference of opinion about what is and is not pleasant, **conflicts** may arise.

When energy is set on a course of action in an animal, if this action is impeded, the animal tends to become **angry**, and to try either to slip around the impedance or to attack and destroy it. It is not different for human beings. When they are pursuing pleasure, and are impeded in this pursuit most human beings become angry. They may for certain reasons **conceal** for a time their anger, but concealment does not annihilate it. **Concealed anger** continues inside the impeded pleasure pursuer and bides its time. It **waits for an opportunity** to spring forth and destroy the impeder.

Civilised people have been taught that they must **control** themselves, that they must not react destructively every time that they cannot immediately get what they want. Civilisations could not exist without controls placed on their members. We all know this, but **knowing it does not mean that we like it**. We accept the controls placed necessarily on us by civilisation, but we do not always **accept** them gladly, and whenever possible we try to **slip out of them**. Where we do not gladly accept them we **fret** under their demands, and from our fretting arises the conditions that psychologists call **neurosis**. Under continuous impedance, nervous energy cannot run freely along the nerve-

pathways, and tends to **pile up in certain centres** in the body. Because impeded action tendencies result in **unpleasant sensations**, we tend to **hide** these from ourselves. The results of this hiding process, continued over a long period of time, is the creation of our so-called "**unconscious mind**". The hiding is an act of **suppression** or **repression**, a pushing or pressing down out of our consciousness. Our **unconscious mind contains records of experiences that we do not wish to remember** either because we find them **unpleasant** or **painful** to think about, or because we have **little or no interest** in them. Apart from lack of interest, or real dislike of our experience records, we would have no unconscious mind. **Our mind-stuff is naturally a good rememberer.**

We are **seeking to find the cause of our difficulties in remembering to be loving and truthful in all our doings.** The **cause** is the **content of our unconscious memory.** This memory is largely constituted of **records of experiences that we do not wish to replay** because of the **unpleasant or painful effects of this replay upon our conscious organism.** A record of a painful experience replayed can cause us to become very **tense**, and so can inhibit proper circulation of our nerve energy and blood. Tension in the organism, in the brain and elsewhere, can result in oxygen starvation and cutting off of necessary food-supplies to our cells. From such starvation and cut-off can arise **diseases** of various kinds according to the part of the organism in which they occur, and the degree and prolongation of the cut-off. Only by **removing the causes** of excessive tensions in the body can we return to the **health and happiness** we all desire.

To remove these destructive tensions, we must learn to **face** the experience records that **naturally** we do not desire to face. We must **dare to re-examine our unpleasant and painful memories.** To dare to do this is to enter our personal Gethsemane. Only when we have done this will we have **gained the courage fully to love life, to tell the truth, and to live in accordance with it.**

Love of life is essential to life. When we say "God is love" we mean by "**Love**" **the power to live joyfully, the will to develop all our potentialities into actualities.** "Perfect Love casts out fear" means that the will to **actualise all our good potentials** gives us the power to **face all our experience-records of miseries and pains, to expose them to the light of perfect consciousness, and in this exposure to wash them all away.** It is this **washing away** of unprofitable, painful and unpleasant experience-records that is meant by "**Salvation**". "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" means that love and truth and action in accord with these shall remove from our mind and body all those fear-produced tensions that threaten our existence and destroy our happiness.

We tend to **defend ourselves against pains,**

unpleasantnesses and the memories of these, but this defence-tendency is itself a cause of tensions which mar the true action of our life-force. We have to learn to **stop defending ourselves.** We have to learn to "Let go and let God". This is our greatest difficulty.

Most of us today have difficulty in believing that God is at work, now and always defending us, and that only our **abandonment of our own personal defensive actions can release us from our private fears and anxieties and the tensions these induce in us.** We can perhaps believe that God exists, but we find it more difficult to believe that He has at heart the welfare of each individual one of us. There are so many of us, millions of us **pursuing private aims** and disregarding God's love for us. We are so busy, so **wrapped in our own self-love**, that we can hardly find time or space in us to allow God's love to work in us.

The self-defensive human-being's mind is filled with its own **system of defences.** Everywhere its walls are up, and are continually reinforced by **fear.** And as long as these walls are up they impede the entrance into us of God's Spirit.

We do not know enough about the Divine Spirit. We do not **realise**, that is, **make real to ourselves**, that God is not a mere idea in our mind, of a Universal Ruler who wields His power from a great distance, from far beyond the outer-most stars. We do not understand that the infinity of God's Spirit means that He is **everywhere present**, and therefore that He is here, now, permeating our being and conducting our living processes for us, that is, if we will let go of our personal defences, and cease to impede His work in us.

Once attained, this **letting go** allows our **life-force**, which is God's spirit in us, the Emanuel in us, to function truly and freely and joyously as God intended from the beginning that it should. **Our egotism hates letting go of its defence system. We have been hurt too often to be able to put down our weapons easily.** We have so many painful experience-records in us and have become habituated to their presence in the depths of our so-called unconscious mind, where they constitute in each one of us a **private and personal Hell.** For this is what "Hell" means; it is the **totality of our encapsulated fears of pains recorded in us from our experiences.** There is no other Hell than this. Hell is not a place far away where terrible pains, punishments and tortures are suffered. It is simply the place in which we have sunk all the painful memories of all the unpleasant experiences we have ever suffered.

To have the courage to enter this private, personal Hell of ours, which we carry about with us wherever we go, is to be like Jesus and to share in his power and positivity, and so be able to release all the tortured elements of our own being from their suffering, and to rise from our own Hell and regain our lost divine-humanity, which was so carelessly thrown away by our first ancestors.

What we have to remember is that it is the

memories of our past pains and miseries that have set up our **present defences**, and that these defences are themselves the **maintainers** of our miserable, unhappy states. How often will we need to be reminded that **fear of pain prolonged over a long period of time does us more damage than the actual original pain that we suffered**? A cut finger remembers the cutting long after the real, factual pain has gone, and keeps us in fear of its recurrence, and so keeps us in a state of injurious tension.

Remembered pain keeps us **on guard** against its recurrence, and memory exists even in our unconscious mind. Let us remind ourselves that our unconscious mind exists either because we are **indifferent** to certain things, or because we are **afraid** to re-awaken the memories of unpleasant or painful experiences. Let us remind ourselves that the totality of the records of all our unpleasant and painful experiences are hidden in the depths of our unconscious mind. If we realise the meaning of this, we will be able to understand why Jesus chose to descend into hell to rescue souls there locked up in dreadful suffering and misery.

We do not realise how much we all **suffer unconsciously**. We know what conscious suffering is, but we tend to believe that if we are not conscious of suffering we are not suffering at all. The notion that we can actually have **pains that we know nothing about** seems very strange. How can we be in pain and suffer the consequences of it in our bodies and not know that we do so? We can do this because we can **block the passage of nerve-impulses in our body** so that a pain message does not actually reach that part to which normally it would travel.

What is pain? Simply, it is **refusal of experience**. If we are undergoing any experience at all, we are receiving into our organism an **energy input**. Energy comes to us from everything that we encounter. We call this energy-input a **stimulus**, because it tends to make us **react** in some way to it. A speck of dust blowing into our eye tends to result in a blink. This blink is a mode of action intended to **defend** our eye against damage.

We can class stimuli or energy inputs according to the **amount of energy they contain**. If their energy is **very small**, we might **not notice that we have received it**. If their energy is not quite so small we might notice the input but find it **easy to assimilate**, perhaps even **pleasurable**. If the energy-input is a little heavier, we might find that we have to **work a little** in order to be able to accept and assimilate it. If the energy-input is very large we find ourselves **unable to assimilate** it at all. It might actually damage our flesh, destroy some of our cells, and in extreme cases might even kill us. When we find that a stimulus is more than we can comfortably bear, we tend to try to **stop its entrance** into us. We try to refuse it, and **this refusal is what we call pain**. Unfortunately, by the time we have decided that a stimulus is too painful for us to accept, we have made a **record of**

it in ourselves. Even if we manage to **escape** the painful stimulus very quickly, we still have in us the **record of that pain**, and we do not like it and **what we do not like we tend to avoid or push out of consciousness**.

A friend of mine had his right arm blown off during the war. Afterwards he had recurrent pains like those he experienced when it was first blown off. The pain he felt seemed to him to be in his arm, as if he had not lost it. He experienced what is called the phenomenon of the "phantom limb". Although his physical arm had been blown off, he insisted that he could still feel it, as if it were still attached to him. The memory of his arm was so strong that he felt as if it were still with him.

Just as it is possible to experience such a phantom limb and repeatedly suffer its original pains, so it is possible to **re-experience any event in our lives**, just as it was originally experienced. We can **re-experience pleasure** and we can **re-experience pain**. **Pleasure tends to cause us to relax, pain tends to cause tension. Pleasure allows easy circulation of our energies and our blood. Pain impedes circulation of these.** Persistent pain may wear us down, or perhaps to prefer death to life.

All the great religions tell us that the result of a truly good life is a state of bliss. **Bliss** is a condition in which our **life energies flow freely**, without impedance of any kind. The opposite of bliss is the experience of total impedance of our Will. Between bliss and total blockage of our will are various degrees of **relative impedance**. Most of us live a sort of fifty-fifty life, a life in which we experience pleasure and pains in about an equal degree. A few persons live a life more pleasant than painful. A few others have more pains than pleasures.

To gain a pleasure-biased life many people pursue activities that **cover up** what pains they have so efficiently that they come to **believe that their lives are happy**. Their pains and displeasures are **well hidden**, so they are **unaware** of them. They present such an appearance of happiness that their friends and enemies believe that they are really as happy as they seem. Their friends are happy to see them so happy, and their enemies may be envious of them and even wish to destroy their apparent happiness. Yet all the time, under their facade of happiness may be hidden deep, unconscious suffering.

To gain true bliss we have to gain release from all the impedances to our will that are hidden inside us. To do this, we have to **expose to ourselves all our hidden pains and fears**. To do this we have to have the courage to **face ourselves as we really are**, not as we would like to be. Just as we dislike pains, so we dislike anything whatever that we have difficulty in assimilating. Where we have memories of pains, we dislike re-awakening these memories. But where we have unconscious records of pains, we have impedances to the flow of our life-energies.

One of the biggest pains we suffer is that which we feel when we believe that our **image of ourself** has

been **damaged**. We all tend to prefer a good image of our self. "Good name in man and woman is the immediate jewel of their souls". If we have a **good self-image** we believe that we shall find that other persons will like to be with us, to relate to us, to share their lives with us. If we can persuade other people to have a good image of us, we shall be on our way to social acceptability and success. In practice nearly everyone works hard to present a good self-image to everyone else. Most people know this and **tacitly agree to swap good images with each other**. Many success books offer lessons in how to create good, socially acceptable images, and how to impose them on others. Politeness is a key-idea in such books. "Politeness" means behaviour conducive to easy social intercourse. Oiling the works makes the engine's parts run efficiently.

Self-image making is used most often to **stabilise the mind**. We need a **good central reference** to enable us to balance all our inner processes and to relate them to those of others. Without such good images, social intercourse would be difficult to maintain. We need to be able to rely on each other to some degree. We want a man's word to be his bond. If it is not we feel insecure and vulnerable.

But although we believe that we need good self-images in order to maintain human society in a working condition, we stand in danger of committing a grave error, the **error of making an image of goodness that does not correspond with the fact**. If we have a good self-image, yet know that this does not correspond with **our real self**, we live in fear of exposure. We are afraid that some sharp-eyed person may penetrate our facade. When we see the possibility of this exposure, we tend to tense ourselves. We try to strengthen our defences. We thicken our walls. We become thick-skinned.

It is just this thick-skinned self-defensiveness that we call **egotism**. When it exists, we become **less and less sensitive to the finer realities of life**. We **miss the real values and grasp at the most gross**. We build thicker walls around ourselves. We reduce the size of our windows so that we see less and less of the realities of the world outside us. **We have eyes, but see not. We have ears, but hear not**. We allow into us only those things that we believe will strengthen our self-image. We fall far short of the glory that could be ours. We alienate ourselves from our fellows and from God.

It is just this alienation that is meant by "**Sin**". To sin is to "**miss the mark**". What we are to aim at is a free, open, joyous interrelation with our fellows and with God. When we sin we **alienate ourselves from others** and so cannot enjoy the free, open interrelation that we were destined to have. **Where we are not free and open we are bound and closed, and our energies are impeded and unable to experience the bliss that should be truly ours**.

To cease to sin is to cease to alienate ourselves from others. For this we must **get rid of any falseness** in our self-image. "Man was made in the image of

God" means that man was given the potential whereby he could become like God. To be like God is to be able to **think clearly, to feel sensitively, to will strongly, to co-ordinate these three, and to activate oneself accordingly**. When a human being is **able to do this**, and **does it**, he is said to be "**divinised**" or made like God. This is the final goal of human evolution.

To cease to sin, to be released from alienation, is what is meant by "**Salvation**". The egotised man cannot do this without help. Luckily for all of us the needed help is at hand. It comes to us from God directly and indirectly; directly from His Holy Spirit, and indirectly through the great religious scriptures of the world. These scriptures give all the rules of our divinisation and direct us to contemplate the Creator of all things as our source and guide. Without these visible scriptures, we might fail to be aware of the Infinite Source-Power in which we live, move and have our being, for this Source-Power is invisible to our physical eyes.

When the outer, material world batters on the doors of our sense-organs we tend to be **drawn out of our innermost self** wherein dwells the Spirit of God. We tend to **forget** our inwardness, our **essentiality**, from which springs our **free spirit**. And in this forgetting we fall into **slavery to the external world's stimuli**. We become **machines**, and **act like machines**. We **react** to every stimulus of the outer world as if we were utterly **devoid of freedom**. We lose our **essential humanness**. At the lowest level of our degenerative fall we become as free as stones. We roll down the mountain of time and strike haphazardly against each other as we roll. **In our strikings we become convinced materialists**. We lose all belief in **free will**. We think ourselves ruled absolutely by senseless laws of matter, and so make no effort to lift ourselves out of our degenerative condition.

Yet all the while within us is the hidden divinity that confers upon mankind the most marvellous of all gifts, the gift of divine grace, the gift of **free will**. To exercise this will we have to **leave our external mechanical self-image** and return into that mysterious **centre of our being wherein dwells our God-given free-will**. "His worship is perfect freedom". Without this we cannot know **real bliss**.

To enter the innermost depths of our being, where dwells our freedom, we must penetrate through all the hiddennesses of our painful experience-records. We must **face ourselves as we really are**, not as we would like to seem to be, knowing that we are not.

It is a hard and narrow path that we have to tread to penetrate into the hidden mystery of our self-being. To tread this path we must **love God, our original source, and fellow path-treaders as our own self**. It is a path trodden only by those who **love the whole of Reality, and love its parts as of that whole**. It is error to love the whole and not its parts. It is equally error to think that we can love parts without loving the whole that generates them.