

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN

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CHRISTMAS, 1985

Dear Friends:

It is estimated that three-quarters of the population of the world is religion oriented. This figure is probably conservative and may not include primitive faiths and shamanistic cults. In recent years, materialism has become a powerful instrument in politics, and several socialistic countries have made every effort possible to spread atheistic teachings. Materialism has proven a serious cause of social decline and has weakened every community wherein it has been promulgated. Without some conviction which sustains spiritual, ethical, and moral values, decadence sets in destroying initiative and leading inevitably to social and political chaos.

The principal religions of the world, though differing on the levels of theology and dogma, are united in matters of basic principles and rules of conduct. They all believe in a divine power or principle which must be obeyed if humanity is to survive. The Golden Rule is found in the basic teachings of all the world's systems of theology. Although divided by numerous creedal differences, the foundations of human believing are the same. All religions also teach that the nominal acceptance of a creed or dogma is comparatively meaningless unless it leads to the practice of the moral virtues. Thus "Thou shalt not kill" has no spiritual value if nominal members continue to condone private or public murder.

All of the major religions and most of the smaller sects state clearly and directly the importance of morality and ethics. They also tell us to forgive our enemies, protect the widow and the fatherless, guard the sanctity of the home, and instruct children to prepare for useful and honorable careers. Unless belief in God bestows the internal strength necessary for right conduct, it has little value in this world and less in the world to come.



At this season we unite to honor the founder of the Christian faith. He is not only honored by members of His own faith, but is respected in all the world's religions. He stands for the highest standard of personal integrity in all the denominations of Christianity. The Sermon on the Mount is the summation of His teachings and these apply to the conduct of His followers. There has been a strong upsurge of religious convictions in recent years, but the average person is inclined to assume that his primary consideration should be the Christianizing of political, industrial, educational, and scientific bodies. He is likely to forget that Christianity begins at home. Morality and ethics are the foundations upon which civilization must be built.

When an individual becomes negatively involved in the confusion of his times, he not only loses his mental perspective, but works a serious hardship upon both his emotions and his body. We may say that a temperate temperament is the secret of a useful and rewarding life. We may not care what others think of our dispositions when we wish to be unpleasant, but most of us learn the hard way that, when we violate Divine Law, there is no way to escape the unpleasant consequences. The atheist may feel that he can do what he pleases with impunity, but his attitude has no effect upon the operations of Universal Law.

When we celebrate a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, it is often difficult to select appropriate gifts or cards with meaningful admonitions. The finest gift we can bestow upon our loved ones is self-improvement. If we can live with our burdens more pleasantly and cheerfully, avoid condemnation and criticism, and arbitrate old grudges and misunderstandings, we have bestowed a benefit more important, useful, and significant than any objects we can heap around a Christmas tree. When we wish someone a New Year, it may be quite possible for us to make a valuable contribution to the happiness of another person or persons. We can be thoughtful, kind, understanding, and comforting as need arises. Every kindly word is far more valuable than an expensive printed card. I have heard many people say that they want their friends to remember them and in turn, return the compliment.

The gracious gifts of the spirit are to show sincere and immediate friendship and affection wherever improvement is indicated. At Christmastime we get rid of the negative memories and at New Years we create new and positive memories which contribute to the well being of all concerned. Those with grudges frequently have headaches, digestive problems, and nervous ailments. They can take medication and consult expensive physicians, but if they are negative thinkers the discomfort will continue and probably increase. It is certainly difficult to retain a high level of personal conduct in a world where kindly attitudes are fading away on every level of society. It can be done, however, if we will first put our own lives in order. Several nations who took it for granted that the belief in God was only a worn out hypothesis have decided that honorable progress requires a belief in a universal power which can never be denied.

A good philosophical Christmas should be organized on three levels of insight and understanding. Its highest expression is religion. It is a sacred holiday which should be free from physical considerations. It is not a time to depend entirely upon an extravagant expenditure as symbols of goodwill. It is a time in which we should consecrate our lives to the mysteries of our faith and unselfish service for those we love and honor. It is a day for the forgiveness of sin, including our own (with proper penance) and the shortcomings of everyone we know and the multitudes beyond our experience. Having put ourselves right with the world, we can then examine Christmas in terms of our mental resources. They will confirm our spiritual dedications. The intellect, contemplating experience, can quickly prove to us that kindness can heal the wounds of criticism, prejudice, and deceit. The mind supports the belief in God in terms of experience supported by history and the healing arts. The body is subject to many contagious and infectious ailments. The mind likewise is sickened by plagues in the political atmosphere and the debilitating influences of economic corruption.

This leaves the physical body. This is the proper realm for family gatherings, Christmas dinners, distribution of gifts, and entertainment of children. Just as the physical body of the human being will enjoy reasonable health if the spiritual and rational faculties are at rest, mortal concerns should run smoothly, affections will be genuine, and Christmas will be the joyous celebration it was intended to be from the beginning. When the earth is at peace, the heavens rejoice and, when human beings gather with sincerity and mutual affection, the Christ spirit is released through the human soul. If we keep this sacred day with sincerity of heart, our virtues will be strengthened and should last to the following holy season. If we rededicate our lives throughout the year, we will be well on the way to the establishment of peace on earth and goodwill to all living creatures. Have a Merry Christmas.

Always sincerely and gratefully yours,

Manly P. Hall

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