

NOTES FROM WOODSONG

By William Samuel

1980

UPHEAVAL

The world is awash in pseudo-metaphysical, mystical, psychic hogwash. Fountains are spewing sheep dip and people are lining up to drink the stuff. Truth is put aside while people argue about the church's mismanagement of money, or worry about changes to a rule book, or nitpick, gossip and spread rumors of the sexual misbehavior of their practitioners. Petty disputes of all kinds are raging in the metaphysical world where judgmentalism is at its peak, from malpractice suits against practitioners to the moral lives of its board members. Jousting with shadows rages everywhere while the Light is ignored.

If California slides into the ocean, it will not happen for the reasons geologists suspect. It will sink from the pure dead weight of accumulating ideologies--pseudo-metaphysical muck piling up on the beaches, mystical mishmosh and psychic hocus pocus filling the valleys. The entire country may be blown away by the noisome pestilence of California's semi-psychologists and metaphysical messiahs, mystic montebanks and charlatans selling their nostrums, building their snake oil tax shelters, accumulating the world's wealth even while denying it--then calling for the manipulation of dream-stuff as the only proof of attainment!

"Heal me!" the world cries in a nightmare. In answer comes a hoard of hypocrites attempting to heal the complaints of the dream; whited sepulchers and opportunists who, for a fee, pour a balm over the dream's sores but do nothing at all to awaken the dreamer. As much of this pestilence arises from the camp of those proclaiming "GOD is ALL!" as from the fornicators who are consciously trying to rape the earth.

THE "MESS IN BOSTON"

A friend visited here at Woodsong recently--former teacher and practitioner of Christian Science, then a Goldsmithian, now a leader of his own dedicated following in the hills of California. "What in the world is going on in Boston?" asked he. "In fact, what is happening to the whole metaphysical world? It is falling apart. It's just terrible!"

It is not terrible at all. It is happening exactly as it should, I answered after he told me what was "going on." "But people are getting sidetracked," he said. "They are spending more time gossiping than with study and searching. Besides that, my people have become so cold and arrogant."

No doubt about it. There is much arrogance, coldness and unwitting blindness in the metaphysical world. Especially among Christian Scientists. Much that ails the Boston church--and all churchdom--lies in the subtle intrusion of self-righteousness—an arrogance that, like

haughtiness, one clearly sees in others but seldom finds in himself. But there is nothing wrong with the arrogance of metaphysics!

It is simply part of the whole, like the thorn is part of the rose, or fragrance part of the hyacinth. Even the gentlest intellectual study breeds an arrogance undiscernible to itself. Where is the flower that notices its own fragrance or the blind cave fish that spies its neon in the dark water?

Arrogance permeates the high places of all intellectualism, whether it is a metaphysical religion or a corporate public service. Arrogance is often intellectualism's first line of defense. We do not have to quarrel with this nor worry about it any more than we need condemn the pine for its pollen. Rather, we "understand what is before our eyes" and call it by its right name. The arrogance of intellectualism is somewhat the Zen of it--so complicating and confusing to the human sense of self it sometimes goads one into a discovery of the divine sense of Self.

So, who wants to fuss about that? Every organization that exists in the universe is self-protective—from the least little bluet blooming in the meadow to the wheeling stars. Human organizations are no different. The vituperative self-defense of an intellectual elitism that claims to be the only legitimate statement of Truth should come as no surprise to anyone who has ever struggled to defend a cherished opinion, right or wrong. The elitism of mortal mind clearly delineates the universality and inevitability of the only Mind, God--and like the shadow inevitably leads straightaway to the tree, so intellectuality, in whatever guise it presents itself, finally leads to the discovery of the Heart! Thence, the Divine Balance is struck between the heart and the intellect. Awareness IS this perfect balance, even NOW--but an intellectualism that keeps eyes glued to its own shadows, trying to Heal them, is intellectualisms natural defense. Heartless and arrogant, but natural.

It is the LIGHT, not the candle. The Office of Light created the candle, not the other way around. MESSAGE, not messenger! We tend the candle as the LIGHT reveals, not necessarily as the candle demands—but we don't lose sight of the Light in the process. A messenger of old said, The Light that is Me is greater than I. The Light that is Life is also greater than Mrs. Eddy or "her" organization. But that organization has a perfect right to exist JUST AS IT IS within the all-inclusiveness of Awareness. It needs no revision or correction. Nor does Religious Science, Unity, Roman Catholicism or the foot washing branch of Southern Conservatism.

Truth's Self-awareness sees no need to make the world over. Only to UNDERSTAND "what is before the eyes." Awareness sees intellectualism lifted to its veritable peak in "the metaphysics of the Absolute." But without the heart it is as nothing, nothing. Without the heart, intellectualism flounders like Sophia, attempting to limit Illimitability to the restraints of scientific reason and logic. Her "wasted effort", according to that Christian cosmology of the first century, became the material world. Indeed, the more one struggles to overcome illusion, the more he is stuck with it. And the anguish of THAT leads to the Heart too!

My visitor had once had a lengthy argument with his church. It ended in his withdrawal. Some of his students left when he did, and others followed over the years. "Why have YOU never encouraged anyone to leave the organization?" he asked me.

I do not tell the fall leaves when they should leave the tree nor on which side of the trail to fall. I do not tell people what I think they should do or not do. At the most, I am entitled to tell my own story only. I know that story and can tell of it with authority. If Light could find "me" in the midst of mortal combat, it will find "others" even if they are stuck fast in the candle's wax.

For thirty years I've watched the intellectualists, the absolutists, withdraw from churchdom, then, out of their pique with the organization, encourage others to withdraw likewise, ready or not. Soon, they became leaders of their own personal following and, more often than not, were twice as dictatorial as "the church" they left. Whatever the brand of intellectual absoluteness, its fruitage has been little more than a game of semantic upmanship. I'm yet to see the grand absolutist whose "demonstrations" --or JOY-- could equal his OWN when he was still a child in metaphysics.

With the Heart, we STAY children, and our world stays full of wonders!

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"BUT WHAT AM I TO DO ABOUT ALL OF THE CRAZY NEW PHILOSOPHIES THAT ARE COMPETING WITH MINE?" asked my friend from California. "I am a teacher and a minister and I hate to see my flock getting sidetracked with all the psychic mess that's going on." (Clearly, he didn't hear me say I could give no advice.)

A "Han Story" came to mind. Han told of two provinces that were separated by Chan, the mighty mountain. One province, the lower, was dark--filled with smoke and clouds. Little grew there and its people were unhappy. The upper province was full of light and love. While only a few lived in the upper province, they were happy and prosperous. It was a garden. But the mighty Chan stood between the provinces and there was no known pathway over it. Stories and folklore among the people of darkness told of hidden trails that crossed Chan but no one knew where they were. No one was certain any pathway existed at all. They were not absolutely certain a province of Light existed. "There is no scientific evidence to support its existence," said the astronomers. "There is no reasonable or logical evidence to support its existence," said the philosophers. "To many of us, the entire idea of a province of Light sounds like the invention of a suffering humanity. A psychological opiate, so to speak."

There arose a group of ministers in the dark province. They told all who listened of the upper province and its beauty. None of them had seen the kingdom of Light but "our ancient literature speaks of it with authority and we accept its existence on our faith in the ancient literature." Some claimed to have had a vision of it in the night.

One minister with a large following told his believers that they could be very still and listen. Their meditation, when done exactly as he instructed, would allow them to hear birds singing in the Kingdom of Light. Another teacher said that when one held his head at a certain angle at a certain time each day, then inhaled slowly in exactly the prescribed manner, he would catch fragrances of flowers blooming. He developed a program of study which, for a price, he offered the faithful so they too could enjoy the sweet fragrance of Light's hyacinths.

Still another teacher arose in the lower province. He prepared and sold a potion which would, he averred, allow one to fly in spirit, free of his body, thence for a time to see sights so strange that, surely, many were from the Kingdom of Light. Soon, all the dark province was agog, seething with marvelous procedures on every street corner and in every home. There was much commentary and argument about them. Bewilderment and wonderment prevailed as to which way was the best. There were experimenters who dared many methods and told of their studies. Their words became another philosophy, another ideology, each with a following of its own and each stranger than the one before. With multiplicity came complexity. Confusion grew apace in the province of darkness. So did misery.

I ended the story. My minister friend sat quietly, looking at me. Finally he said, "I understand the story but I don't see how it applies to my question. It alludes to some of the problems we have today but it gives no answers. People are smothered with new ideologies, theories and disciplines. Many are turning to the magic potions that will kill them. But your story gives no answer."

I agreed it didn't. There is another Han story that mentions the two provinces, I told him. In this story, the great mountain, Chan, speaks to Han saying, "Children playing with abandon often find the lone pathway across my face. It is a narrow pathway, one child wide, yet as many children who play and dream here may walk across my face into the sunshine of Light."

My minister friend was thoughtful again. "It's beginning to sound a little like your simplicity and childlikeness theme."

There is one more mention in a third Han story, I said. The third note of a chord. I don't remember it all, but the part that comes to mind has Han telling of an old mute who lived in the dark province. Without a tongue, he couldn't talk of the many philosophies and teachings, so he had no friends except children. Children understand men who keep silent, and don't think them strange. The old mute watched the children playing and dreaming with abandon. He saw them as they found the pathway over the face of the mountain. He watched them as they ran laughing into the sunlight.

One day the mute visited the village. There, wherever he looked, he saw a suffering people trying in vain to follow the strange, complex instructions of their teachers. Those who were meditating, those who were tilting their head and those who were drinking the magic potion were all closing their eyes for a time, but when they opened them, the scene of darkness was unchanged. They were still in the darkness of the lower province. There were no smiles on their faces. There was no laughter. Only the children's eyes twinkled because they spent their mornings playing on the mountain's face.

"The time has come to ACT," the mute thought. He walked to the village square and, with a piece of charcoal, wrote these words on a wall: IN THE MORNING I SHALL SKIP ACROSS CHAN'S FACE INTO THE SUNSHINE OF LIGHT.

When morning broke, the old man began his playful journey. Because the trail was only one child wide, he walked alone. Because he never looked back, he never knew who or how many

were following, if any at all. And because he could speak no words, he led the way from darkness to light in silence.

Han said, "Whoever thinks he can lead a single soul to Light has already condemned his world. But whoever sees the Light as all, therefore no one guilty of darkness, guides the ten thousand galaxies on their courses."

Light and love from the hills of Alabama,
William Samuel

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