

To the Reader:

This issue of *The Acorn* contains four articles on the subject of Truth, representing four major religious traditions of the world: Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity. Missing here is an Islamic view on the subject. We hope to be able to include it in one of our future issues. As a sort of introduction to the topic of Truth, I would like to raise a few questions and reflect on what sort of thing Truth must be and what sort of thing it cannot possibly be—without really pursuing what it is.

Would it be possible to force truth upon those who do not accept it? If so, what kind of truth would it be? To put it in another way, would truth need coercion, manipulation or whatever means beyond itself for its acceptance? If so, again, what kind of truth would it be? Perhaps more fundamentally, if anyone refuses to accept truth, why does he or she do so? Still more fundamentally, is truth really something that can be accepted or rejected? Isn't it, rather, something that *is*, apart from our accepting it or knowing it? We speak of the pursuit of truth. If truth is something we seek, must it not be something that already *is*, even before our seeking it?

Truth is indeed what all religions, all philosophies, and, ultimately, all sciences seek. We give it also other names such as Reality or God. To be sure, different traditions and disciplines represent it differently. But it is crucial to keep in mind the identity of Truth with God or Reality (i.e., that which cannot but be). For the recognition and remembrance of this identity may help us answer many otherwise insoluble questions concerning the nature of Truth, the way of Truth and the life dedicated to Truth.

If Truth already *is* without our accepting or knowing it, would it not be absurd to speak of "forcing" it upon others who do not accept it? What does it really mean to say: "John doesn't accept Truth?" Can anyone really refuse to "accept" what already *is* apart from his or her accepting it? No. Strictly speaking, Truth is something one can neither "accept" nor "reject." Isn't God or Reality such a thing? (Remember the identity of Truth and God.) When we speak of our "accepting" or "rejecting" Truth, there is some confusion or illusion in our minds. Confusion—because we think that truth is an abstract proposition, which may be affirmed or denied by us. Illusion—because we think that we are in a position to accept or reject what already is. (This is indeed a sort of foolish arrogance!) Truth is there, Reality is there, God is there, without John's accepting it. John either comes to know it or remains ignorant of it. What he comes to know, Truth, is not an abstract proposition but Reality, i.e., what is.

Truth or God does not assert itself by means of force or manipulation. It certainly does not need *human* assistance for its being, for it eternally is. Also, nothing that the human being does can possibly destroy it. How absurd then is our attempt to assert Truth against Untruth or our claim to

protect the Kingdom of God from the threat of the Evil Empire? How foolish and how arrogant is our delusion in thinking that we can defend God's Kingdom by means of missiles and bombs, or that we must broadcast the message of Truth by means of propaganda, including falsification and disinformation?

Truth is to be known; it cannot be forced upon those who do not know it. Knowledge can never be gained through manipulation, violence or threat of violence. The ignorant must be awakened—awakened to see Truth. For Truth is to be seen, and knowledge is *seeing*. Can *seeing* be forced? By way of coercion or threat of violence, we may make others *pretend* to see what they don't see; indeed, we may make them "accept" Truth. But this has nothing to do with Truth or knowledge! In fact, this would only serve Untruth and block the way to Truth.

Should the ignorant be punished for their ignorance? No. A knower, with his deep compassion for those who still don't see Truth, only seeks their awakening—awakening out of their illusion. That is what all great religious teachers of the past did. It is in the very nature of the true seer that he pities those who are still in a state of ignorance, and seeks their release from that state. He pities them, because he knows that they are only in a state of ignorance, and they need only awakening because they all have that capacity to see Truth or Reality. And he seeks their release from ignorance, because he is a votary of Truth.

The rhetoric of truth abounds in our age, but we seem farthest removed from Truth. Ours is a politicized universe which is altogether indifferent to Truth. "Truth," like "God," is merely another instrument of political control—whether for repression or oppression. We say, "We must assert Truth against Untruth." But what we really want is our *self*-assertion. We say, "We must protect Truth against Untruth." But what we really want is our *self*-protection. And when we accuse each other of not accepting Truth, we are really complaining that "my" opponent is not submitting to "me." "Truth" is simply another name for *me*. Ours is an age in which "I" am "God."

The political universe is, indeed, one in which "I" am "God." This "I," of course, may be my family, my nation, my religion, or whatever I may identify with. But this "I" is a false, mortal god, for it is constantly threatened from outside with frustration and extinction. Perceiving this threat, "I" must assert "myself" against others, must control nature, must mold history, according to "my" own vision and wish. And "I" find the world around "me" constantly resisting and threatening "me." For "me" Reality is what "I" am up against. "I"—this mortal god—now must fight against God. It is inevitable that this "I" should seek the way of force, the way of coercion, the way of manipulation. "I" am now prepared even to destroy the world if it does not submit to "my" way. How far am "I" then removed from Truth or God, that which eternally is?

(H.P.K.)