



Book of Wisdom

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When a conscious, awakened spirit occupies a material body in conscious unity, the whole being is united with The Divine. It expands out beyond the limitations of space and time. Mindfulness controls the thoughts and feelings and clears an inner place, so that in silence and peace it is ready to receive an influx of the Divine Mindfulness, and meditation opens a way of communication, whereby the spirit of man may communicate with the spirit surrounding The Divine. It is a higher form of prayer, a controlled concentration of thought.

Wisdom: 1:2

One - Meditation and Morals

¹ The only way a man can become fully awakened spiritually is to know his true nature and to strive for communication with the Spiritual Realm. This can best be achieved by meditation, or perhaps 'mindfulness' expresses it better. This is a state of conscious awareness of all the potentialities within man; the ability to cut off all material disturbances and to bring the spirit into harmonious relationship with a higher, more compatible realm. It means gaining complete mastery over all material impulses, urges and desires.

² When a conscious, awakened spirit occupies a material body in conscious unity, the whole being is united with The Divine. It expands out beyond the limitations of space and time. Mindfulness controls the thoughts and feelings and clears an inner place, so that in silence and peace it is ready to receive an influx of the Divine Mindfulness, and meditation opens a way of communication, whereby the spirit of man may communicate with the spirit surrounding The Divine. It is a higher form of prayer, a controlled concentration of thought.

³ Clearing an inner place to form the Shrine of the Heart does not mean that it serves no purpose. The usefulness of a cave is in its empty space; the usefulness of a basket or a pot is in its emptiness. All wisdom and all knowledge, the answer to every question, are not to be found outside of man, but within him. He need not seek outside himself for the solution to the riddle of his nature. He need not traverse the Earth to find the answer; it can be reached from within himself. There, too, he will find all that supplies the needs of his spirit.

⁴ In his daily life and in all he does, each man should conduct himself as though intending to be a living example to others. He should act as though proclaiming his dedication to service in the greatest cause any man can serve, and as though inviting others to join him. He should be a leader showing the way and a guide indicating the path others should follow, the path each must travel alone.

⁵ Every thinking man must surely realize now that there is something more to life than a search for happiness, wealth, or luxury. That life must be more than an idle drifting, the only efforts being bent towards seeking the still waters of contentment and the shallows of pleasure. There must be more than walking around seeking enjoyment. There is indeed something more to it than that; there is a purpose to life, and that purpose is living.

⁶ Living is meant in its fullest sense and does not refer to mortal life alone. Mortal life is the servant, the threshold of a greater life and should be regarded only in this light. The duty of all is to awaken their own spirit to consciousness. If, however, this has not been achieved, then the best thing to do is to follow the precepts and advice contained in the writings of those who have themselves awakened their spirits to consciousness.

⁷ For the first step it is sufficient to be self-controlled and self-disciplined, the efforts of every man being bent towards learning more about himself. He must cultivate mindfulness, to discover his own motives and to know what lies behind every thought, every word and action. He must discover every cause and understand its effect. He must know why he does a certain thing and by what means he achieves it. He must decide upon a plan of life, upon certain objectives and carry them through to a successful conclusion. He must choose a path and follow it through to the end, not looking too far ahead that he ignores what lies before his feet. He must firmly ignore the cries of diverting desires and disregard the bypaths of foolish fancies.

⁸ As yet, no mortal man knows the true laws of justice, and no mortal man has ever seen the face of Truth unveiled. No man has yet risen sufficiently in greatness to proclaim his ability to live free from all restraint imposed by others. Some may proclaim their ability or right to do so, but these do it not from strength but from moral weakness. Their affirmation of their own freedom is in fact a declaration of war upon the liberties of others. They are no more than spineless creatures who decry the laws of morality and high principles only because these seek to restrain their baser instincts and restrain their unhealthy carnal outlets.

⁹ While disparaging the existing codes, whereby men live, they have neither the ability nor the strength to replace them with anything equally good and worthy. Certainly, whatever they did produce would never tend

towards the spiritual elevation of mankind. Such as these must not be pandered to and, if they refuse to bear their fair share of the burdens of mankind, they should not be humored. Those who seek to assert their individuality at the expense of others are a menace not to be tolerated. The rule shall be that everyone is to be granted the greatest possible freedom up to, but not beyond, the point where it infringes upon the freedom, rights or contentment of others. It is impossible to give complete freedom to any man, and no man is worthy of it. Any freedom attained at the expense of another man is an unworthy freedom.

¹⁰ No man has the right to condemn a moral code or standard of principles until he himself has risen above them. No laws, no principles and no code should be discarded until they have been replaced by something proven to be better. The replacement of those already established anywhere is no easy task and one certainly far beyond the experience and ability of any one person. Therefore, in the present condition and development of mankind, goodness and righteousness are expressed by the disciplined acceptance of the moral law and courageous submission to the written law. These must, however, evolve with man, to meet his changing and greater needs.

¹¹ An evil custom or law is to be cast aside, even though it be established and accepted by many generations. A good custom or law should be taken over and followed, even if it be observed by your enemies and followed by them. The decision as to what is good and what is bad cannot lie within the province of any one man.

¹² Laws are made, and laws are changed, but no man truly knows what is right and what is wrong. This can be discovered only in the inspired books compiled by the hands of illuminated men. The time is not far distant when men should no longer think in terms of being good or wicked, rich or poor, sick or healthy, but in terms of being spiritual or material.

¹³ The basic motive behind a righteous and good life is not the quest for happiness. Righteousness, goodness, and morality are other words meaning self-discipline, duty, obligation and service. These form a foundation upon which a proper way of life can be built, and within the framework of this foundation, the quest for happiness is certainly not restricted. Indeed, not only is it encouraged but also earnestly urged.

¹⁴ Nearly everyone has principles of some sort, but all have a tendency to push back the frontiers of these principles to suit themselves. Their idea of morality is subordinated to their material interests. Men should not be hypocrites with themselves and should freely admit to this tendency to subordinate their principles to their own selfish interests. A standard of morality or code of principles which is not absolute and unshakable is worthless as a support and no standard at all. Only the very wisest of men can set their own standards, and the wisest of men are too wise to do so.

¹⁵ As far as man is concerned, the purpose of life is development and preparation for something greater. This cannot be undertaken in a half-hearted manner or at specific times; it is a process continuing every minute of the day. Every test confronting man here is purposeful and necessary, even though its reason and end may be obscure.

¹⁶ The measure of the duties, obligations and service demanded from any man is dependent upon the strength, talents, and possessions, which have been bestowed upon him. The more a man has, the stronger he is, so must the returns be in proportion, for he is that much better able to serve. Every man has been given according to the extent of the service expected from him.

¹⁷ One of the less easy tasks for the enlightened man is to develop the ability to genuinely assess the service to be rendered in return for the things, with which he has been endowed, and to serve without selfish hesitation. Each man has his particular place in the ranks of those who serve, and his own talents and possessions should be regarded only as a means of enlarging the pool of common good and the advancement of mankind. Those who deny their obligations inflict a lonely, awful doom upon themselves.

¹⁸ As the weakness and faltering of any one man lessen the total of service rendered and retard the advance, it becomes the obligation of the strong to protect the weak, not in order that they should be shielded from things leading to their ultimate good, or to carry a burden they decline, but to help them towards the attainment of strength. The aim should always be towards increasing the total amount of strength and ability at the disposal of the whole.

¹⁹ Suffering and affliction are unavoidable if man is to develop into the godlike being intended. He must grow spiritually strong, possessing both courage and compassion, and, to do this, he cannot be protected from suffering and affliction. Can the over-sheltered plant kept indoors withstand either the sun's heat or the windy blast? Compassion was awakened in the heart of man only through suffering, and the noble qualities of courage and dedication were roused only through affliction. Those who, in the past, bore their suffering with fortitude became uplifting examples to their fellowmen.

²⁰ However, it must be remembered that pain and suffering do not, of themselves, develop spirituality. They are not so important, but what is important is the manner in which they are endured, the spirited, rising to the challenge and the courageous conquest. The suffering of each man should be an offering dedicated to the uplifting of mankind.

²¹ What any man has to face and overcome is unimportant. What really matters is how he faces it and by what means he overcomes it. Where a man stands is also unimportant, the important thing is the direction, in which he is moving. Life on Earth was never meant to be spent in rest and tranquility. Its very tribulations and problems give it an added zest for those brave spirits who face up to them with courage and cheerfulness. Each man must discover for himself his own weaknesses and frailty.

²² The Creating Divinity could have brought a painless world into being, but it would also have been one without purpose. It could have been peopled with perfect beings, but these could not have understood the meaning of suffering and tribulation. They would have been devoid of pity, tenderness and sympathetic understanding.

²³ It is not through the Divine Will that man suffers. The Divine Will is that man fulfil the Divine Plan through learning to overcome the restrictions and illusions of a material existence by rising above them. The troubles and trials are there to goad man on, to stimulate him, to rouse him out of material lethargy and urge him towards the development of spirituality and wisdom. If man suffers unduly, it is because of his own heedlessness and waywardness, his ignorance of the true meaning and purpose of life.

²⁴ The Earth is imperfect because its imperfections are essential. The social imperfections, as distinct from the natural imperfections, are the result of man's lack of understanding and his dedication to material ends rather than spiritual ones. The trials and tests resulting from the natural imperfections of Earth do not oppress man nearly as much as the afflictions man has brought upon himself, through seeking to establish a life wholly within the material. It is necessary to know the difference between the two and to separate one from the other.

²⁵ The reason that there is so little divine intervention is not that The Divine remains indifferent, but that man has been given all the powers and wisdom necessary to deal with the affairs of Earth. If he fails to make use of them, who then is to blame? The duty and obligation placed upon man relate to his reaching upward towards spirituality and outward towards perfection. If man declines to do this, he must accept the consequences and can blame none but himself.

²⁶ Were there no pain and suffering, man would be like a jellyfish drifting aimlessly with the currents in a sea of matter. Suffering, pain and sorrow result from an existence within a material body and are not a part of man's spiritual heritage. The bonds of humanity are forged in the furnaces of life and not in its tranquil breezes.

²⁷ These are the directions for those who follow the Great Path of the True Way, the never failing guides and sustainers: Be grateful for the good things of life. Be patient under suffering and steadfast in adversity. Be diligent in the performance of your duty, and never shirk your obligations. Bear the blows of affliction with cheerfulness and courage. Do not be quick to anger, hasty to argue or rash in judgement, for this reveals your lack of self-control. Avoid the weaknesses of unjust hate and envy, for they rebound upon yourself. Do not engage in undue frivolity, lest people come to think you petty-minded. Keep your temper under control, for an angry person is a confused one. Let your deportment be serene and confident. Keep your mind above earthly things and look towards the Kingdom of the Spirit and Mansions of the Soul. Never pay homage to evil men, and never commend what is wrong.

²⁸ Do not use lewd expressions or foul language, for this advertises your inferiority to others. Do not laugh at sly or dirty humor, for this displays

an unclean and unhealthy mind. Do not raise money or possessions to the status of a god. Fit yourself to earn an honest and useful livelihood. Skill and knowledge are jewels in times of prosperity, a sword and shield in times of adversity, and sure guides through times of uncertainty.

²⁹ In the midst of material illusion, do not add to the confusion by acting falsely in word or deed. Be diligent and consistent in studying the wisdom contained within these books. Never forget the benefits that accrue from a life well led and remember that whatever befalls is intended for your own good. If a man, establish yourself by your manliness and, if a woman, by your femininity.

³⁰ Be modest in manner and calm in bearing, for men avoid the excitable man who is a weak reed to lean upon in times of stress and a hazard in danger. The boastful man falls far short of the image he intends to create, so weigh your words carefully, for the spoken word cannot be recalled. A man careless with words is also unreliable in other ways. Never make a confident of one who babbles.

³¹ Forget what has been done and cannot be altered, and do not be concerned about things, which may never happen. If you have anything of value, keep it away from an envious man. Arise early in the morning, and greet the day eagerly, for the sluggard and liebed are already partially dead. Eat and drink in moderation, taking sufficient for the wellbeing of the body without overloading it. Seek the company of those who are your superiors in wisdom, skill, and spirituality, so that you will be raised up to prosper. Always be ready to heed advice and to accept instruction, bearing in mind that it is more profitable to listen than to talk.

³² The man who cannot restrain his tongue rides a wild stallion. Keep it in check and avoid returning a hasty answer to those who say unkind things, which may stem only from their own weakness. Be patient and forbearing under provocation and restrain your arm when tempted to raise it in anger. The man who remains unmoved under provocation is a better man than he who strikes. Always speak calmly and with few words. Speak softly and clearly, for only fools shout to cover their own ignorance. The ox bellows, while the bull snorts.

³³ One of the great failures of life is to lose a friend. If this misfortune befall a man, he should search his heart carefully and sincerely, lest it happen again. Never seek to maintain a friendship through hypocrisy or flattery, for this is no friendship, and it displays the double heart of a deceiver.

³⁴ Be proud but not haughty, straight-talking but not insulting. Bold but not aggressive, patient but not servile. Bear in mind that it is better for a man to be numbered among the insulted than among the insulters, among the slandered and not among the slanderers.

³⁵ Keep your feet firmly upon the Great Path of the True Way, using moderation in all things as your guiding light. Never be effusive of speech or too friendly towards those who are no more than acquaintances. Keep all at arms length until they have established themselves for what they are and their true natures are revealed. Never allow the secrets of your heart to be handed around as common property.

³⁶ Do not be over-sensitive and ever ready to take offence, for this will only turn people against you. Never trespass upon the privacy of others and let all follow the paths of their inclinations. Attend to your own affairs and keep your thoughts from the affairs of others.

³⁷ Of thoughts, words, and deeds, only deeds have any established value on Earth. Thoughts are intangible things in a world of matter, while words have no meaning unless translated into action.

³⁸ Goodness and wisdom should not be secreted, for when their possessor cuts himself off from others, what purpose do they serve and how can they be measured and tested? The good man who fears contamination by the world has no confidence in his goodness and renders no service. If a man is found sinking into a morass of mud, he who tries to rescue him cannot be rescued by anyone standing off. The man who attempts to clean up the morals of the people is like the dusting cloth which cleans only by becoming soiled itself.

Two - The Dispensations of Life

² If visited by affliction or sorrow a man should not bewail his loss, for these should be the means of drawing him closer into the embrace of Divinity. They are meant to strengthen his spirit and develop his spirituality. No man has any right to expect an untroubled life, and one who has passed half a year without trouble or affliction has already received ample reward for living and should not ask for more. Sorrow is the purging agent of the spirit and suffering the flux merging man with Divinity. They also help to distinguish purelove from mocklove, for purelove is the unquenchable fire, which the waters of tribulation cannot put out.

² A man should always be prepared for testing and never be caught off guard, for calamity may well strike in the midst of prosperity and peace. He should also bear in mind while undergoing his test, that at any time it may be eased by a stroke of good fortune.

³ After every calamity, a man should review the words he has spoken and the things he has done, for perhaps what has befallen him is only the result of incautious words or the outcome of foolish deeds. Chastisement is a necessity of earthly life. If it did not follow a wrongdoing, how could a child ever learn the difference between right and wrong? The chastisements of men spring from Divine Love alone, for through suffering comes sympathy and through tribulation comes understanding. The man who can cheerfully accept affliction, knowing its true purpose, is one who has learned one of the deepest secrets of life. No man is afflicted beyond his endurance, for the cold blasts of calamity are always tempered to his weakness. Only the strong and chosen are called upon to carry the heavy burdens, for the strong runner does not care if the wind is against him.

⁴ If trials and tribulations descend upon a man, he should meet them with quiet resolution and courage. It is useless to rage against them or seek to rise in revolt against his lot. Only the faint-hearted and ignorant are turned from the Path because they think their endurance may be in vain. The righteousness and goodness of a man will not protect him from suffering

and may even add to it. The fruits of his labor are not plucked along the road which lies on this side of the border. How often is a man seen bewailing his misfortune and so sorry for himself that he fails to gain any benefit from it? All too often, men take their misfortunes as a sign that they are abandoned.

⁵ Men set their hearts on certain things and make plans for their attainment, but unless the plans they make complement the Divine Plan, they will come to nothing. Earth has a mission, and everything upon it is there to play its part in the fulfilment of that mission. Material ends have little importance beside spiritual ends, and creation is only intended to satisfy spiritual needs and develop spiritual abilities.

⁶ The good and the wicked are tested, and no one is exempt. The difference is that the righteous man uses the tests to benefit himself, while the unrighteous turns them against himself to destroy his own soul. No man should be overwhelmed by the troubles and tribulations, which come upon him. They are intended to be utilized for the benefit of his soul and the strengthening of his spirit, and bearing this in mind, he should be better able to endure them.

⁷ Every man is born to be tested and tried. Sorrow and suffering, problems and tribulations, are meant to be the lot of men. Yet, they are never his continued lot, and the brighter moments of life far outweigh the darker. Man was not given life for the sole purpose of enjoying Earth and its pleasures. Earth is a place man must cultivate and prepare for harvest, and what he produces will be his sustenance when the season is ended. Tribulation is his plough and trouble his spade. Sorrow and suffering are his seeds, and the joys of life the fertilizing waters.

⁸ Be grateful for the good things of life, for they far exceed your needs. Offer a prayer of thanks in the morning and another in the evening, and if you can find no reason for doing so, be certain the fault lies within yourself. Even to know that the worst possible thing has happened, and the cup of misfortune been drained to its last drop, brings a strange compensation, for there is a deep peace of mind known only to those who have lost all and cannot lose more.

⁹ If a man is favored with prosperity, he should be vigilant, lest it permit his desires to lead him astray and his spiritual diligence be diminished. In the greater scheme of things, the times of affliction and adversity are not to be feared so much, for then, men incline towards spiritual things. It is in times of prosperity, when they acquire wealth and become conceited and self-centered, that the danger lies, for then they twist the commanding words and austere meanings of the sacred books and pervert them to console their own consciences. Therefore, in times of prosperity and contentment, a man must be more careful in the interpretation of the Sacred Books than he would be when he only turned to them for strength and consolation.

¹⁰ The intelligent man observes the ways of Nature and the forces she utilizes. He learns how they operate, so that he does not become the slave of blind forces beyond his control. Those who do not understand the workings of natural forces, or are overawed by them, become their slaves. This is a place where nothing is seen clearly, and even Truth can be distinguished only against a background of contrasting falsity.

¹¹ The dispensations of life are not entirely beyond the understanding of man, and indeed he has a duty to strive for understanding. Everything serves a purpose, even things which seem the most hurtful. Every ungainly rock has, within itself, a potential statue, and potential beauty lies in every block of wood or lump of clay, but what is there cannot come out of its own volition. The image and the beauty are brought out only after the untouched materials have been subjected to the discipline of thought and the forming action of chisel, knife, or fire. According to the good things done by a man, so will he be rewarded, and by the nature of the evil he does, so will he be punished. A man is paid according to his labor, and idle hands make a hungry mouth.

Three - The Harmonious Life

³ Whatever is wrong on Earth is wrong with man. The discord among men comes from within themselves and not from their environment, and it is in his relationship with others that man displays his deficiencies and weaknesses most clearly. Hypocrisy is one of the most deep-rooted evils in the natures of men, for they hate in others the things they fear in themselves. The man who is the most voluble against a particular form of vice is the man who practices it in secret. Men wrap themselves in a mantle of hypocrisy and never uncover their real selves. They declare themselves for or against; they say they believe one thing or the other; they like this or that, but rarely do they declare themselves truthfully or reveal their true thoughts and feelings to others. To overcome this evil, this weakness in men, is one of mankind's greatest battles. To this, the Good Religion must dedicate itself.

² Those who follow the Good Religion should seek their friends among others of similar belief and inclination, and they should not try to walk a double road. No man can hide a thing within his breast forever, and if he is a secret hypocrite, some day it will be made known. Nothing done, known or experienced during earthly life is lost forever.

³ If your neighbor offend you, then restrain your anger so that your spirit may be benefited. Burdens borne patiently and with courage, and insults ignored, are better for the spirit than any form of penance. Always restrain your anger for the sake of neighborly harmony, but for your own good, remember that the words of an angry man are like glowing embers in his mouth. Anger alone does no great harm to the spirit, but anger with malice or hatred certainly blemishes the purity of a soul.

⁴ Never try to appease a man in the hour of his anger but leave him to be consumed in his own fire. Before you vent your anger on a man who has offended you, pause and try to discover some goodness in him, which you lack. It is not required that a person never get angry or become stirred up inside, for sometimes circumstances demand the response of righteous anger. Therefore, be one slow to anger and with complete mastery over the temper, rather than one without the ability to be stirred to anger. Do

not be too sweet unless you want to be eaten. When two persons quarrel in anger, both are always in the wrong.

⁵ The most burdensome person in any community is the one who will not do what he is capable of doing because he cannot do the things he wants to do. Every man must learn the difference between the little things he can do alone and the greater things, which can be done with the co-operation of others, for unity bestows strength.

⁶ Always be generous in your dealings with a neighbor and bear in mind that as water quenches fire, so does cheerful restitution atone for a wrong. When a neighbor greets you cheerfully, answer him in the same manner, for a surly face or a frown frightens away the hand of friendship. Generosity and kind-heartedness are excellent qualities, but those who possess them should be vigilant, for it is not inconceivable that the goodness they do may sometimes result in more evil than good.

⁷ Always treat the property of your neighbor or his friends as you would wish your own property and friends to be treated. Never speak without thought, for words cannot be recalled and things said may remain beyond recall forever. A lightly spoken word may ruin a life or destroy the contentment of a family. The guiding rule is not only to say the right thing in the right place, but also to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the moment when it is most tempting to utter it. This is the rule of conversation: Is it true, is it instructive, is it kind, is it necessary?

⁸ Do not be crude in speech or rough in manner, for these reveal a hidden weakness. Courtesy, consideration, and good manners are necessary ingredients in the cement of neighborliness. The cement of friendship is mutual suffering.

⁹ A man should never talk to a woman in a manner, which would outrage her modesty, but common women have sacrificed their modesty and cannot be outraged. Therefore, the manner of a man's speech in the presence of a woman indicates his opinion of her and her reputation. Always be vigilant when in the company of women, for no greater insult can be offered to a man than to imply that his wife, mother, daughter or sister is a common

woman. A strong man can afford to be gentle and quiet wherever he is, but a weak man must be rough and boastful to boost himself. The man who is always boosting himself is certainly one who needs boosting.

¹⁰ If some misfortune has befallen a neighbor, or he is out of favor with the rulers, he will be suffering the miseries of shame, and therefore to visit him under these circumstances might add to it. It is a matter of discretion and tact as to when he should be visited. Whatever he has done, treat him with kindness and consideration. The fruits of kindness are sweet, but the fruits of hatred and malice lie heavily on the stomach. As surely as night follows day, as a man deals with others, so will he be dealt with.

¹¹ If a man does not wish his own possessions to be touched, he should show the same respect for the possessions of another man. Likewise, if he respects his own reputation and expects others to respect it also, he should hold the reputation of others in the same high regard. If he does not wish to become the subject of gossip, he should not gossip about anyone else.

¹² As a man expects his own home and family to be treated, so should he treat the home and family of another. As he cherishes the good name of his wife and the welfare of his children, so should he cherish the good name of another's wife and the welfare of his children.

¹³ Deal charitably with your neighbors, and wherever the opportunity to do good arises, do not hesitate to do it. However, a single act of charity means that the heart has been stirred only once. It may be just a sudden urge that passes, and charity is a continuing process.

¹⁴ A man can find peace and happiness in his home only when his wife and family have it, and these things cannot be portioned out. The man with strife at home has a lot more misery than that of a hungry dog. When a guest, bear in mind that the ways of a host are always right in the eyes of his guest.

¹⁵ Always live according to your beliefs, for to do otherwise is hypocrisy. One of the tasks of the Good Religion is to teach men that they have to bridge the great gap between what they believe to be right and the way

they live. Also, though many men know how they should live very few do in fact live that way.

¹⁶ Though it is proper for a man to marry early, it is not right to marry with undue haste. For a man to take a wife before he can support her, or before he can understand her, is foolishness. The man who takes a wife in unwise haste ties a millstone around his own neck and can blame none but himself for the consequences. A man should never take a wife until he has read through the Sacred Books many times.

¹⁷ Stand firm in your belief as to what is right and what is wrong. Never surrender your principles or betray your ideals. Yet, do not let your mind become bigoted or prejudiced, for the man of unchanging mind is as water, which, standing still, becomes stagnant and filled with slime. His thoughts are like water imprisoned within a vase until it becomes foul.

¹⁸ Tact and self-control, the exercise of moderation in all things and a disciplined ambition with attainable aim, a kind heart and truthful tongue, these are the things which smooth the way along the path of life. The maggots that eat away the body of peace and contentment are: undue haste, thoughtlessness, indifference and malice.

¹⁹ Do not be unduly afraid of being poor. It is better to have only a few possessions with just sufficient to maintain the health of the body, than to have vitality-sapping and spiritual-energating abundance of the rich. Happiness cannot be bought, and a joyful heart makes a healthy body. Pure love, not wealth, is the most desirable of treasures, for it hallows the brief days of life and fills them to overflowing with spiritual wealth of everlasting value.

²⁰ Along the high road of life, man and woman must walk together hand in hand. The two together are meant to make their joint love a harmonious whole, and the life of one without the other is incomplete. Yet in these times, true matrimonial harmony appears to be one of the most difficult things to achieve, because of the spiritual immaturity resulting from the inadequacy of existing religious doctrines. This, too, must be remedied.

²¹ Do not be too hasty in judging a wrongdoer, for it may well be that though he has been found in some wickedness, the good in him is greater

than the good in you. Perhaps in the Divine View, he is a better man than you are. Disobedience to the laws of men with the sincere and considered intention of doing good, is better than abject submission to them without any such motive.

²² The golden rule of harmonious living is that a man must master his desires, control his will and serve his conscience.

Chapter Four - Defects of Character

⁴ The man who talks much does so to cover his own weakness. Words, of themselves, are worthless things and where there is much talk there is little action. Words alone are lifeless things having no value until they are quickened within the heart and demonstrated in deeds. Therefore, the rule is never to engage in idle chatter and always to avoid the company of those who babble.

² Those who find pleasure in chattering and gossip display the outward signs of a small and irresponsible mind. Those who sow mischief with their tongue can be assured that they will reap the harvest of scorn. Speech is one of the qualities, which set men apart from the animals, but it is also a drug to be handled with care. Therefore, treat all words as an apothecary does the drugs of a prescription. They must be carefully measured out and weighed, with every precaution taken against an overdose.

³ Over-indulgence in talk displays a defect of character. Therefore, even when praising another or lauding his virtue, excessive talk should be avoided, lest the speaker be accused of hypocrisy or patronage. Effusive speech is the babbling water flowing over a shallow mind. Nothing is more becoming for the intelligent man than silence, and how much more so for one who is not!

⁴ The motto for those who follow the Good Religion should be: 'Say little and do much. Replace words with deeds.' The good will find this no hardship, but the wicked will prefer talk to action. The mouth of a man is like a horse; it must be restrained by firm control and bridled before it can serve him. If allowed out of control, it will carry him off to calamity. Therefore, guard your tongue as you would your wealth, bearing in mind that the less the words spoken the less the errors made.

⁵ Though all the wisdom of the past condemns overindulgence in chatter, this still grows in volume, while the ills of the world do not lessen, though they may change in nature. Therefore, if you would serve the Good Religion well, hold your tongue in check. Do not overlook it in youth,

then in maturity, it may pour out wisdom, which will advance the greater cause of mankind.

⁶ Words are the weapons, which give power to falsehood and equip the liar. Lying and deceit are the defects of character, which most reveal its underlying weakness. The earthly punishment of a liar is in the fact that nobody believes him when he eventually speaks the truth, but he condemns himself to greater punishment in the realm of the spirit.

⁷ Lack of hospitality displays the defects of meanness. Therefore, always be hospitable to the wayfarer and stranger, treating them fairly and with consideration. Do not cheat them or betray their trust and confidence in you, for this is the action of a mean nature. Those who are mean or who lead others into meanness cannot avoid a blemished soul.

⁸ Few are those who recognize their own defects and fewer still those who honestly acknowledge them. Even less in number are those who earnestly strive to overcome them, though this is an essential part of life's purpose. Most are hypocrites and self-deceivers whose regeneration commences only when they honestly search their hearts and discover what they actually are within themselves.

⁹ One of the greatest defects of character is sheer indifference and lack of interest in anything beneficial and useful. A man can gain wisdom and enlightenment only when he has labored at reading and diligently studied the Sacred Books. Casual thinking about higher things and reading for amusement or pleasure produce no beneficial effect and serve no useful purpose.

¹⁰ The man who is dominated by passion and is the slave of his desires is one whose character is weak. He can serve nothing greater than an earthly end. To serve the Good Religion, a man has to rise above this end, and the means for so doing, the reason and purpose, is the revelation contained within the Sacred Books.

¹¹ The man of defective character seeks to live at the expense of others and does not pull his weight. He takes and does not give; he is a parasite on the body of mankind. Therefore, bear in mind that he who eats from the produce of his own hands is contented in heart and refreshed in spirit.

But when eating, do not bring discord to the table or consume food while flies swarm or a dog stands by hungry.

¹² Throughout the lands of the old religions, people complain that they have little to live for, but it would be more true to say that they have nothing to die for. They can see no purpose in life, but the truth is they can see no purpose in death. They complain they do not have enough to sustain them in death. The existing religions grow old and weak, not through age, for a religion sustained by Truth is ageless, but through lack of Truth which is the food of good faith. They cannot give sustenance, which provides strength to deal with the times, but the food of the Good Religion must still be withheld from men, for its day remains deep within the womb of time.

¹³ In these times men lack the strength of character to seek fame, and seek notoriety instead, but this is no more than fame's horribly distorted image. Men are deficient in the qualities, which should spur them to seek fame through service and sacrifice. They lack the driving force and inspiration, which should come from their national spirit. The fertile fields of inspiration are now overgrown with weeds, and the refreshing waters of spirituality are stagnant. The sun of a new inspiration, the dawn of a new day of hope will surely follow this night of darkness. Then, mankind will surge forward once again to storm the spiritual heights, bearing a new standard, a new banner with the device of spiritual inspiration.

¹⁴ Pride is a quality of good; false pride and haughtiness are servants of evil. The man who has no pride in himself as a man is weak in character, and this weakness leads him into error and wrongdoing. When a man is without a standard to live by and holds himself in low esteem, any wickedness he does will not appear wrong to him. The laws of men punish the sickness and ills within the nations, but do not cure them. The precepts and moral code of the Good Religion are the medicines needed to prevent and cure; their day will come. If a man is more concerned about what others may think of him than about what he knows himself to be, if he fears their judgement more than his own, then he knows the worthlessness of his own opinion. Man must be made to stand proud in his strength of character and moral integrity. The duty of religion is to make such a man.

¹⁵ To be good, a man must not only live a good life; he must also do good deeds. These should not be only such as come his way or result from his inclinations, they must also be the result of effort, search, and sacrifice. Doing good when the opportunity arises is not sufficient, for real merit results only from a hard-fought battle with evil.

¹⁶ The man of sound character bestirs himself in the cause of good and diligently studies the Sacred Books, to know what is required of him. He accepts with good grace the tasks imposed upon him and does not shirk his duties and obligations. He does not try to interpret the words of the Sacred Books in such a way that things are made easier for him. He does not treat their command lightly, neither does he shun the service they require from him. He knows that no matter how hard he strives, they can still lead him on towards greater perfection. No man is asked to be perfect; he is asked only to strive towards perfection with all his heart and strength.

¹⁷ No man can ever be a failure if he strives to do his duty and undertakes all the things he should. But if he turns his back on his duty and shirks his obligations, he is always a failure. A man who seeks to boost himself by displaying his cleverness is like a commander who reveals all the secrets of his defense. He lays himself open to easy conquest.

¹⁸ The defects of character are many and varied, but before they can be overcome, they must be discovered. The words written here can be no more than a mirror, which is handed to you. Whether you look at the mere reflection of yourself, or whether you look with deeper insight and understanding, does itself depend upon the nature of your own character. The defects of a defective character may conceal its own deficiencies from itself, but they cannot remain hidden if sought in the light of Wisdom and Truth.

Five - Within Your Home

⁵ Though your house is your domain and the stronghold of your privacy, keep it open for acts of charity. Do not close its doors to one in trouble but let all who need it enter and find sympathy. Let your house be open to receive the widow and the orphan.

² Maintain your house as a place of contentment and happiness, permitting all members to have their say without interruption or suppression. Uphold its sanctity and the sanctity of your family, whatever befalls, bearing in mind that no sacrifice in doing so is too great. If the sanctity of your home or family has been betrayed or destroyed, do not be passive, for by doing so, you induce the same calamity to fall upon another.

³ Your home is the stronghold of your privacy and ideals, and it enshrines the gentleness of your wife and the modesty of your daughters. Therefore, do not permit it to be invaded by the tongues of lewdness, or allow its air to be polluted by the breath of the foul-mouthed. The man who does so displays his lack of pride and the low esteem, in which he holds his family. If you hear lewdness in the privacy of a man's house, know that he is a weak character whose family is to be pitied.

⁴ Within your house is your home, and this is the life and spirit of the house. Maintain your home as a hallowed place where all that is finest in mankind remains enshrined. Do not argue except to instruct, and do not chastise without understanding and good intent. Never break the peace of the table, for food should always be consumed in tranquility and without haste.

⁵ It is the nature of children to be boisterous and get into mischief, so the good parent tempers discipline with understanding and tolerance. The good parent is never unduly harsh, but neither is he lax and indifferent to the need for discipline. The proper discipline for a child is maintained through example and guidance, not through chastisement. When the need arises to punish a child, never do so without asking yourself where you

have failed. If you care enough for the child, you will be diligent in your heart-searching.

⁶ An unhappy marriage is always the result of haste, thoughtlessness or lack of consideration by both or one. No child should ever suffer for the foolishness or ignorance of a parent, and when dealing with a child, this must be the governing rule. While no one can claim happiness as a birthright, every child brought into the world is entitled to all the happiness possible and all the pleasures of childhood.

⁷ The sun of a man's home is his wife, but he who takes an unchaste woman to wife is one content to live without the warmth of inspiration. The man whose wife lacks the womanly virtues becomes a prisoner to his own shame, and his house a place of discord and unrest. A faithful wife crowns her husband with a garland of happiness, but the wife who deceives her husband is like a cancer within his heart waiting to erupt.

⁸ Within his home a man is king, and his wife is queen. No stranger should be permitted to trespass on the domain of their happiness, and prying officials should rightly be excluded. Even those who seek to uphold the laws of men shall not force entry, but all worthy men will deal with them honorably and justly.

Six - The Treatment of Women

⁶ No man shall be intimate with a woman during the time of her courses, for this brings about a subtle pollution. However, a man may go with a woman after her cleansing without any fear, for this thing stems from the nature of women and is not uncleanness. Yet it is to be borne in mind that the sufferings of women at such times are not part of their nature, but a sign of their past failure to maintain the purity of the fountain of life.

² A man's wife is his own pasture, wherein he may enter as he wills, but he never should be insensitive to her own feelings, for an inconsiderate husband reaps a poor harvest. A wife must not be subjected to harshness but should be treated with tenderness and affection. She is deserving of consideration, for her feelings are not those of a loose woman, whom men have treated as they willed.

³ Always treat a woman with reserve and respect, for by doing so, you enhance your own standing as a man. It is the men without pride in themselves who hold women in low esteem, and women who submit to such men take a perverted pleasure in their own degradation. When all a man seeks in the company of a woman is frivolity and amusement, he will in the end seek to use her as an instrument of fornication. The wise man keeps well away from the chattering woman, for life with her would be like living at the foot of a sandhill.

⁴ Every man who follows the Good Religion will treat women with respect and consideration. He will never attempt the seduction of a decent woman, for chastity is the pure blossom of womanhood. Without it, a woman is like a garden tree that never blooms, and she fails to inspire rapture in the heart of any man.

⁵ Long ages have taught many subtle lessons, and one is that married to a decent woman, a man tends to become better. Married to an unchaste or faithless woman he tends to become lewd, harsh, inconsiderate, and rude. The man who is willing to take an unchaste woman to wife gets just what such as he deserves.

⁶ Therefore, treat those who may become the wives of other men as you would want your own waiting wife to be treated. Bear in mind the ancient words of wisdom, which have stood the test of time, and choose a wife with care. Fortunate indeed is he who unearths the treasure of a virtuous woman, for her value is beyond estimation in earthly wealth. The heart of her husband rests on a bed of contentment, and he sleeps secure in her constancy. She will never cause him to bow his head in sorrow when men speak of women, or to turn his face in shame from the mocking glances of other men.

⁷ The intelligent man does not maintain his wife in idleness, lest her thoughts stray towards scandal and gossip. When the light of the Good Religion is revealed, it will set the good woman apart from others, and man need no longer walk in doubt.

⁸ The good woman has pity on the destitute poor but is not deceived by the wiles of the idle beggarmen. Her children are brought up in the knowledge of goodness, and they reach maturity in honor and uprightness. No songs on the lips of men extol the virtues of a good wife and mother, but the silent, grateful song in the hearts of her husband and children never ceases. It is the holy melody resounding among the universal spheres.

Seven - Duties, Obligations and Service to Life

⁷ If a woman is beautiful and gifted beyond other women, then she has been favored by The Divine and entrusted with life's greatest treasures. Therefore, she should not conduct herself as other women, for many men will seek after her, and she must be discriminating. Her influence on men can be greater than that of other women, so she must always be conscious of its effect. Does it make them better men, and does it serve the cause of good? The attitude of gifted and beautiful women is of prime interest to those who concern themselves with the spiritual uplifting and advancement of mankind. Unlike the religions that will die, the Good Religion cannot ignore this aspect of life.

² The beautiful woman, if she be good, is proud of being the guardian of such treasure and safeguards it from polluting hands. She dedicates it to the service of good, which also means the service of mankind. She uses it as a spur and incentive in the upward struggle of man towards divinity. She is more modest and reserved than other women, and as this increases her desirability even more, she is absolutely discreet and prudent in all her activities. Her devotion to the cause of good need entail no more than the maintenance of strict female standards of decency in the face of overwhelming temptation and being a good wife and mother.

³ The fires of passion can rage in woman as they do in man, but when they do, it should be borne in mind that such driving forces are to be used for good and not wasted on an evil outlet. Men and women are not alike, and their duties and obligations in the Divine Design are different, even though they share the same urges and desires. The same water is in the river and the irrigation channel, but the millstone and the growing plant do not utilize it in the same manner. The power, which serves best, serves many different ends.

⁴ The Divine Design sets man and woman apart and prescribes for each a different form of service. Women are not called upon to be warriors, and men are not intended to bear children. Yet, the differences of man and woman complement one another and, coming together, form a harmonious whole.

⁵ It is the duty of everyone to study the Sacred Books and to try to understand their deeper meaning. All should learn a skill whereby a useful livelihood be earned, and knowledge and wisdom should be increased day by day. As the purpose of life is to develop spirituality and further the Divine Design, it would be utter foolishness to neglect this. Each person should try, each and every day, to become a better balanced being living a more harmonious life.

⁶ The obligations of men reach out far and wide, while the obligations of women incline towards the beautification of life and enshrine the virtues. The duties of manhood tend to draw men from home and comfort, while those of womanhood tend to draw women to serve hearth, home and family. Man worships at the altar of duty and obligation, while woman worships at the altar of virtue and service. Both bow before the altars of love.

⁷ It is the duty of anyone who can to set right what another has done wrongly or in error. No one who has the welfare of mankind at heart can say, "This does not concern me," or, "I have no interest in what another does."

⁸ Do not neglect the welfare of the sick and aged, for this is an obligation each one bears. Visit those who are ill, for visitors break the loneliness of their days. Enter the sick room cheerfully, as though it were a pleasure, and not as if you were fulfilling an obligation. Be considerate of their circumstances, and do not overstay.

⁹ Each man should clothe his family decently and feed it according to his means. He should never allow any member of his family to become shabby, unclean, or indolent. When something goes wrong within a house, it shall be the head of the house who will answer for it. Though every child is born with certain tendencies, the parents incline them as they will and therefore cannot deny responsibility for what a child becomes. When the child grows up to be a worthy man or woman, parents will often hasten to take credit, but when the child turns out to be a disgrace, they are tardy in accepting responsibility. Yet, the bad is more likely to result from what the parents have done or failed to do, than is the good.

Eight - Respect for the Rights of Others

⁸ Do not enter a house other than your own uninvited, and if you have a position of power, do not use it to gain entry into the house of another. Do not enter a house when the occupier is absent, even if it is open. If at any time, you are denied admittance to a house or told to go away, then depart in peace. Only in the interests of justice or peace, or when the safety of another demands it, should the privacy of a home be invaded, and even then, only with the greatest restraint and consideration.

² However, if a house is abandoned or empty, there is no harm done if it is entered for shelter, but it should not be damaged willfully. Nothing established by the hand of man should be damaged, unless it causes harm or inconvenience, which outweighs its usefulness.

³ When a guest within the house of another, treat his family with respect and his possessions with care. If you damage anything belonging to him, make proper and full restitution. When in the house of a friend, under no circumstances, touch a woman of his family improperly or show disrespect for her modesty by word or gesture. Note the way a man conducts himself in his own home, for this reveals not only his own character but also the character of his womenfolk.

⁴ If a man greets you with courtesy, then answer him in the same manner, for surliness displays a weakness of character. If a man in difficulty seeks your aid, cheerfully grant him whatever assistance you can. If advice or information is yours to give, do not withhold it when requested, but never press advice upon another.

⁵ Respect the rights and dignity of the poor, for they may have little else. Those who help the poor or needy with gifts or benefits, knowing they cannot be repaid, are not without gain when their life is enlarged. Receive all comers with a happy smile, and do not look downcast when giving something away; otherwise, you set the gift at naught.

⁶ Though freedom is the birthright of every man and one of the ideals, which must be upheld, when it infringes upon the freedom of another

man, it ceases to be genuine. Therefore, before you talk about your own freedom or rights, consider the freedom and rights of others, for if you are truly good, their freedom and rights are the most important. However, if others come seeking to diminish your freedom and rights by force or legislation, without conferring a benefit of equal value in return, they are to be resisted. But bear in mind that true freedom is another of the sublime qualities unattainable on Earth, where, though man may aspire to it, and must, it is restricted by earthly conditions requiring service, duty and obligation.

⁷ To be truly free, man must rise above his mortality and become divine. To attain true freedom, he must travel a road of many tollgates, and at each, payment is demanded from his own supply of freedom's gold. Freedom, like perfection, goodness, and justice, is an end man must strive for, but he must also realize that its attainment lies beyond the realm of mortal limitations. Like the other divine qualities here on Earth, it is best understood by contrast.

⁸ Duty, obligation and service are the three inescapable elements of life. On the road to divinity, they are the three burdens, which have to be carried every step of the way. They cannot, of course, be without purpose and so are also the great stimulants, without which man cannot be sustained in his ascent. Take them away, and man slides backwards towards the low ground of the brute beasts which have no awareness of them.

Nine - People and Places to Avoid

⁹ Avoid all places and people, which conduce to evil. Keep away from hypocrites, for, having a common feeling of degradation, they will congregate together, and it would be unwise to be numbered among them. Hypocrites tend towards evil because they serve its purpose and, therefore having an affinity with it, they turn away from what is good and just. They are hard-fisted when the poor come discreetly seeking for alms but are open-handed when approached in a public place. Surely the hypocrite must be the lowest form of man or woman!

² If you meet a stranger who appears to be filled with extraordinary virtues, or who conducts himself with grace and good manners, do not hastily conclude that this is his true character. Go to the place where he lives and is known. Note his attitude towards his family and behavior among friends and listen to what is said about him. Only then will you be in a better position to judge and to weigh him in the balances.

³ There are many persons of a hypocritical nature who reveal their true character in one place but put on a false display of goodness in another. If you accept a man or woman in haste and are deceived, then blame no one except yourself. The man who accepts another at his own valuation usually gets a poor bargain.

⁴ Avoid those whose natures are shallow or superficial, even though they be attractive and pleasant. Shallow streams sparkle most, and weakest waters make the most pleasant sound. There are many whose understanding of friendship is mere companionship, and they neither seek nor know anything deeper. Such people should not be cultivated beyond acquaintanceship. No man really knows another until he has seen him exposed to danger and loss. Even then, he cannot know him fully until he has seen him when tested by prosperity and success.

⁵ Avoid those who are seeking to benefit from your friendship; they are not for you. Friendship is a precious plant, which must be nurtured in the good soil of sincerity and trust, and plentifully watered with loyalty and

understanding. The man who presumes too much on friendship is unworthy of it.

⁶ Avoid the loose woman, for even if she is beautiful, it may be just a lure over the pit trap. Do not become snared by your desires or let your eyes drug your wisdom. The man who claps fire to his chest cannot escape unbumed, and he who embraces uncleanness will be soiled, however delicately it is wrapped.

⁷ Avoid an evil neighbor and a wicked neighborhood, bearing in mind that a man is judged according to his associations. There are many weak characters who, while not desiring to associate with the wicked or live in their neighborhood, will do so for benefit or to advance their ends. Unless they are prepared to freely admit their weakness, they are hypocrites.

⁸ Avoid the places of pleasure, which attract the weak and bad characters, for if you associate with them you cannot expect to remain uncontaminated. Bear in mind that the best person to associate with may not be the best companion; and evil places are generally more alluring than the good.

Ten - Neighborly Living

10 When a man holds views directly at variance with those of his neighbors, they are incompatible with harmonious living. He then has to decide whether the right views are held by himself or by his neighbors and, if by his neighbors, he must adjust his own.

² However, if he sees that the views held by his neighbors are wrong or corrupt and degenerate, and he fears he may fall under their influence, he must depart without delay. He must go to another place where the conduct and outlook of his neighbors will be more congenial and compatible with his. It does not matter how far he has to travel.

³ Where there is no one ready to take command in an emergency, or no one prepared to concern himself with the welfare of the neighborhood, then strive to be a man worthy of the purpose. Do this even if it means having to neglect some study of the Sacred Books, for the man who serves his neighborhood well serves the cause of good.

⁴ As the whole man suffers for the errors of the hand or tongue, so shall the whole congregation of the righteous suffer for the misdeeds of any one of their number. If a member commits a wrongful act, then the others shall put it right. This is so that every man shall have a feeling of responsibility towards the whole, and that the good name and reputation of the whole shall not suffer for the acts of one person.

⁵ It may be no great wrong if one neighbor gives comfort to another who has committed some misdeed, but if a neighbor aids another in a wrong or covers it for him, he is no better than the wrongdoer. To comfort and to condone are things far apart.

⁶ Whatever the problems of your neighborhood, do not isolate yourself from them, for if they concern the welfare of others, they are your concern. Strive to be on friendly terms with all your neighbors, and if you fail, let it not be said that the fault lies with you.

⁷ If you have a neighbor in need, do not be tardy in going to his assistance. If you are not in a position to help, show that you are not indifferent to his predicament. If a neighbor falls into ill favor with the law of the land, do not set yourself up to judge him. If you cannot say anything in his favor, then hold your peace.

⁸ The laws of the land and of your neighborhood should be framed towards the maintenance of peace and security, therefore it is your duty not only to abide by them, but also to uphold them. Good laws do not need enforcing among the good, for their goodness declares itself to all, but oppressive laws chafe upon the neck like a yoke. The goat does not attack the lion, and sometimes bad laws have to be endured with patience for the sake of neighborly peace. Yet, if the entrance to its hole is threatened, a mouse will not hesitate to attack an elephant, and men are no less courageous.

Eleven - The Cause and its Champions

11 The greatest cause any man can serve is that divinely designed for him and intended to be his. It is the cause of mankind, which operates within the Divine Design and bears man upward to the very threshold of divinity.

² In these dark days when many gods wage war among themselves for supremacy and man is divided against himself with the many conflicting beliefs, this cause is voiceless and unchampioned. Yet already, the champion is conceived and lies asleep within the womb of time, awaiting the hour of birth.

³ This champion is the Good Religion now safeguarded and cherished by the devoted few during the ages of its conception. This is the religion, which will someday enter the homes and hearts of a despairing humanity. Enshrining the hopes and aspirations of mankind, it will endow them with life and meaning, so that they can rise with man to the mountain tops of divinity. Only the Good Religion will stand forth and declare that man, given a cause sufficiently great, will be unconquerable.

⁴ While other beliefs appeal for mercy or aid, or beg forgiveness or seek to appease, declaring man to be weak and pitiful, the Good Religion will come to his aid like a life-giving elixir. Its advent will be the morning star heralding a new, brighter day, and, in the light of that day, man will know himself for what he really is and will do the things he must do. He will then no longer be a child walking in darkness and ignorance, wringing his hands and crying because he is so weak and wicked. He will no longer crawl in the dust of servile humility, begging for mercy or for another to bear the burden of his sins. In the light of the new dawning day, man will be shown what he really is, and the dawn heralds will declare his divinity. Then, from out of the dust long gathered in the darkness, the new man will arise and stride resolutely forward towards the sunrise.

⁵ In the days of its awakening, the Good Religion will require leaders, and these will need to be men of exceptional qualities. They will have to devote themselves to its cause without any thought of self-aggrandizement. Many men deceive themselves into thinking their desire for leadership is to

benefit others, but in fact, they are really seeking self-esteem and power. Some cannot even see their true incentives or read their innermost thoughts, because of the cloud of hypocrisy which surrounds them. Such men are not desirable leaders.

⁶ The path the Good Religion must tread will not be an easy one, and all who follow it will need to dedicate every effort and the last reserves of resourcefulness to its cause. The faint-hearted will have no place in it, for a cause so great will need the utmost sacrifice of person and purse.

⁷ There are men who are vainglorious leaders knowing only outward and superficial values. Many such as these cannot even find the right direction or select the best path for themselves; yet their vanity and ambition prompt them to presume their qualities of leadership. Still, they may be no more to blame than those who support them and follow a road blindly.

⁸ When men are half-hearted in a cause or indifferent about the achievement of its objective, they are denied a true leader. If the leader is blind, he and those who follow him will end up in the ditch. The true leader is a man, to whom all who follow him can look up in every way.

⁹ Where there are no true men capable of worthy leadership, strive to be such a man yourself. Where no one is willing to accept responsibility, or to strive and be worthy of it, then take the initiative yourself. In this, there is no arrogance if you dedicate yourself to service and not self-esteem if you recognize your own shortcomings and limitations.

¹⁰ Leadership and example are essential to the advancement of mankind, and where they are lacking, there is certainly no wrong done in their establishment. The criterion of a good leader is his own integrity and intent.

¹¹ When support is needed for the cause, it will be no betrayal if the infirm, the sick and the incapable remain inactive because of their inability to contribute anything. Their sincerity and moral support may be all they can give. Those who will be blameworthy are the wealthy or those able to serve who seek exemption by excuses. The man who can give most in any way should be forefront; he should not lag behind or be lax in action.

12 Life is not altogether a vale of sorrow, neither is it meant to be a grim, unending struggle. Man is born into the world to make the best possible use of earthly conditions, and this does not mean that effort should be concentrated exclusively on the achievement of spirituality. Things must be kept in the right perspective, and a proper balance achieved. It is unwise to let thoughts dwell exclusively upon the Spiritual Realm, and this was never intended. Only its reality and ultimate attainment should be ever borne in mind.

² Man is to make the most of conditions as he finds them and get all the happiness, he can from life within the framework laid down in the Sacred Books. Not only must he make the best of earthly conditions, but he must also improve them, so that more happiness may be gained. Though this may appear to serve only an earthly end, it is not entirely the case, for in the effort lies the spiritual development. Earthly conditions are not to be accepted passively, for every man has a duty to make some improvement, however slight, upon the earthly state of things.

³ While permitted to seek the greatest amount of happiness, man must bear in mind that the search must not extend beyond the bounds of his duties and responsibilities. When seeking spirituality and knowledge of the Spiritual Realm, man must remember that there are limitations as to what he can experience. The purpose of Earth must, and will, be maintained with all its lack of stability and certainty. No mortal man will ever know for certain what the coming year will bring.

⁴ The amount of spiritual experience and enlightenment permitted any man is just sufficient not to upset the balance of his life or nullify his earthly existence. This is a fact, which should be clearly understood by those ignorant persons who rail against the lack of divine intervention or guidance. In these times, mankind is not advanced enough for the Divine Veil to be any more withdrawn, and even in the greater light of the Good Religion, it will not be removed. The two realms of spirit and matter, mind and body, must remain separated by a near impassable gulf, which can be spanned only by the utmost effort. When the light of the Good Religion

is given to the world, it will not be a world ready to welcome it, or even ready to receive it. The world to which it will come will be a sick, disordered world reluctant to take the medicine, which will restore it to health.

⁵ In those coming days the desire for the good life will have exceeded its proper bounds and, for many, become the sole objective. It will be a world of spiritual barrenness, a place where discord and disillusion has become lost in a doctrinal wilderness, with nothing more refreshing to offer than the waters of stagnant dogma.

⁶ What man needs, the Good Religion will be able to offer, but as man is always tardy in accepting what is good for him and seems incapable of diagnosing his own maladies, he is unlikely to recognize the remedy. Perhaps the illness of man will then be too far advanced for the simple cure by herbal potions, and only the agonizing knife or cauterizing fire will effect it. Meanwhile, wait and watch for the heralds of the dawn.

⁷ The body of man is perishable and only a speck of dust in the great scheme of things; yet, men believe that the mighty universe was created solely to serve it. Man, the mortal, sadly deludes himself by presuming to think he can bend all Nature to serve his bodily wellbeing. As the fool, seeing trees and mountains shimmering in the waters, thinks their images are dancing for his pleasure, so man, while Nature follows her destined course, believes all her activity is only to gladden his eye and give him pleasure.

⁸ Nature, like man, is intended to serve an end and purpose, which far exceed any conceivable by mortal flesh alone. Yet it can be said with truth that the eternal universe and boundless Nature exist only to serve man, the greater being. Therefore, this being so, each man has a duty to recognize himself for what he really is and to do all that is required of him. He should strive to improve life, to supply something it lacks, and to leave the world a better place for having passed through it.

⁹ The man who denies himself harmless pleasure is also a wrongdoer and servant of evil, for such pleasures serve a good purpose and proper end. Happiness is not a thing to be avoided, and enjoyments, which do no harm, are not to be shunned.

¹⁰ Desires and ends, which are good should be pursued, but bear in mind that the tree of desire will bear no fruit unless nourished with the waters of effort. Happiness itself is not an undesirable end, but too many pay for it with their contentment and peace.

¹¹ It has been taught that the love of pleasure serves no useful end, and that wisdom comes through pain. This is not true, for the spirit can also develop through pleasure, for otherwise it would be an unjust world. Not all school lessons are unpleasant, though all should be rewarding.

¹² It is none-the-less true that of all things man may do on Earth to his benefit, the acquisition of spirituality is supreme. It is in fact the whole and sole reason for man's existence. Therefore, while getting whatever happiness he can, he should never over-indulge his bodily appetites and should shun the frivolities of life. These are earthly seducers, which leave little time for more beneficial things and become more demanding as they gain greater control.

¹³ Such things as eating, drinking, sleeping and the bodily union of man and woman are meant to be sources of pleasure, when enjoyed in moderation and for their proper purpose. They, too, can serve a spiritual end. The rule is moderation in all things, with consideration for the welfare and feelings of others and a complete disregard of anything, which may serve the cause of evil.

¹⁴ Do not fear the onset of old age, for though to the undeveloped spirit, it may be the bleak winter of life, to the developed spirit, it is the harvesting time. Old age is bodily preparation for departure to rebirth. It is the approach to the threshold of a new life.

¹⁵ Every man should earn his livelihood by service through toil or skill. The man who wishes to live the good life fully must engage in all kinds of activities, in trade and in various instructive affairs. Life, to be properly lived, must be balanced with a knowledge of many things and a variety of experiences.

¹⁶ Man must certainly engage in worldly and social activities for the benefit of his body, for its needs are not to be neglected. Still always bear in mind that this is not the sole aim in life, nor the greatest. Only one aim or

objective should be held always in view, and that is the perfecting of the soul. In this way, all activities become praiseworthy and beneficial, since the end lies not in the activities themselves but in their objective.

¹⁷ If a man has any talent and fails to develop it, he is unworthy of the gift and, in due course, must make an accounting. The man who does not continually expand the horizon of his life becomes stagnant within himself. The man who does not study and learn places himself on the level of the dumb beasts, though even they learn.

¹⁸ The good life is a balanced, harmonious life and a life well and profitably lived. It is a life of many contrasts and experiences, with a steady advance towards spirituality. All earthly goals are elusive, and their attainment may not bring the pleasure and happiness anticipated. There is only one goal, towards which everyone can advance with certainty and assurance, and that is the goal of spirituality. The very things, which defeat earthly ends and render them impossible to accomplish are, if viewed in the proper perspective, aids towards the achievement of spirituality. Out of earthly failure and frustration can come spiritual accomplishment and gain. If you can understand this, the good life is yours.

13 Religion is not something alien to the nature of man, but something which supplies a fundamental need. Just as eating is the response to an inner urge, so is religion the response to another. It is only when religion, in a particular form, becomes insipid, ceases to nourish, that it is discarded, and then the nature of man seeks to supply the deficiency from another source. Without religious nourishment, the spirit of man becomes unstable and out of harmony with life. Unless the deficiency is made good the whole being may disrupt into disharmony.

² The religious urge is as much a part of man as the urge to eat or sleep, though of a much more subtle nature. Some try to suppress the urge, and in such cases, the effects are no less harmful and apparent than when other urges are suppressed completely. Those with a little knowledge and wisdom often turn away from religion, but once they have gained much more, they turn back again. Religion itself can, therefore, never be outdated or outmoded, though its earthly manifestations certainly may be, and so many persons, disillusioned with the image, spurn the reality behind it. True religion deals only with the relationship between man and his divinity and is the stairway for his ascent.

³ Too often, religion is a quagmire, into which the spirits of men sink and are lost, but it is the fault of men and not of religion. Each man has the religion he deserves and not necessarily the religion he needs. When it proves inadequate for his needs and he becomes disillusioned, he seeks to lay blame on the religion and not on himself. Religions which nourished weaknesses of character and ignorance in men have been destroyed by those same failings and are no more, but the religions are no more to blame than those who served them. If a man put to sea in an unseaworthy boat, can he blame the craft if he be cast into the water? Still man is never abandoned and somewhere there is the religion he needs, though he may never find it because of his spiritual indolence.

⁴ The religious life is not one of ease and indolence, neither is it something to be undertaken half-heartedly. Too often an old man who has wasted his life in worldly excesses and scorned religion, suddenly becomes

converted and seeks to imitate the religious life. He imagines he has become good because he performs acts having an outer appearance of goodness. However, he is no more than a hypocrite. The truth is that his abstinence from wrongdoing and conversion to the religious life are directly related to his declining bodily powers. Such men generally become so self-righteous that they readily forgive themselves for their past deeds, which, after a shallow repentance, are quickly and conveniently forgotten. They should read what is written in the Sacred Books and learn how much more is required of them.

⁵ Religion is man reaching out towards something greater than himself and attempting to express an indescribable glory revealed just beyond his grasp. It is man's search for greatness, the recognition that he is more than mere mortal flesh, and that above this is a divinity towards which he may aspire.

⁶ Devotion is not a state of servility but is actually an attempt to return to man's natural condition. It is a seeking for powers, which, though once possessed, have now been lost. It is a search for the truth concerning man as he really is in his whole being.

⁷ Incense, fire, candles, and ritual cannot increase the glory of The Divine. Certainly, they may benefit man and increase his sensitivity, but he should not be hypocritical about their effect or insulting. The sacrifice of bird or beast, the offering of gold and jewels, may assist men, but in no way do they benefit The Divine. All The Divine asks from man is whole-hearted self-dedication to the fulfilment of The Divine Design. The worshipful ritual and devotional acts are the manifestation of man's desire to take an easy path. They are no more than an interlude in his daily life, the acknowledgement that he owes some sort of obligation.

⁸ The Sacred Books should be read often and diligently, for they are the repository of knowledge transcending that, which can be gained by the senses of men. The Divine knows your heart, your intentions, and inclinations, and therefore does not expect you to make the study of the Sacred Books too wearisome. The Divine knows that some are sick while others are handicapped either by a life of movement or a life of restraint. Others are so tied up in the struggle for the cause that they have little time for

reading. Many have to depend upon the literacy of others for the learning. Therefore, even one section at a time is enough, if it is studied and meditated upon.

⁹ Prayer is an exercise of the spirit. It must never be misdirected and cannot be used to change natural laws and effects for the sake of the one who prays. Always pray in a place proper for prayer. Those who say no place is especially holy because The Divine is everywhere, may discover that they are unable to find The Divine anywhere.

¹⁰ Prayer is little understood, for it raises the worshipper above a normal state. It is a state of being wherein man loses himself in the Spirit of Divinity. To those great souls who know the true nature of prayer in its highest expression, it seems a miracle that after losing himself in prayer, the worshipper continues to live in the flesh. True worship, however, is not prayer but the devotion of a life dedicated to the fulfilment of the Divine Design and the preparation of the soul for the crown of divinity.

¹¹ Repentance from those who have been doers of wickedness and then repent their deeds or confess their wrongdoing when dying, serves little purpose. Unless some recompense is made by the death itself or by other deeds, mere repentance alone cannot reshape the soul.

¹² Worship and devotion require effort, so unless specific times are set apart for reading the Sacred Books, for worship and dedicated service, no time will be given to The Divine. Too often, men devote all their time to the affairs of the body and completely neglect the welfare of the spirit.

¹³ Ignorant men stupidly stir up many cares and troubles; they confront themselves with pointless problems and add unnecessarily to the burdens of life. They increase the number of trials prescribed by their destiny. They indulge in futile forms of worship and waste time in worthless ceremonial. They delude themselves by placing false values on their offerings, they fast and mortify themselves without gain. They go on timewasting pilgrimages and seek new shrines, but from all this they derive little spiritual benefit.

¹⁴ Religious rituals and ceremonies are brought about by a desire for the mutual sharing of religious experience. As words cannot describe the

greater glories, which are inseparable from the religious life, the problems connected with belief and faith are no more than standpoints indicating man's limited means of communication. Therefore, let each man find his own path, and having found it follow steadfastly through to the end.

¹⁵ The many and seemingly conflicting doctrines, which arise from time to time and in many places, do, if inspired by the urge to spirituality, lead towards the same goal - the One Supreme Truth. They are like the many roads into the city, which convey travelers from all directions. The conflict and discord between the many religions are caused by ignorance, by blindness in the material clouds of illusion and by misinterpretation of basic truths. Rightly or wrongly, each man believes the road he travels to be the best and most direct.

¹⁶ A true religion does in fact do no more than supply the medium, whereby man works in co-operation with The Divine. It is the means, whereby the Divine Design is revealed, and its purpose interpreted. Whatever goes into the make-up of human nature bearing the impress of divinity, whatever man does to unfold the divinity of his soul, that constitutes the religious life.

¹⁷ The religious life on Earth does not lead to any finality. It is no more than the first stage of the journey, but it does lead in the right direction. Death is no more than a movement across a frontier, though the wise man assures that the move improves his circumstances and is to a better place.

¹⁸ The course of life is determined by destiny, so pay no heed to those who pretend to read futures in the stars, for they predict only in riddles and what they say may apply to many. No two predictions are alike, except by coincidence, and the planets have no power to determine what a man will become.

¹⁹ The origins of superstition and false belief lie in the conceit and presumption of man, but to an even greater extent in his mortal tendency towards deceit and hypocrisy. They also stem from his spiritual immaturity and indifference, for he tries to attain and understand things which are attainable only by the spiritually developed, and interprets them

with his inadequate knowledge and inspiration. Superstition and blind faith are pillars supporting the religions of ignorance.

Fourteen - Personal Conduct

14 Every man should have a cause to fight for and a road to follow. He should fight for the cause until its objective is attained and follow the road until the end. The horizon of each should be outward towards perfection. The causeless man is like a riderless horse.

² It is better to adhere to one cause absolutely and wholeheartedly than to dabble in many causes without being wholehearted in any. A truly great cause should carry all other worthy causes forward with it, and one great cause cannot fall into conflict with another. A man is judged by what he fights for, or by what he declines to fight for, he must do one or the other.

³ A man must keep careful watch on himself, so he does not wax fat and self-indulgent. Whatever his position in life, he should always be engaged in some worthwhile occupation and never neglect the study of the Sacred Books. Idleness is the mother of miseries. Indolence occupies itself in filling the body with fat.

⁴ To study the Books of Wisdom is good, for thereby a man learns what to do and what not to do. On the other hand, if a man is busily engaged in earning his livelihood and fulfilling his obligations, it will not occur to him to steal and fornicate.

⁵ Man and woman are intended to be unlike, and therefore, a man should conduct himself as a man and a woman as a woman. They were made to serve differently; their separate purposes should not become confused. A mannish woman cannot inspire men or serve the cause of womankind. If she serves mankind, it is in a capacity below that of other women.

⁶ Do not disgrace a man before others or hold any man up to ridicule. The Books of Wisdom say that the only person a man will disgrace before others is his bitterest enemy. Mockery of another discloses the mocker's own weakness of character.

⁷ Do not be immovable in your ways or set in your circumstances. Be like the reed, which bows with the wind and bends all the way, but always

springs up again. Always be alert and ready for whatever may come your way, and above all, do not expect life to deal kindly with you always. Do not envy those who have more than you, but turn your eyes towards those less fortunate.

⁸ Do not be complacent about your personal attainments, for no one can say truthfully that he has purged his spirit of all disfiguring stains and is now perfect. No matter how perfect a man may appear to himself in any respect, there is still a greater perfection attainable, and that is the goal. The limits of earthly perfection remain unmarked.

⁹ Cleanliness in all things is essential. If you would not put filth in your mouth, why put it in your mind? No one allows garbage at the eating table, yet many gladly overload their minds with it. These are weaknesses of character, which have to be eliminated. Through long ages it has been known that a foul tongue expresses the language of weakness, and filthy jokes are the consolation of slaves. The nation sinking into the mire is comforted by the knowledge of its affinity to filth.

¹⁰ The man who boasts about his prowess as a fornicator does so to hide the secret knowledge of his own inadequacy. His foolish boasting is the source of his satisfaction and indicates the limit of his achievements. Let the man of weak character and weaker vitality betray himself, but keep away, lest you be numbered among the self-deceivers.

¹¹ Let your personal conduct be in all ways above reproach. Strive to be worthy of the respect of all men, though their praise is froth on the waters of life. Live as you should live and not as you would like to live. If you cannot acknowledge your own worth, then recognize your own failings.

15 The Spiritual Realm lies between the realm of matter and the realm of The Divine. If your mind is unable to grasp the idea of The Divine and you cannot understand what is meant by spirituality, do not be dismayed. How can an ordinary, unenlightened mind do so when it is shut in by a corrupt material world and enclosed on every side by illusion? Absolute purity cannot be seen amid the clouds of earthly impurity, and in this defiled place, the immaculate is inconceivable. Therefore, if you cannot understand this or perceive the reality of perfection, how much less are you able to comprehend The Divine! Step confidently along the path, guided by understanding companions, who are more enlightened, for they will not lead you astray, and soon the light of understanding will be placed in your hand.

² The Spiritual Realm is divided into two parts. On one side is the place, where the wicked have companionship of their own kind, and it is a cold place of gloom and darkness. This is the realm of evil containing those who are repulsive even to their own kind. Their greatest punishment may lie in the fact that they retain the memory of beauty, goodness and cleanliness, just as the happiness of those in the realm of good, on the other side is heightened by its contrast with the sorrows and afflictions they have known.

³ The realm of evil is separated from the realm of good by an etheric form of flame, through which communication can be made. Were those on the sunlit side to enquire from the dwellers in gloom what brought them to their deplorable state, if the truth could be found in them, they would reply: "We are those who were heedless of all spiritual and ennobling things. We were those who thought only of their own betterment and not the advancement of mankind and the welfare of others. We were the selfish ones who considered only their own comfort and convenience.

Now look at what we have! We oppressed the poor and lowly and exploited the helpless and weak, doing nothing to improve their lot. Now look at ours! We sat on councils and in seats of authority engaging in vain disputes about right and wrong, while the poor, the hungry and the

oppressed stood by and suffered in patience. We are, above all, those who could have done much but did little. We were those who, given great gifts, used them for selfish ends. What have we now? We inhabited fine houses and surrounded ourselves with all things to give ease and comfort. Now we are comfortless. We sought out places of pleasure and closed our eyes to the sorrow and suffering of the world. We laughed at those who sought to teach us spirituality and took a base and easy view of right and wrong. There is no laughter here. We doubted that there was any life to come and could not understand the talk about it. Would that the grave had been the end! Talk of duty and service disturbed our ease and complacency, and we let others carry our burdens. If only we could return!

Only now when we so miserably exist in the certainty of life after death can we realize our errors and suffer for them. Here the air is filled with the sighing sound of the saddest words we know, "Too late!"

⁴ Those words did once span the gulf and were recorded by an ancient seer.

⁵ On the day when the whole being is split apart by death and the mortal clay is consigned to its proper place, the spirit passes through the great gates into the Spiritual Realm. There it first enters a Borderland, where the floodgates of memory are opened and each and every deed recalled. This is where the newly arrived spirit waits while slowly it assumes its chosen shape and realizes the direction of its destination.

⁶ The spirit does not arrive in a state of waking, but it is like one asleep. It awakes to its new life like a man awakes to a new day. Then, if during earthly life it has doomed itself, this realization will slowly dawn, and the newly formed being will cringe away from those who came to welcome it. It will indeed wish that death had been the end. The wisdom of ancient times disclosed that the newly arrived spirit stood in completeness for judgement, but what it called the Place of Decision is the Borderland.

⁷ If, during life, the spirit has beautified and ennobled itself, it will slowly realize its unfolding glory and rejoice. It will rise gladly to its welcome and advance fearlessly into the light of its compatible place. Some, which do not have full affinity with either the light or the darkness depart for the

Shadowland, towards which they are impelled by its attraction for one in their state.

⁸ Within the Spiritual Realm there are places to suit the condition of every spirit entering it, and that is why the ancient books state, 'The mansions of the spirit are without number'.

Sixteen - The Meaning of Marriage

16 In the eyes of men and according to their laws, marriage is a covenant made between a man and a woman, under which they can enjoy bodily union with the sanction of their religion. This is not the view which can be supported by the Good Religion, for true marriage is not something formed through the words spoken by a priest or through sanction by the laws of men. Marriage is an open declaration, which marks the taking of an irrevocable step by two souls towards a definite end. It signifies their complete surrender and dedication to each other. It is meant to be far more than union of the bodies, it should also be a union of spirits, though this is rarely achieved. True marriage is a union of two realms, it is a twofold union.

² The marriage ceremony is an announcement made before all persons that a man and woman are setting out on the rocky road of matrimony in search of true love. This is not something which can be picked up like a jewel, it cannot be bartered, bought or sold. The thing which must never be overlooked is that true marriage is not just the union of two bodies, but the first step towards the blending of two spirits.

³ The marriages of humble people, unsanctified by priest, are no less worthy than those of wealthy people of quality whose religion sanctifies bonds of straw. 'Living in sin' means living together without responsibility and for bodily satisfaction alone. Unholy wedlock means being bound fast in the bonds of matrimony without any prospect of advancement to the glory of true love. Wedlock and marriage are not alike, for a true marriage may exist without sanction by the laws of men or blessing of priest, providing a love exists, which can mature into true love.

⁴ The chain that binds two souls together is forged in the spiritual realm, and no earthly power can ever break it. It is worn on Earth like a gloriously wrought chain of weightless gold, but not one marriage in a thousand is ever blessed with it.

⁵ Adultery is the defilement of a marriage, but there is a mild form of it when the thoughts of one partner go out towards someone else. Religions

now existing do not understand the true nature of marriage and regard it as an end in itself and not as a beginning, a fulfilment rather than a search for fulfilment. The Good Religion will regard marriage as one of the great challenges of life and one of the supreme tests along the road to spirituality. Love is not the end, for love aspires to reach out beyond itself and ascend to the heights of true love, sometimes called 'pure love'.

⁶ Outside of the Good Religion, union between man and woman has become so tainted with imperfection, so clouded in lewdness, so subordinate to lust and bodily satisfaction, that anyone can readily be forgiven for believing the falsehood that no spiritual benefit can derive from the act; that it has no sanctity, no higher objective and purpose than to meet the demands of the flesh.

⁷ Man soars on spiritual wings and rises high above the realm of the dumb brutes. Therefore, he can conceive something greater in bodily union than mere satisfaction of the flesh, and indeed it is not meant to be a concession to the flesh but a sublime sacrifice to love. The feelings arising in the body are not, of themselves, servants of evil, this is a wrong teaching. The body is not naturally antagonistic to the spirit, and its needs are by no means incompatible with spiritual needs. As the harp to the harpist, so is the body to the spirit, the instrument and means of expression.

⁸ Marriage is the fortress of the family, so its safeguarding and integrity is a sacred obligation. The unity and purity of the family is one of the great concerns of men, but though the laws of men may build a wall about it they cannot prevent corruption and decay from within. Only higher laws, moral laws, can deal with this, and these the world sadly lacks.

⁹ The three earthly institutions a man is entitled to defend, even to the extent of taking the life of another, are: His marriage, his home and his family.

Seventeen - The Upbringing of Children

17 To teach a child a readymade code of morality may not be the ideal, but ideals are rarely approachable on Earth and while mankind is so far-retarded spiritually, it is impossible to do otherwise. Yet if a child is also told why there is a necessity for such a code, perhaps in the child's maturity, it will add something of goodness to the code.

² Children brought up with the very best instruction often become wayward and later disregard all they have been taught. Parents wonder why, for the ancient wisdom states that if a child is properly instructed and good habits ingrained, this will not desert the child when it grows up. Such parents must honestly search their own hearts, because the reason is that they have failed to practise their own teachings, and the growing child resents such hypocrisy. Therefore, as it grows up, it will tend to imitate the parents rather than follow the teachings. Parents should bear in mind that example is the best instruction.

³ A healthier and better upbringing is if parents do not overindulge their children or play with them too much. A parent is not a playmate, and his or her first duty is to be a parent. A mother should act like a mother, and a father like a father. Read the Sacred Books and learn your proper role in life.

⁴ Parents get the children they deserve, and the failings of a child mirror the failings of its parents. The children of a considerate and just father are successful. Good children cannot be raised in a house of discord. When the father is hot-tempered and the mother a gossip, the sons are fools and the daughters slovenly.

⁵ Those who spare themselves the pain of chastising their children display their lack of love for them. Proper and just chastisement is part of a child's upbringing and the duty of every parent. Chastise a child during its childhood, for later is too late. When you were advised against over-familiarity with children, it did not mean that you should be too stern and austere with them.

⁶ The highest expressions of Justice and Truth and a perfect code of laws are not attainable on Earth. Therefore, the best thing anyone can do for a child is to teach it self-mastery and bring it up in the knowledge of its true nature. The wisdom of the Sacred Books should be impressed upon the minds of children and taught according to their understanding. It is the duty and obligation of every parent to see that their children are properly instructed.

⁷ Children are not to be brought into the world irresponsibly and parents have an obligation for their welfare. They must see that a child is not left without a craft or calling whereby a livelihood can be earned, There is an obligation upon those who bring a child into the world to see that it does not grow up without learning a skillful and useful occupation, and that it is instructed in the purpose of life and ways of the world.

⁸ The well brought up child crowns its parents with happiness, but one ill raised weighs heavily upon their hearts. A child may rightly reproach its parents if they fail in their duty or avoid their obligations, for it did not ask to be born. Parents, however, cannot reproach their child, for it came at their behest and is the fruit of their pleasure.

⁹ Parents should bear in mind that the fruit of the tree of indulgence is bitter and the waters of indifference soon quench the fires of affection. The parent who sows unwisely in the fertile fields of childhood reaps a blighted harvest when the crop comes to maturity.

Eighteen - Friends and Enemies

18 The only real enemy any man has is the man he does not understand, and the only man to really fear is the one who is afraid. While it is true that a man can be judged by his friends, it is no less true that he can be judged by his enemies. A weak character does not have enemies, but only those who pity or despise him. A declared enemy is not necessarily a source of constant danger. He is better than a false friend and need not be an object of hatred; in fact, many enemies can be admired.

² The man who seeks a friend without faults or one without weaknesses and failings, will never have a friend, and he who declares his enemy to be wholly evil is a liar. A man may be poor in worldly possessions but rich in friendship, for true wealth is not the accumulation of lifeless things but the possession of firm friendship. The greatness of a man may be assessed according to his friends, but it may be measured even better according to who are his enemies.

³ True friendship is not given its proper value in times of prosperity, and fair-weather friends grow wings when the winds of adversity blow. Though misfortune reveals the friend, it also discloses the enemy. When misfortune strikes, false friends scamper like rats, and enemies gather like vultures.

⁴ No man can attain full spiritual development until he has learned to respect the rights and views of others. Help others along the path, and the right way will be pointed out.

⁵ The nature of man is such that while it always tends to resist force and compulsion, it will always yield to gentleness and persuasion. Force is the last resort and an acknowledgement of failure. Power in the hands of a man in all ways strong is always good, but power in the hands of a weak man is a menace.

⁶ A friend is capable of inflicting greater hurt than an enemy, but both should be chosen with equal discretion. Yet wounds inflicted at the hands of a friend are more to be desired than the hypocritical embraces of an

enemy. Let experience be your guide. He who has tested honey knows it to be sweet, while he who has tasted the fruit of evil knows it to be bitter.

⁷ Do not take a fornicator as a friend, or you admit a wolf into the sheepfold. Enslaved by his urges, he will never be constant and always a weak reed to lean upon. As a dog leaves its kennel to return to its vomit, so is a fornicator drawn back to the woman with whom he relieves himself.

⁸ Genuine friendship between man and woman is said to be impossible, but this is the talk of weak characters, of whom many burden the world. When the relationship of love between man and woman is hallowed as it should be, and elevated far above sordid relationships, between the two there will be a place for friendship.

⁹ Do not be lukewarm either in friendship or enmity, for the strong character reaches out afar in all directions. Not all enemies are personal ones, for those who oppose the cause for which you fight are also your enemies, as are all who oppress the weak and lowly. There is everlasting enmity between those who serve the cause of good and those who serve evil, and there can be no reconciliation between the two. To compromise with evil means contamination of the good.

Nineteen - The Tendency Towards Evil

19 Everyone born to be tested in a mortal world has a tendency towards things which are evil, rather than towards those, which are good. The material part of man, with its heritage of decay, finds itself more attracted towards evil than towards good. Therefore, it is good, which has to be taught and learned and evil, which has to be put aside and eliminated.

² When a man delves into wickedness, to satisfy his carnal urges, the body fully supports him, and his mortal limbs and organs readily respond. The bestial desires and urges lurk only just beneath the surface and need little encouragement to bring them up. However, when a man is called upon to do some good deed, his body is reluctant, and disinclination invades his heart.

³ This is because evil impulses range freely through the movement of good impulses. The gross material of the body must be impregnated with spirituality, if the position within is to be reversed.

⁴ Evil impulses press urgently upon the mortal body and make their demands known in no uncertain manner. Only the best of men are truly free enough to rise above them and stand firm in resistance. Passions and the demands of the body are aggressors from the realm of evil seeking to capture and enslave the spirit. These aggressors must be subdued, put in restraint and made to serve.

⁵ The tendency towards evil involves not only those who break the laws of men, but also those who break higher laws. The Good Religion should not concern itself so much with earthly lawbreakers, for the laws of men can deal with them, but with greater things, against which the laws of men are inadequate. The number of lawbreakers and outcasts in any nation is the measure of a nation's spiritual deficiency. 'Where there is lawlessness, there will also be injustice, for the two go together like light and shade.

⁶ The spiritual life is inseparable from daily existence, and a nation becomes spiritually deficient when it tries to separate one from the other. Religions, which stand aloof and permit this to happen, if not servants of

evil, are certainly poor champions of good. The laws of men have to be enforced only when people cease to govern their lives by spiritual laws. Therefore, of all laws spiritual laws are the highest.

⁷ The duty of religion is to concern itself with moral laws and discipline, and when it fails in this duty it no longer serves the welfare of mankind. The laws of men are completely inadequate for this, as indicated by their complexity and multiplicity. The greatness of any nation resides in its national spirit, and the breath of that spirit is religion.

⁸ The tendency towards evil is opposed by religion, the champion of good, which must prove itself equal to the challenge. A poorly armed champion, ill prepared for combat or defective in resolution, is of no use whatsoever, though the people of few nations deserve anything better.

⁹ The tendency towards evil includes abuse of the body, for unhealthy excesses lead to weakness, apathy and early death. The body that is overstuffed with food houses a selfish spirit, which has deprived others of sustenance. A body worn out with dissipation hides a spirit, which has surrendered to wickedness. It includes also all things tending towards the disruption of life and the brutalization of mankind.

¹⁰ Yet, to live a righteous life does not mean withdrawal from association with all others. A man should withdraw from life among his own people only when they have turned completely from the path of good and tread the road of evil. In such cases a man has the obligation to separate his family from the contaminating influence of those about him, but he must always bear in mind that his duty is to fight and not run away. Withdrawal to a stronger base, from which to fight is not running away.

Twenty - Teaching, Study and Learning

20 Conscience is the best guide, and experience the best teacher. Nature is the best book, and life the highest form of schooling. Death is the great graduation day.

² Study itself is not enough, for learning without application and practice is futile and leads towards wickedness. The man who studies the Sacred Books as a child and applies their teachings to his life is like one who works with metal while it is still hot. The man who leaves such study until old age is like one who works with metal when it is cold.

³ Study, when not combined with work and practice, tends to lead towards the path of weakness. Unless a man is engaged in a skilled or useful occupation, all his book learning serves little purpose and does not avail him much. Therefore, even the man most devoted to the study of the Sacred Books must also learn a skilled or useful occupation.

⁴ Practice is of greater importance than study; for of what use is it to study the way for goodness, and being willing to do good, if experience of what constitutes good living is lacking? The good life is a life of action and not a life of passiveness.

⁵ Yet, study and learning are not to be neglected, for they are part of the discipline of living. Without the study, which leads to knowledge, right living and right action in their fullest expression are very unlikely.

⁶ In your absorption of knowledge, consider nothing impossible and nothing beyond achievement. Bear in mind that whatever is possible will one day come into being. The road to wisdom begins in attentive silence and passes through study and practice into fulfilment.

⁷ A teacher's words should be goads to goodness and learning, and not like a salve to the wounds of wickedness or a narcotic deadening the instructive pains of life. As the herdsman's goad directs beasts and urges them along the right road, so should the teacher's word direct and urge the pupil. Words of worth do not fall softly.

⁸ A teacher may have a pupil wait upon him and attend to his needs, providing it is regarded as an opportunity for training and teaching. The teacher who fails to set a good example, or to abide by his own teachings, is unworthy of his position and betrays his trust.

⁹ The man who quietly carries out the precepts of the Sacred Books and upholds their teachings is better than he who studies diligently and teaches well, but fails to put his teaching into practice. A hypocritical teacher is the lowest order of hypocrites.

¹⁰ A disciple is one who follows a religious master, and it is better to be the disciple of a wiser man than the master of others who are ignorant. Always seek self-improvement and advancement in knowledge, for these are the justifiable aims of the disciple.

¹¹ The man who is diligent and careful in his studies, but not in his deeds or words, is a weak character who tends to hypocrisy. The man who learns but does not practice what he learns is like a man who labors at the sowing but does not reap the harvest. He is like a man who digs a well and never draws water.

¹² The purpose of learning is to know the good from the bad, the beneficial from the harmful. The good and beneficial should not be scorned, whoever dispenses them. Would you take poison even if offered by your best friend, or refuse dressing for a wound because given by an enemy?

¹³ The man who is filled with learning and knows all the wisdom of the Sacred Books, but fails to put it into practice, is like a many-branched tree with no depth of root. The wind blows, and it is laid low to quickly rot. The man with much learning and knowledge but no strength of character, is like a frail pot filled with precious liquid. If roughly handled, it falls apart, and the contents are lost.

¹⁴ Good has its fount in The Divine, and at its source is uncontaminated with evil. It is that which harmonizes best with the Divine Design, and evil is that which harmonizes least. Good is absolute quality, while evil is not; therefore, even in the greatest concentration of evil there must be some good. So there is no form of evil, whether in man or outside of

him, from which some good cannot be extracted, but man by nature tends to overlook this. Entrapped in matter, evil is more easily seen. Bear in mind that, in even the greatest evil, there is somewhere a speck of good which can be of service if extracted.

¹⁵ Finally, if seeking a religious master, be careful in your choice. In matters of religion, the whole forces of evil are marshalled to deceive and delude. If one whom you would choose as a master seeks popularity or self-advancement, avoid him like the plague, for he is a false prophet.

Twenty-One - A Word to Prophets and Preachers

21 The true prophet is a message bearer who has heard a voice crying out across the distances. The message may not be clearly heard and perhaps conveyed with errors and distortion, but if it is the dedicated effort of a sincere man, it must be of value.

² Because there are many false prophets, the words of a true prophet do not lose their value. No man has ever sought to counterfeit a valueless thing. The vine is judged by the drink it produces and not by its leaves and appearance. It is the end product that matters.

³ The pattern of the Divine Design is marvelous and its working intricate. The threads are many, and their preparation involves countless processes. The weavers are numerous, but few can visualize what magnificence completion may reveal, and none can see the uncompleted whole. Therefore, those who would show others the pattern to follow should not seek to guess at what lies beyond their own range of vision.

⁴ So if you are a prophet chosen to guide, do not exceed the scope of your authority or seek to describe things beyond the reach of your light. Go forward with courage and confidence, and the voice of The Divine will teach you the signs along the road and make clear their meaning.

⁵ When you stand up to deliver your message, many hypocrites will gather and declare their belief in what you say. The words they speak may deceive you, for they are a cloak disguising their true garb and, because of their hypocrisy, those who would otherwise listen to your words will turn away in disgust. Therefore, when you make converts, beware of including the faint-hearted and hypocrites, for they will only be a liability.

⁶ Do not be afraid to speak up when men will listen to what you have to say, but also know when to be silent and hold your peace. It is futile to waste words when you will not be given a hearing. You will have to contend with many false-faced prophets whose words are beautiful baubles falling from silver tongues. They attract the attention of many who listen for pleasure and so are led astray.

⁷ Some men will come to you declaring that they have been converted to your cause, but the words they utter have no more substance than the breath, upon which the words ride. Their speech does not reflect the image in their hearts, and their hypocrisy places them among the damned.

⁸ Others will come prepared to accept what you say in part only and to serve with reservations. If good comes out of what they do, they consider the effort sufficient, but if they find the going hard, they will fall away. Those are weak characters who can derive little benefit from your teachings, until they first change themselves. The first duty of the Good Religion is not to preach The Divine, but to teach men to change themselves. Its first aim is to develop a better being.

⁹ Do not ever tell others the way to live and how to govern their lives, until after you have put your teachings into practice. First practice what you teach, and then, you can instruct others from your experience. The hypocritical teacher betrays his cause.

¹⁰ Though you may preach to an audience of allcomers, choose your disciples carefully. Do not waste time on fools or simpletons, or on those unwilling to take the road towards spirituality. Always explain in such a manner that your words cannot be misconstrued. Do not always expect people to ask for further explanation if they do not understand, for their misinterpretation may satisfy them, or they may be reluctant to speak up.

¹¹ Sometimes, a preaching prophet may upbraid his hearers with anger because his heart is stirred up within him, and some may be resentful. They will overlook all his good qualities and search out his faults. Perhaps they will say, "This man preaches forbearance and self-control, while railing against us with hostility and anger." Therefore, before attempting to preach, strengthen your character, so that if you must upbraid people for their ways, you do so with affection and restraint.

¹² Do not argue hot-headedly or enter into dispute with your hearers, but talk to them in a kindly, reserved manner. Bear in mind that, whatever their belief, it will contain a large amount of good with which you have no dispute or issue. It is the bad, which taints and contaminates the good, that has to be sought out and destroyed.

¹³ Do not enter into discussion or argument with anyone well instructed in another doctrine, unless you are equally well instructed in yours and equally well informed on theirs. In disputes and discussions, the ill-informed man is knocked over with a straw. In the arena of argument, the man without knowledge attacks with a reed.

¹⁴ Other doctrines have their books, and the best book is the one which benefits the most. In one book, Truth may be described in one way, and, in another book, it may be described differently, but this need not mean that one is right and the other wrong. Truth never goes unveiled, but the wise man seeks her where she is veiled the least.

¹⁵ The outward vestments of a religion are unimportant, for gaudy ones may hide a festering body, while unimposing garments may clothe a healthy one. Disregard the bottle and give your attention to its contents. A misshapen bottle may hold matured wine, while the well-shaped bottle may contain wine newly pressed.

¹⁶ If your calling is to preach, then declare to others all the words you believe to be true concerning The Divine and the latent divinity in men. Pay no heed to those who would discourage you, and follow the footsteps of Truth unflinchingly. The least enlightened are those who close their ears to the voice of wisdom.

¹⁷ If you have been granted the gift of speech so that your opponents are routed under a hail of words, do not proclaim a victory. A man is not converted because he is silenced. The advocate who presents the best argument may not have the best case, and he who speaks the right words may not be on the right side.

¹⁸ Though you cannot reveal the Divine Design, you can point out the order in the Divine Dominion. All about, the signs are manifested in the order and procession of the stars and the succession of the seasons, in the abounding beauty and bounty of Nature and in the laws that govern growth and decay.

¹⁹ When the call to the cause is sounded in the dawnlight of the day of Truth, preaching prophets will fare forth as harbingers. If it falls to your lot to be numbered among them, then consider yourself honored among

humanity. Summon others to tread the way of Truth with you but do so in simple words and with enlightened argument and wisdom. Do not enter into time-wasting disputes, but use gentle persuasion and kindly guidance to put the feet of your followers upon the right road.

²⁰ Those who answer the call to the cause cannot expect to escape the conflict unscathed. If you are among those who suffer, do not take reprisals, but only such steps as will prevent a repetition. Display your strength of character in patient endurance and cheerfulness, but you are not expected to be meekly submissive.

²¹ Endure whatever trials come your way with patience and fortitude, for they serve you well. Do not be unduly disturbed if you are not believed, or troubled because so many betray their own nature and destiny. You can do no more than warn them and call upon them to fulfil their duty and obligations. Do not let your heart be troubled by their subtleties of arguments, and bear in mind that deluded men always believe in the reality of their delusions.

²² Concentrate on teaching the young, for this is like engraving words on metal, while teaching the aged is like writing words on the seashore sands. But instruction should be given by the aged, for he who looks for wisdom in the young is like a man who eats unripe fruit from the vine or drinks unmellowed wine from the cask.

²³ The Good Religion will not concern itself with moneymaking for profit; though, if it is made to serve a good end there is no harm. With moneymaking and profit, it is the objective that counts. Those who preach the Good Religion will take no money for themselves in such a way that people might come to regard it as no more than another means of livelihood. The praiseworthy teacher will earn his livelihood through his skill or labor.

²⁴ However, if a man devotes himself to furthering the cause, and sacrifices opportunities in other directions, he shall not be denied a fair return for his services. A man who dedicates himself wholly to the service of a cause can rightly expect that cause to supply him with the necessities of life.

²⁵ The preacher dedicated to service must not be too fastidious, for to give battle to the muck wallowers, the muck heap must be entered. Neither must he be intolerant with those who hold to the most outlandish beliefs, for each man's belief seems right in his own eyes.

²⁶ The harbingers of the Good Religion must be men of strong character and integrity, for a fortress cannot be built on shaky foundations, or stout walls erected over a bog. The preacher who is truly dedicated to a Divinity of Love and Goodness becomes, himself, a manifestation of those qualities.

²⁷ Man is not expected to achieve perfection here on Earth, but only to seek it. What is expected of him is a sincere and honest effort without any hypocritical or deceptive reservations. The Divine Design requires that man make a conscious choice of right under the constant pressure of temptation to do otherwise. This also leaves man free to choose wrong.

²⁸ Man chooses wrong instead of right for just two reasons; either it is the easy path of least resistance, or it is the most alluring. Consequently, the Good Religion must first concern itself with establishing strength of character and moral backbone, for these form the only foundation, upon which the palace of spirituality can be erected.

²⁹ Long ages ago, man took the wrong path and was led astray still further by guides with insufficient knowledge of the way. They knew the general direction, but their maps were faulty. Now, man is lost in the swamps of spiritual barrenness and the marshes of moral decay. His vision cannot penetrate the thick mists of mortal and material illusion, which have closed in upon him. He has lost all confidence in his guides and feels betrayed, abandoned and lonely.

³⁰ The lost wayfarer must be revived with a draught of moral courage. He must be strengthened and revitalised with a belief which gives him spiritual backbone. The religions, which pander to the weak characters, to the meek and servile, the ignorant and unthinking, must be discarded. Man must be given what he needs, not what he deserves. He must be taught the meaning and purpose of life, so that he no longer wastes it. He must know that whatever befalls him on Earth is either decreed or the result of his own actions, but that it may be utilized to his benefit

elsewhere. Now, as always, man is taught to seek inspiration outside himself. In the light of the new dawn, he must be taught to seek his inspiration from the divinity within himself.

³¹ This is not the hour of dawning, for it lies still distant, and therefore, these words are no more than an arrow shot in the direction of the rising sun. He who writes them now will never put them into effect, for a child born prematurely has little chance of survival. A ship is not launched on the floodwaters, and a harvest is reaped only when the seed is sown in its proper season.

³² Do not be downhearted if the results of your preaching cannot be seen, for be assured that if good is sown well, it will surely take root. When your hearers are men of intelligence, speak to them profoundly, but if they are men who toil, men not gifted with intellect or well-endowed with words, instruct them by parable and with tales drawn from their own background and turned to account.

³³ When The Divine intends to call a man to high service, that man is certain to be the first disciplined by suffering. He may be tested by bodily labor, by hunger and privation, or he may be tried in the fires of trouble and distress. His every undertaking may be confounded and every effort frustrated. By such means his character will be strengthened and his resolution intensified. His understanding and compassion will be increased.

³⁴ Men have to make mistakes to learn, and reformation of character often commences under duress. Yet, it does not follow that all derive benefit from the tests of life, for many weak characters succumb before them, and then, their weakness swallows them up. The benefit comes to those who realize benefit is to be gained and who look for it, or to those who, unconscious of benefit, still rise above their trials,

³⁵ Nothing is wrong with the Spiritual Realm, and nothing is wrong with the world except through man's own actions. What is wrong and must be remade is man, himself. The Good Religion must, therefore, teach man to be happy and contented within himself and to rise above his environment. Too many lack this ability and are happy only when circumstances and surroundings are favorable, but they soon become

depressed and sad when things go against them or are not to their liking. Despondency and worry arise when a person's thoughts are completely self-centered, and harmful desires arise when they seek selfish gratification. To seek the things and circumstances that please and to shun those that do not is taking the slippery path leading to the pit of sorrow. The road to degeneracy is wide, smooth and downhill all the way.

³⁶ Men must learn that, while they traverse the arid desert of materialism, they must expect to suffer the thirstpangs of unquenchable desires and unsatisfied urges. Their feet will always drag heavily through the sands of sorrow and suffering. Only when they come to the cool waters of spirituality can they rest, refreshed and satisfied. The duststorms of passion, the mirages of deception and illusion and the dark cloud of mortal ignorance must be penetrated in order to glimpse the Light of Divinity beyond. The phantoms of sense fallacies must be recognised for what they are, unimportant things without substance.

³⁷ Things come into being because they are needed and necessary, and when the Good Religion opens its arms to men, it will be for this reason. Until then, it is not harmful for them to worship the awe-inspiring symbols and indulge in the spirit-stirring litanies conceived by the many existing religions. These do serve by assisting the spirit to purge itself of grosser attractions and to elevate the soul. In such elementary forms of worship, the object of homage does not matter, for each worshipper forms an image in his own mind of what lies behind it according to his own state of development. In this manner, the way is prepared for the coming of the Light.

³⁸ No activity of man is so wrapped in ignorance, so inept and harmful as religious intolerance or prejudice in favor of one outward form of worship as against another. All who worship are seeking the same destination, and each takes the road he thinks most suitable. Men are led by phantoms to fight for dimly revealed causes and end up consumed in fiery pits of hatred. Why have they chosen one side rather than the other? Only because the particular religion they support is an accident of birth and upbringing. Man weaves his sorrows from the very materials given for his adornment and glorification.

³⁹ The answers given by all true religions are inspired by the desire to meet particular needs. These needs differ according to time and place and the condition and development of men, but all true religions have this in common: they come in response to something upsurging in the nature of man. When the rites of a religion are performed without thought and its ceremonial becomes meaningless, then that religion is ready to die.

22 This is not a recipe for salvation, nor a formula for blind belief. It is not a matter of doctrine alone, and dogmatic belief must not be rigidly imposed, though loyalty and unity are certainly to be expected from those who follow its light. The Good Religion is not so much a belief or doctrine as a way of living. It is the way of life of a company of kindred spirits headed for the same destination and all sharing the same adventure, with its hazards and excitement, all seeking the best road together.

² It is not a religion of gloom and despair. It does not seek to placate or coerce any Being, for it serves a Divinity above such things. It is not a religion reveling in servility and meekness; instead, it seeks to reveal the greatness of man. It is a religion of joy and hope, of high ideals and aspirations. It adheres to the highest principles of Truth, Justice and Goodness. It aspires to the greatest good for all mankind and believes in the sanctity of life, love and family. It hallows hearth and home.

³ It is a practical religion teaching the doctrine of evolving betterment. It establishes a standard for men to live by, which will make them better men and permit them to live in peace and harmony with others. It values the qualities of courage, audacity, fortitude and steadfastness. It upholds the virtues of modesty, patience, purity and gentleness. It is not a religion of undue restraint or narrow dogma, and it does not believe in the futile mortification of the body. It takes full regard of man as a twofold being and maintains the dignity of the mortal as well as the spiritual body. It makes no empty promises of salvation or redemption and is not founded upon a system of indulgences, rewards or promises. It expounds the principles of personal responsibility, obligation and effort. Its prime objectives are to the carrying out of the Divine Design and the service of mankind.

It is a religion to be lived by and not just believed in. It demands to be expressed in deeds and not in words, in beneficial action and not in blind conformity. It is more interested in bringing out the hidden good than in outward display and pomp. The Good Religion concerns itself with

whatever is necessary for the unfolding of the spirit, and its aim is to spur man upward to divinity.

⁴ The purpose of a religion is to serve, and it cannot do this properly by concentrating on spiritual matters alone, for it also has the obligation of setting a moral standard. A worthwhile religion cannot permit itself to be shut out from everyday life. If it does so, it is undeserving of its status. It must concern itself with the way men live, with the conduct of their daily affairs, with their relationship with one another.

⁵ Religion is man's response to his existence in earthly conditions and the answer to the challenge of his environment. Therefore, it is in religion that he finds the most satisfactory outlet for his feelings and the best way of expressing his inner yearning. The soundless, insistent voice of The Divine calls out to man from the depths of his being, and that which guides and directs him towards it is called 'religion.'

⁶ The Divine is hidden from men and veiled behind the firmament, and this separation, this feeling of being cut off, is the source and basis of religion. The Divine and man, fire and spark, now sundered apart, crave to be united, and this craving expresses itself as religion.

⁷ Man, the person, is like a lamb separated from its mother, the source of its life, and lost in the mountain mists. He is a lonely creature pulled and pushed around by urges and desires, dragged onward by the remorseless chords of time, heavily burdened with fragile mortality and always haunted by the accompanying phantoms of decay and change. His only encouragement is the light of divinity just dimly glimpsed in the distance, and his only consolation and comfort his religion.

⁸ But religion too often gives cold comfort and little encouragement; therefore, the Good Religion must be a true comforter as well as a champion. It will teach man that there is a happy haven and worthwhile destination at the end of the road. It will show him that it is futile to try and run away from life and that its trials are inescapable. Life is given to man with intent and purpose, and he can achieve divinity only by first experiencing the realities of existence here and rising above them.

⁹ The standards imposed upon those who follow the light of the Good Religion will be those already set out in the Sacred Books of times gone by, for wisdom is not a callow youth. Such standards should not weigh too heavily on men, as do some enforced under the cloak of ignorance. This is the Religion of the Light, and it accords with the natural tendencies of man. It declares every man to be heir of divinity and, therefore, capable of living a righteous and upward-tending life.

¹⁰ The concept of righteousness held by the Good Religion is not one of external display, for it preaches that goodness is expressed in deeds and in a way of life, not in the holding of barren beliefs and purposeless ceremonial. It is like a mighty oak, always shedding leaves and replacing them in the proper seasons. Its roots keep spreading out into new ground, but its trunk is always strengthening and growing greater.

¹¹ The Good Religion believes that man is the instrument of The Divine and His deputy on Earth; that man is entrusted with certain responsibilities and duties, which he can shirk only to his cost; that the soul is immortal and the body mortal and that man can achieve divinity only through his own efforts. He can be saved by no one except himself.

¹² There are those who prefer the worship of many lesser divinities, and those who divide their belief so from one come many, and each is content with his portion and derides that of others. The many divinities are like mirages across the sands, which appear to offer cool waters, but no man ever found refreshment there. When darkness falls, the mirage disappears, and he who trod the sand towards it is lost.

¹³ Men have to be organized in worship as in all things, but this is not so much for their own good, though this is often made the excuse, but to check man's inherent tendency towards irresponsibility and apathy. While it is true that the less responsible and resolute men are the more they have to be organized and controlled, it is also true that the more they are organized and controlled, the less responsible and resolute they tend to become. In this as in all things a balance must be struck. Therefore, when a religion teaches that men should be responsible and resolute, it should not seek to organize and control them too much. However, it must also be remembered that without leadership, organization and discipline, no battle was ever won.

¹⁴ The Good Religion must do more than produce good men. The popular religions within the confines of civilization already produce good men, but they do not produce divinely inspired men or men who rise even above goodness.

¹⁵ The Good Religion will not accept the doctrine now preached that the man who suffers is one who has done wrong or offended some divinity. Instead, it will declare that the man who suffers is undergoing one of the inescapable tests of life and may be one chosen for higher service. However, it should acknowledge that this should not lead to suffering being accepted passively. Not only must suffering be struggled against, but every effort must be made by others to help the sufferer. The trials and tests of life are not things to be endured with passive patience, they are challenges to be met and overcome.

¹⁶ The Good Religion must establish a tradition of service, which it can hand down from one generation to another. It must also establish base within a compatible body of people, from which it can be propagated, not only by preaching and teaching but also, more important, by example. To each of its followers, it must declare the message: "Whether a man does much or little is not as important as to whether he always does his best and directs his actions towards the fulfilment of the Divine Design."

¹⁷ The Good Religion exists even now, for it is the faith of the few who cherish the seed. It is limited to a small number who hand on the torch, and this must continue until the day already appointed. Meanwhile, mankind is not ill served by its many religions, but the day comes when they will no longer serve, and that is the day the child of man's ancient heritage will be born.