

## Civilization Built upon Thought

Thought is the motive power of men. It governs even emotion and can control it, and although sometimes thought is evoked by feeling, I think that on the higher planes they are one. The world we live in is a world of thinkers and feelers; and if the world is bad, it is because our thoughts and feelings have made it so. If human conditions are inharmonious, even diabolic at times, when brute force takes the place of reason and justice, it is because our thoughts have made it so.

Ideas control actions. There you have the cause of the unrest in the world we live in, and its cure. If a man wants to reform himself, he does so by first of all changing his thought; he begins by feeling differently. It is the only lasting way, for it means a change of character. If you want to prevent a quarrel you have to begin your work before the quarrel threatens. If you try to interfere in a quarrel between two people, not only are you apt to hurt yourself, but you will have a quarrel of three. It is no way to stop a quarrel by going to the quarrelers and preaching. By so doing you have not touched them where they are susceptible, you have not changed them, you have not appealed to their thought or their feelings. You have been trying mere palliatives.

Make them see that they are acting a bit worse than the beasts are when they fight, because the beasts have not our reason and common sense. Make your appeal with ideas; awaken thoughts. Put into their minds a new sequence of thought and feeling. Then they will begin to realize that you cannot settle a quarrel by brute force, for that simply means that the chap who has got the worst of it is going to bide his time to see if he can best the other fellow by brute force. They will begin to see that you cannot stop wars by making wars to stop wars. It has never worked and never will, because it is a wrong psychology, as well as foolish.

All civilization is built upon thought, and if you want to change a civilization, you must change accepted thought by giving a new thought. What is an invention? A thought. What is literature? What are philosophy, religion, science? Thought. What is the social structure under which we live? Thought. Every movement in the world today is built upon thought: social, political, philosophic, religious, and scientific. Nine out of ten of these movements began in the mind of one individual, and spread. You see in the pages of history the tremendous cataclysmic effects of thought. What is war? Not only the result of thought, but thought itself. Men fighting because of ideas, thoughts. To avoid another world war we must begin before the next one happens -- begin by starting a new current of thought in the world.

These truths are so simple they pass us by and we do not take them in and digest them. It is ideas that shake the world. It is ideas that make the world. It is ideas that unmake men and the world of men. Consult the annals of history. Look at the amazing results that spring from movements which begin perhaps with a handful of earnest people. For years they may work and preach and labor apparently without result. Suddenly, for some remarkable reason, the idea catches and spreads like wildfire. At times ideas take hold of people in the most amazing way. What were the Crusades, when men left home and hearth and fireside and everything they held dear to go and fight the paynim, in a distant foreign and unknown land? These tens of thousands of men collected from all over Europe *for an idea*. Still more remarkable: what was this amazing and thought-arresting idea which even caught the thoughts and imaginations of little children? Have you not heard of the Children's Crusade? Out of Germany and what is now Belgium and Holland and France and Switzerland, down into the south of France and into Italy suddenly children began to arise -- boys and girls from toddling ones up to those of thirteen or fourteen years they took to the roads and went by the scores of thousands till the highways were black with their marching feet. Hundreds of miles they went, dying by thousands on the way, and horribly treated by human monsters who batted on them. Nobody knows how this thought arose. Suddenly the children in the various countries took it

into their heads: "We will go fight, we will go save the Holy Sepulcher." Fancy children talking like that! They got it from their parents, of course; but look at the psychology -- a psychology that swept every home, took one or more children from every fireside. The mothers and fathers could not stop them. They would steal out by night. They would go by byways and devious pathways to the great highways, those bands of helpless children going south, going south! All for an idea, a thought!

What was the idea of the wonderful tarantella which is best described by the historians of Spain and Italy -- Italy particularly? Suddenly for no understandable reason, grown men and women got the idea that they must dance; and they began to dance, and danced on and on until they fell down unconscious, exhausted. They could not stop themselves from singing and dancing, singly and together, whole countrysides, whole districts of them -- a psychology, a thought, an idea.

It is just such kind of insane psychology that rules the world of human thought today. Men and women have got the idea that it is impossible to prevent another great war. They really believe it. That is one of the reasons it will happen unless sanity resumes its sway over our minds. What makes and carries on any war? Thought. What stops any war? Thought: a changing of the thoughts of men; for by changing their thoughts you change their hearts, you change their lives and therefore their civilizations. If a war comes, it is because men and women have brought it about by their thinking. Their thinking arouses their feeling. Their feeling arouses their jealousy and fear. Evil thought will be followed by similar thought. You cannot extinguish fire by fire. You cannot stop war by war. This is as simple as ABC. These are thoughts which fly unnoticed over our heads because we are so accustomed to them, and yet they are the secret of all good and all evil. A man's life is changed sublimely by his thoughts; so too can he go to hell or the gallows by his thinking. It is thought which makes the gentleman or the boor. It is thought which makes the courageous man or the coward. It is thought which produces forgiveness or carries on hate.

It was because of these facts that the Theosophical Society was begun: to try to change the thoughts of men and women towards better and higher things; to arouse inspiring and benevolent ideas in the minds of individual men and women. Why don't theosophists all go out and take lunch baskets around to the starving, and go to the bedsides of the people who are smitten with disease, and dying? Many of us do it and have done it. But our main work in life is to try to *do away* with poverty, rather than tinkering with the needs of the poor; and this will gradually be accomplished by changing people's minds so that our civilization will be an enlightened one. That, among other noble objectives, is what we aspire towards. There is no other work which is farther reaching than that. It goes to the root of things, instead of only putting plaster and ointments on the surface of the festering wounds. And in a still higher field our work is to teach men and women what they as individuals have locked up within them: powers, capacities, faculties, which the average man or woman today does not suspect. Yet they are there. The titan intellects, the greatest men who have ever lived, have proved what the human mind is capable of; and every normal person has the same potencies within himself. It is a part of the work of the Theosophical Society to re-arouse belief in these things, so that human beings will yearn to cultivate themselves from within outwards, to awaken what is within, and to become greater and grander. What a world we shall live in then! It is thought that will do it, and the feeling which follows upon thought. Then indeed will the Christ, crucified in us every day we live, ascend from the crucifix, our own being, the body of each man, and enter into his brain and enlighten his life, and reform his conduct towards his fellows. just that one thought alone, if you could get men and women to believe it and inwardly to know it, would bring about a universal "conversion" -- a "turning around," a changing -- of our minds and hearts to the living Christ within, the living Buddha!