

From Darkness Into Light

Thoughts to Brighten Your Holidays
From the Residents at Home Farm
December 2011



When the Sun Moves Northward

When we started talking about our annual newsletter, Lynne Hoffman, our new editor, suggested a theme around Mabel Collins' When the Sun Moves Northward, a very early publication of The Theosophical Society. An old memory popped up and I went to my bookshelf. I have two copies, an old (c.1923) hardbound and a more recent paperback. More than 30 years ago we often started reading from it in December, as our meditation seed, every night. I don't recall that we always read through until Spring, but I recall the impact those seeds had on my beginning studies of the Ancient Wisdom.

My paperback copy has typewritten cards of some of the ceremonies of December, the Birth Month. *"I devote the spirit that is being born within me to the service of the spirit of love. In this coming year I will dwell in the sanctuary of love; I will not offend against the law of love. I will remember that I have not to ask love but to give love; that I have to give of my very self to the world. I will molest none; I will forgive all. In return, I demand that the spirit to be born in me this month shall be beloved of the brotherhood of souls, and shall be recognized as a soul of love. LOVE is the only King; the only Ruler; the only Creator... Transform all feeling into power. Take emotion and make it purpose. Take fever and make it force. Take madness and make it divine confidence... The obedient one must have patience, and the will to endure."*

When I read this today and remember how eager I was to "get on the Path," I smile at my beginner's naïveté. But there was clearly a resounding resonance within me. This year's December 25th, the Birth Day, will be my 34th here at Home Farm. "My Path" has been a most interesting journey. When the Sun Moves Northward and Light on the Path, also by Mabel Collins, are still available. If one is on the devotional ray, I recommend them.

May the Blessed Ones lead us from darkness into LIGHT.

- Val Taylor 2011



From Darkness into Light

The Dream Time clouding my brain
pushes the 'reality' space/time away from the brightness;
Believing the unbelievable
swimming against a seemingly impossible current
Backing out of the dark dreams of madness
and swimming toward a weak light shining thru the darkness;
I wind my lonely way back home, back to the Light, back to sanity.
In the times of grief, darkness, chaos.....equilibrium careens itself
back into balance.....although grudgingly.

I'm thankful for the balancing act of the Cosmos;
May you all seek your peace and become re-joyful.

- BFree 2011

Winterizing

When winter comes on it is a time to withdraw into the indoors, which can become a quiet time for reflection and introspection. The warm times which beckoned us into outward activity and bustle have gone. In the enforced quiet the snows may lay with the image of eternity, giving the sense of time frozen, changeless in a pristine white Now.

There are those who escape to the warmer south, those I affectionately call the SNO birds! But for those who stay cocooned inside, it can be a time to ponder, to review the year, or to rise up as above the Earth and contemplate the great cycles of time. Only change is constant, change within the stately measures of aeons within which our small circumscribed lives are as a passing breath.

We complain when things don't change fast enough according to our little frame of reference. We have inspiring visions but grow discouraged when they don't come about shortly after we see them. It seems it may take a generation for a new paradigm to get concretized on Earth. We imagine that a new idea will become viral but more than likely, the "meta-stability" of the old ways will only gradually let go.

That is why having Faith, Holding the Vision, keeping your intention pure and protected in your heart, and having patience, persistence, and co-operating with the natural growth in the time cycles, is what we come to accept and understand. Thy will not mine be done.

Institutions, governments, cultures, our schools, our School, all of these exist within the flow of the natural order of time. They too pass through periods of growth, then abundance and harvest, then a drawing back, and even what seems on the surface to be quiet and sleep. Any thing expressed as a Field in our world of polarity must oscillate through activity and bloom, followed by rest and the falling away of faded leaves.

Be still and listen for the small voice. Old paradigms may yet come born again in new Spring raiment, freshly re-stated, full of rising spirit. "The Spirit breathes where he will, and you hear his voice, but you do not know from where he comes and where he goes; thus is everyone who is born from The Spirit." John 3:8 (*Aramaic Bible in Plain English* (©2010))

We have all seen those old cartoons, perhaps in the Saturday Evening Post, of Old Man Year, often with the Saturnian sickle ("cycle?!") of Time; at his feet is the young babe of the New Cycle, the New Year. You can just hear the old one as he tsks tsks: "you young whippersnappers have no idea how it's done. How it's always been done. What do you know about anything?" And we grant him his stubborn moment of reminiscence. He has done well, he has persisted, he has carried the torch of Time to this moment. Let him retire from the Field in honor. For we know that tomorrow he will be gone, and the Zeitgeist will lift up the young one, and new flowers not seen before will sprout up carrying on, supported in the arms of our Loving Mother who birthed and carried us all through our infancies.

So many things have grown old and crabbed, and need to fade into compost for the new growth. Let us trust the Power-to-be-conscious, which has carried us to this point up through the Ages. If we have no faith in That, then what have we learned?

- Jim Woolsey 2011





Growth Emerging

In thinking about the theme that was discussed for this year's Christmas Newsletter, 'growth emerging from the darkness of winter (perhaps expressed by the sun moving northward)', I was reminded of the many cycles we observe around us in the natural world. We see it when we watch the insects, the animals, the plants and trees. We see it when we look out at the sun and moon and stars, in the passages of days and months and seasons. In the constant dynamic changing we become aware of, we may discover that parts of that process that we have come to label death are only a bridge to another growth, the seeds of a new beginning.

I remember when I was in my early twenties I found my first book that started to provide explanations for some of the questions I was beginning to have. It was a little book by Kahlil Gibran called The Prophet. On the eve of his departure after many years of residence in a foreign land, the prophet spoke to the assembled multitude, responding to various questions. The following is his response to one of those questions that I thought might be of interest.

Then Almitra spoke, saying, We would ask now of Death.

And he said:

You would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?

The owl whom night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring.

Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.

Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honour.

Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king?

Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?

For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?

And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

Sometimes we may gain inspiration from 'the prophet', and other times we may turn within to... Be Still and Know. May peace and wisdom be with you in this new year.

— *Bill Coffman* 2011



FIRST MISSAL --- SECOND MISSAL

As the sun moves northward
We watch the stars at night
Tho' names have changed through ages
The progression has not

Personified and anthropomorph'd
Seen through cultural influence
Through lenses or addled eyes
Named and objectified
To put them on familiar terms

They, uncaring, remain the same
Timekeepers, markers of seasonal change
An intimation of infinity
Regardless of the names

Abandon veils of knowledge
And preposterous bona fides
Find courage, accept knowing
Beyond all understanding

Seemingly separated
We share this insecurity
Be content with that

Out in the darkness
Until the sun returns

Ah, culture. Marvelous what we have accumulated! Habits that define us as a tribe, a people, a nation, a race, are given to us by the murmurs of our mothers and smiles of our fathers. Our grandmothers told us stories with morals woven in. The songs we sang reinforced the patter with rhymes and sweet music forever embedded in our daily lives.

As wonderful as this sounds, I have been in places where people in the next valley were considered inferior, where people on the other side of a river were hated, where people shot each other because the one thought their neighbors were "gospodim;" unfairly taking on gentlemanly airs. I have sat and listened to music that another culture considered an abomination... the high art of one ridiculed as a grotesque comedy.

But we are only seemingly separated by these cultural barriers; all of us being human, sharing the same set of organs and blood types. What shall be the catalyst that dispels violent disapproval of another's norm?

While I was teaching English in Sweden the students despaired of being engulfed by this international language, and were afraid of their cultural fabric disappearing. India created Bollywood to prevent the new format (television instead of puppet shows) medieval Christian morality tales of "I Love Lucy" from invading their Vedic cultural domain. China is truly afraid of semantic innuendos that are impossible to filter out of internet traffic.

Perfect nonviolence is a myth like zero waste but is a goal worth moving towards. Learning to keep anger under control requires practice... persistence, and many small steps are necessary. Social change is the same, requiring a degree of physical commitment, not simply a nod of the head. This social change issue, once the domain of intellectuals, has now become global. Who will lead is so non-possible in this new age of conflicted paradigms. What will lead us?

Ideas and not a persona. A person to lead us was the idea of the last ages, the last two thousand years and more, when people were tribal and could only visualize order coming from a single person. Now that we have seen the Arab Spring, we realize that regardless of the theology, the as yet imperfect matrix of democracy is being willingly shared by humanity.

Give thanks and have faith.

- Dan Hathaway 2011

Cycles of Life

I thought this excerpt from Earth Prayers: 365 Prayers, Poems and Invocations for Honoring the Earth was very apropos in carrying out the theme of this year's holiday newsletter.

“Spring, summer, autumn, winter—birth, growth, fading, death—the cycles of life turn, and we turn with them. Ideas are born, projects are consummated, plans prove impractical and die. We fall in love, we suffer loss, we give birth, we grow old. We are renewed, we are reborn, even as we decay and die. Our psychic energies are renewed in their deepest sources by this participation in the cycles of change within the natural world.

When we are aware of the earth's processes, seeing ourselves as parts of a whole, we learn to let go of the need to control life. We are reminded to accept the inevitable cycles of green and dry, birth and death, cold and warm, emptiness and fullness, light and dark, that characterize the events and activities of our daily life.

Just as the spring has been celebrated for tens of thousands of years as the point of fertility, as a time when nature displays its beauty to bring about the conception of new life, so too our own life has its birthing seasons. With the summer solstice we feel the maximum power of the sun as it gives its fullest offering to our part of the earth. The time of rigorous outward manifestation is here. Everywhere are the energies of doing. The garden image of summer applies to whatever we undertake, if we continue to give them our energies—sun, water care, love—our dreams will grow and prosper. If we do not continue to nourish our dreams, they may wilt and perish.

Inevitably in every life there comes a time of waiting. In the fields the grain is ripe but not yet harvested. We have worked hard to bring things to fruition, but reward is not yet certain. The days shorten. We remember that to harvest we must sacrifice the warmth and light of summer and pass into autumn. This is the time of harvest, of thanksgiving and of leave taking. Life appears to decline. The season of barrenness is upon us. Yet we give thanks for that which we have reaped and gathered. The end of a cycle has come. We enter our resting season.

*It is our quiet time
We do not speak, because the voices are within us.
It is our quiet time.
We do not walk because the earth is all within us.
It is our quiet time.....*

Nancy Wood

May the earth always speak to your spirit.”

- Jane Murray 2011



A Candle

Near the beginning of a guided tour through Lehman Caves, the park ranger turns off the lights for a short time. The darkness is absolute. You literally cannot see your hand in front of your face. Then the ranger lights a candle to demonstrate what the early cave visitors saw as they explored the cave passages.

The light in the darkness can be many things—a candle when the electricity goes out, a lighthouse on a rocky coast, the arrival of a friend at a difficult time, the embrace of a loved one, a decision, which, once taken, clarifies and simplifies an overwhelming situation....

One of the quotes on my refrigerator—source unknown—is “It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.” It reminds me that I have a choice in dealing with challenges in my life, and that positive action, no matter how small, can have far-reaching and powerful effects.

The relief and comfort of a single candle is out of all proportion to its tiny flame.

- Susan Wetmore 2011



Special Quotes

What I've got this year are a few special quotes that came my way!

You are here to "be" something, not "do" something. The soul cares only about what you're being.
- Neale D Walsh

Remember that you are unique. If that is not fulfilled, then something wonderful has been lost.
- Martha Graham

Learning to perceive the world energetically helps to free you from one of the most daunting obstacles: judgment. – Anon

If you're "branding" your religious institution and marketing it, at what point have you just become yet another product for sale? – Anon

You could fill the airwaves and the web with words of wisdom, but only those ready to hear will hear. Too little info is not the problem. – Anon

'Sacred' is a mood without which relationships to all and everything inside and outside will have no depth, meaning, or benefit for us.
– Esoteric Work Group

People spend lifetimes seeking that which they already have. – Anon

Never confuse making a living with having a life. – Anon

Don't pursue goals that are easily achieved. Pursue what you can just barely achieve through your greatest efforts.
-Albert Einstein

Even when the obstacle of myself seems endlessly insurmountable, I continue. - Carla Needleman

- brother gregory 2011

REJOICE ALWAYS

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! – Philippians 4:4

Looking around us today at the social scene in our society and observing the increasing turbulence in world governments, financial systems, religious and educational organizations, it is easy to become pessimistic about the future. As evidence of the breakdown in the old paradigm accumulates, and if we have developed dependency through identity with these institutions and forms, much 'inner' turmoil is created as our values are constantly challenged by change. As students of SNO, how do we find something to cling to, to guide us each day in our practice of self-development?

"The disciple stands unshaken on the battlefield of his nature, in the midst of the turmoil of life, and resolutely effects the transmutation within himself. The feeling within him, the agony of emotion which an intense situation in human life has called into existence, can be changed into power, and used to a great end. The highest motive he can see or reach to must be his guide, that and none other; the most selfless action possible must be the one of his choice." – Mabel Collins, "When the Sun Moves Northward"

Some of us may find ourselves hoping that some of our cherished traditions and supporting Aristotelian institutions might somehow survive the present transition period between two great cycles, each with quite different motivating forces. At the same time, we know as students who are developing orientation to the Mind level of the "energy world" that we will suffer great disappointment if we put our faith in first order abstractions (our own private world) or in the private worlds of any other person, no matter how sincere or well-meaning these individuals might be.

"The disciple...has entered upon that place where there are footprints solid as though cut in rock, because through the ages and before Time was, each one who has entered upon the great path has of necessity stepped in the prints of the feet of the one who has gone before him. The steps of all are identical...Only this higher self of man, in its full consciousness, can realize the intense reality and solidity of spiritual life; how brilliant the light of the spiritual sun, how firm that which is beneath the footsteps of the one who can walk..." – ibid.

We are living in a time of accelerated changes, which we cannot avoid, and are being precipitated into situations that most of us would not have willingly created or agreed to. Can we take this situation and make it a blessing? Can we grasp the many opportunities to change our former attitudes towards everything that is presented to us on a daily basis? This is the great challenge for every sincere student of SNO, as it is indeed a blessing to be in a situation where our growth and development will be significantly speeded up if we can handle our opportunities correctly.

"The mystic and occult ritual is exemplified and fulfilled in the daily life of the world – the very purpose of this daily life being the awakening and purifying of the spirit of man, which is only possible through the heart and its emotions. " – ibid.

Doctor John Gozzi recommended that we handle these ongoing challenges and situations as class work in self-regulation, in self-organization and self-discipline. Can we really "give freedom to each one, and then take our own freedom?" If we have the courage to do so, we can count our daily opportunities as practice sessions and move ever forward on our journey, finding hope and joy in each success, in each challenge met without flinching or drawing back. This is the overwhelming beauty of the Roadmap Vitvan left for us students– if we just keep following in the footsteps of the ones who have gone before us on the path, we cannot possibly lose our way.

"Oh, sleeping souls that go blindly on to death, be warned and awake! There is no death for those that live love. See then, that you open your hearts and let the green leaves of spring burst forth within them, making new life for those who look upon the miracle taking place within you. Those to whom your tenderness is given will taste the sweetness of divine life, will witness the majesty of resurrection, will themselves become aware of the power of the unseen..." – ibid.

- Karyn Weese 2011



Our Choice

Long ago when we lived in caves and grazed our animals on available grasses the changing of the seasons was very important to us. Today in our modern world full of electrically powered lights and gadgets, we tend to pay less attention to those changes. Still, on 'inner' levels as well as in our objectively observable world, those changes occur. As students of the wisdom teachings, the changing seasons can be more important than we realize. In Mabel Collins' book, When the Sun Moves Northward, she describes a series of important rituals that take place on the 'inner' levels during the season of the winter solstice on an annual basis. While we may participate in those rituals when we are out of our bodies during sleep, we may not bring back memories, or even feelings, of what goes on during that time. Even if we can only accept on faith that such events happen (or not accept it as fact at all), we can utilize the heightened frequencies of this season to enhance our work with our self-development process. If we choose to do so, we can attune to the frequencies of the planetary rhythms and allow those heightened vibrations to enhance our efforts. We can make space in our lives to spend more time just getting acquainted with our inner feelings and promoting the awareness of finer, higher frequencies that lead to greater self-awareness.

We have a mantra that some of us say almost daily that contains these words: "May the Blessed Ones lead us from darkness into Light." What is that darkness? According to Vitvan, it is being limited to sense-faculty awareness. And Light, according to his teachings, is higher level wave-frequencies that we can contact as we refine our ability to register them. The ability to live in those higher frequencies will help us overcome the limitations and tribulations of 'physical' existence.

How difficult is it to learn to function on those higher levels? Vitvan liked to quote the words of an old Christian hymn to answer that question: "My yoke is easy, my burden is light, I've found it so, I've found it so . . ." While we may be aware that this is so, we continue to live lives of suffering and concern. Why? I believe it is only a matter of choice. We fall into the routines of our day to day existence and forget that we can choose a different way of looking at the world. Day by day, or even moment by moment, we can choose where to focus our attention—if we just remember to do it. There is only one world, whether we focus on its 'outer' or 'inner' aspects. So at any given instant we can shift our mental focus to the realization that this world and all that we deal with in it is an energy system. We are integrated in it and our choices determine our outcomes. Notice in the mantra, we entreat the Blessed Ones to *lead us*. No force or Being gets behind us to *push*. We are led. And to be led we have to follow—our choice.

So as I wish you a Merry Christmas I also wish for us all a New Year filled with making the choices that will lead us "from darkness into Light."

— Marj Coffman 2011





The Great Life

Excerpted from the preface of the book Susila Budhi Dharma by Muhammad Subuh, as rendered from his original poem in High Javanese into Bahasa Indonesia, and translated into English by the Subud Committee for Great Britain.

.... no man, for all his strivings of his heart and his mind, can understand or comprehend the Nature and the Power of God. This is why not a few people, seeking by their own efforts to find a way to enter into contact with the Great Life, are always stranded on the path, or, even if not, their spiritual strivings can only lead them unconsciously into byways where they meet only with shadows and fantasies begotten of their own desires and speculations.

The man who seeks to achieve a form of worship which will enable him to touch the Great Life is well-advised to stop the arising in him of imagination and thinking. Under such conditions he can really deprive his passions of their force and humble his human science and human wisdom: the meaning of which is that he, as a man, submits and surrenders himself with complete sincerity before God who rules within him.

This is nothing really new, for in ancient times men used to follow this path and so meet with a contact which could be experienced within. What then is the reason why, since the conditions of our present age are not comparable to those of former times, there are not so many people now who can receive this contact? The reason for this is that mankind is faced with conditions of life upon earth that change from generation to generation and many are easily influenced and affected by these ever-changing conditions. This has been most markedly the case since the intellectual powers of man have become dominant and made great progress in the realm of science. This has opened a path which leads rather into the realm of thought than into one where the feelings can be at peace. In consequence, mankind has eventually become dominated by thought to the exclusion of inner sensitivity or awareness of individuality. Finally, all of this has led to a condition in which there is incessant activity of heart and brain and so the conditions for the arising of inner peace scarcely exist at all.

Certainly it is necessary that men should think. Thought is an important instrument that serves man to acquire what he needs in his life here on earth, and to organise his existence here. But thought is useless for the purpose of attaining spiritual consciousness in order to restore contact with the Great Life which can be attained only if he will abandon both thoughts and imagination.

In this way, and only in this way, may he be able to receive a contact that is beyond his comprehension and later is experienced as the entry of a force or vibration that is actually felt as present within oneself. It must be evident that the only way to attain contact with the Great Life or with the Power of God can never be other than by the complete and sincere surrender of self....

- David Cochrane 2011



Dancing in the Light

A few words that keep me inspired and dancing in the Light. Blessed Love and Sweetness from my Heart to yours.
xoxo Laura

"the essence of this moment cannot be acquired because it is the only thing that's going on. that's why seeing it is called realization. you are realizing what always is, always was and always will be."

"when we wake up from our story, and we start to realize what truth is, we recognize that truth is not an abstraction. it is not out there at a distance from you and it is not something to learn tomorrow. you discover that truth is who you are without your story or script right now."

**dharma talks of Adyashanti*

"the path of the disciple is a thorny one; briars beset his every step, and difficulties meet him at every turn. yet in the treading of the path, in the overcoming of difficulties, and in a single-hearted adherence to the good of the group, with a proportionate attention to the individuals and their evolutionary development, comes at length fruition, and the attainment of the goal. a server of the race stands forth."

"at the centre of all love i stand, and naught can touch me here, and from this centre i shall go forth to love and serve."

**the tibetan master, Djwhal Khul*

"the love, reward, gratitude, justice, mercy or kindness that we let flow out from us is the only love, justice, mercy, kindness or gratitude that can *ever* flow back to us."

**leave your nets, Joel S. Goldsmith*

- Laura Rankin 2011



From Galaxies to Cells

I have always enjoyed the turning of the seasons and am grateful that I have most often lived where the four seasons are well defined. I love the aliveness of spring and summer and the bustle of fall activities as we get ready for winter. When winter arrives, I really appreciate the literal and figurative quiet and stillness. The obvious annual cycle of birth, growth, death, and rebirth is a constant reminder to me of the many other cycles, large and small, in which we are enmeshed.

If we accept that our objective world is filled with examples of "as above, so below," then the winter solstice is an especially significant one to track down. For every example of birth and growth that we can point to, there has been the preceding death of something else. On the grand scale, we can see fascinating pictures from the Hubble telescope of the death and birth of stars and galaxies. Closer to home, the chickens quit laying eggs, pausing to gather strength to raise new chicks in the increasing light of spring. We can see the death of the leaves on the trees, knowing that the rebirth of green leaves on those same branches is lurking, sleeping, waiting for the next vibrant springtime. Even in spring and summer, we can see that the seeds in the soil must die, that a plant may grow. In fall, we see that the annual plant must die that the seeds may be born.

Closer still, we might remember that our 'body' replaces every cell frequently. Every day we shed dead and dying cells until nearly every cell has been replaced within a year. What does this mean to us as we grow in understanding? I think it means that while we observe the death of skin cells or cells in the digestive track, or the death of cells of the eyes, ears, or mouth, or any other part of the 'body', we have the opportunity to participate in the rebirth of cells, the new cells that will soon replace those old worn out cells, with our meditations.

Death and rebirth, death and rebirth. The process goes on around and in us constantly. How exciting it is to be able to observe the process and to be involved in it!

- Lynne Hoffman 2011