

LAW OF SACRIFICE

By Patsy Newman

On September 11 Todd Beamer presented a new call to action for all humanity when he uttered the following words: "Let's roll!" So saying, he led the group effort that resulted in the defeat of the airline hijackers' purpose by downing the plane in Pennsylvania. The heroic events of that day have left us with much to think about with regard to the meaning of sacrifice, so in the light of those events it seems apropos to examine the Law of Sacrifice in more depth.

We learn from esoteric writings that the Law of Sacrifice underlies our system and all systems upon which all universes are built. All great religions of the world have declared that the universe begins by an act of sacrifice and have incorporated the idea of sacrifice into their most solemn rituals. The Law of Sacrifice might more truly be called the Law of Manifestation, or the Law of Love and Life, for throughout the universe it is the cause of all manifestation and life. The Law of Sacrifice points to something in the very nature of God, for it is by the One Existence conditioning Itself and allowing Itself to be Self-limited that manifestation itself is possible. Such self-limitation and manifestation can only be a supreme act of sacrifice, and thus the Law of Sacrifice is both the law of being and the law of derived lives; Spirit within and limitation, or Matter, without.

From Annie Besant we learn in *Esoteric Christianity*:

This sacrifice is perpetual, for in every form in this universe of infinite diversity this life is enfolded, and is its very heart, the 'Heart of Silence' of the Egyptian ritual, the 'Hidden God.' This sacrifice is the secret of evolution. The Divine Life, cabined within a form, ever presses outwards in order that the form may expand, but presses gently, lest the form should break ere yet it had reached its utmost limit of expansion. With infinite patience and tact and discretion, the divine One keeps up the constant pressure that expands, without losing a force that would disrupt. In every form, in mineral, in vegetable, in animal, in man, this expansive energy of the Logos is ceaselessly working. That is the evolutionary force, the lifting life within the forms, the rising energy that science glimpses, but knows not whence it comes. The botanist tells of an energy within the plant that pulls ever upwards. Just as it is in plant life, so is it in other forms as well, making them more and more expressive of life within them. When the limit of any form is reached, and it can grow no further, so that nothing more can be gained through it by the soul of it - that germ of Himself, which the Logos is brooding over - then He draws away his energy, and the form disintegrates - we call it death and decay. But the soul is with Him, and He shapes for it a new form, and the death of the form is the birth of the soul into fuller life...Through that perpetual sacrifice of the Logos all lives exist; it is the life by which the universe is ever becoming. This life is One, but it embodies itself in myriad forms, ever drawing them together and gently overcoming their resistance. Thus it is an At-one-ment, a unifying force, by which the separated lives are gradually made conscious of their unity, laboring to develop in each a self-consciousness, which shall at last know itself to be one with all others, and its root One and divine.

This continued and perpetual outpouring of Life itself is directed by Love, a voluntary and glad outpouring of Self for the making of other Selves. This is "the joy of the Lord" spoken of in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 25, into which the faithful servant enters because he has fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, ministered to the sick, welcomed the stranger

and visited the imprisoned. To the Spirit of God, it is a joy to give, and the more that is given the more there is growth. The life of God is increased by the pouring forth of Itself, not by drawing from without. Thus the Joy of the Lord is derived from giving, not from taking. Sacrifice, then, is a thing of joy.

Humankind has feared sacrifice because it has feared suffering, pain and loss with regard to the form in which it is embodied. While the life of Life is in giving, the life of the form is in taking. For life in form to continue it must continually draw from outside itself that which it needs to be sustained. For this reason, as consciousness identifies itself with form, sacrifice takes on a painful aspect. To give, to surrender, to lose what one has gained becomes a threat to persistence of the form, and the Law of Sacrifice becomes a law of pain instead of joy.

The big lesson for humanity to learn has been to identify less with the changing form life, and identify more and more with the persistent inner life of the Spirit. This lesson has become an expression of evolution itself, with human beings first learning to sacrifice a portion of their material prosperity for charity toward their fellow beings and an offering of love to the Deity. Next came the concept of giving up things that we crave in this world for the sake of a distant unseen world to come.

When the separated self comes to understand itself as a part of a greater life, we become willing to sacrifice ourselves for the good of the whole. We become strong enough to subordinate the self, the part, the fragment of the totality of life. Finally, the hero-soul realizes that there is in reality no separation at all, but one pervading Life. We learn the joy of sacrifice, for as we joyfully pour ourself forth as part of Life Universal, we truly understand that all Life is One, and that nothing has been lost. Life thus won is won for all.