

VISVA-BHARATI

PRESIDENT : RABINDRANATH TAGORE



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"To approach the West from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia."

"To seek to realise in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres."

"And with such ideals in view to provide at Santiniketan aforesaid a centre of Culture where research into and study of the religion, literature, history, science and art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina, Islamic, Sikh, Christian, and other civilisations may be pursued along with the culture of the West, with that simplicity in externals which is necessary for true spiritual realisation, in amity, good fellowship and co-operation between the thinkers and scholars of both Eastern and Western countries, free from all antagonisms of race, nationality, creed or caste and in the name of the One Supreme Being who is Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam."

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BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY.



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IN religion as well as in politics India is at the cross-roads. To be sure this might be said of nearly all civilized lands, but it is true of India in peculiar degree. The Indians are perhaps the most deeply religious people in the world: but a visit to Kalighat or Puri or the Golden Temple of Benares will make most sympathetic observers feel that the orthodox Hindu deserves a better religion than he possesses. This is not intended as a criticism of the better forms of Hinduism. Enlightened Hinduism, such as one finds in the spirit of the Upanishads, in religious Vedantism, in the Ramakrishna movement, in the Brahma Somaj, is a very noble thing. The philosophy back of Hinduism is in no peculiar danger before the attacks of the critical spirit of our times; but its popular forms, its outgrown social taboos, its many superstitions can hardly stand before the growing enlightenment of our century for more than a very few generations.

Islam, the other great religion of India, is in a position almost the reverse of that in which Hinduism finds itself. Its form of worship is notably purer from superstition, less open to the attacks of rationalism than is the worship one finds in Hindu temples. Its philosophy, however, particularly its basal and absolute confidence in the plenary inspiration of the Koran, will hardly be able to resist for many generations the advance of the modern critical spirit. When this basal dogma of the absolute authority of the Koran breaks down, what will happen? I do not think that either Hinduism or Islam will be or should be destroyed. But it is plain to me that both will have to undergo considerable modification if they are to survive, and equally plain that for the good of India, each ought to be considerably modified.

Will this modification be of a purely negative and naturalistic sort, or will it be in part a truly religious rejuvenation? It was a

fortunate thing that in the Christendom of the 16th Century, Roman Catholicism found a stimulant not only in the rise of natural Science, but in the rivalry of Protestantism: for out of this rivalry arose not a sceptical but a spiritually revised Catholicism. Would not a similar impetus be a blessing to the religions of India to-day? And one may ask further, are there not many religious and earnest souls in India whose spiritual development needs nourishment of a sort that neither Hinduism nor Muhammedanism are well adapted to give? In short, is not India both ready for, and in need of, a profound religious renaissance?

Now at this spiritually crucial moment, there stand at India's door two very noble religions, asking admission. One of them, indeed, has already succeeded in prying the door part way open. The other, though it was born in India, is still outside: but it is knocking at the door, and I find a feeling among many well-informed Indians that it is surely coming back. I refer, of course, to Christianity and Buddhism. What shall we say of them? Would it be well for India could they really enter; and what are the probabilities of their being accepted by the Indian mind? Are they adapted to the land and the people, and if they should get a solid footing would they bring with them a blessing, or merely increase the strife of tongues? It is therefore not as a purely theoretical question that I mean to consider in this paper what of value these two religions have to offer, and how far they are adapted to the Indian mind.

But before taking up our examination of Buddhism and Christianity, I want to say a word concerning the value to man of religion as such, or of religion at its best. No one can doubt that, as a historical fact, the actual religions have brought in their train many curses to the human race—superstition, conflict, mutual hatred, and blindness to many of life's values. These all, however, are the doing not of religion as such but of certain peculiar traits of particular religions, and though some of the evil influences referred to have been common enough, none of them are essential to religion. If now I am asked what I mean by religion as such I should answer very simply that I mean by it man's attitude toward

the Determiner of Destiny,—let him picture the Determiner how he will.

What then are the values which religion at its best may and does bring to man? I shall say nothing of the supernatural benefits which theology often promises, and confine myself to the purely human and verifiable values of religion. And these, though many, are, I think, to be included under three heads. First of all, religion enlarges the universe in which one habitually lives. It pushes back the horizon, it carries one to the top of a mountain and shows one kingdoms and ranges and seas of which in his purely secular life, one had no thought. It gives one cosmic vistas which the non-religious man never guesses.

Secondly, religion at its best aids its follower in the pursuit of the moral ideal. It does this in two ways. The great historical religions hold up before their worshippers lofty and definite ideals, and they also lend new strength and enthusiasm for the following of these ideals, partly through the authority of a great tradition, partly through the sense of cosmic sanction, partly through the inspiration that comes from the lives and examples of the Founders and Saints.

The third, and perhaps the greatest of the values that religion contributes to human life, is happiness. I am firmly convinced that genuinely religious people are the happiest people in the world. They give one the impression of being fore-armed against many of the attacks of outrageous Fortune, from which their non-religious fellows have no refuge. And further than that, they seem to possess a kind of positive happiness which their fellows do not know. This I believe is the result of the dual action of religion in unifying one's inner life and giving one a sense of the success and of the ultimate or eternal victory of one's larger purposes.

We come at length to a consideration of Buddhism and Christianity. I shall not attempt to give anything like a complete account of either of these religions, but in the case of Buddhism shall confine myself to making certain comments on the ethical teachings found

in Pali Buddhism, and on some of the more metaphysical doctrines of the Hinayana.

It is unfortunate that the teachings of Gotama are so commonly presented, especially by Western writers, as being essentially negative in their nature. The emphasis of the First Noble Truth upon the fact of sorrow has too often been extended to a universal pessimism; while through the insight of the Second Noble Truth, that sorrow springs from desire, the deduction has been made that all desire and purpose and effort is evil, and that the aim of all life should be pure negativity—with the uprooting of all human affections. There can be no doubt, one must admit, that this view of the Buddha's teaching has much to substantiate it in the Pali Canon. Says of the Dhamapada: "Let no man love anything: loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing and hate nothing have no fetters." The ideal commonly held up is that of the monk who has "cut all the ties," left home and family and productive activity, and "wanders alone like a rhinoceros."

This emphasis upon the avoidance of desire and its unpleasant consequences, however, is only one side of the Buddha's teaching. There is a positive as well, an emphasis upon compassion and earnest service and over-flowing love. This looms quite as large in the Buddha's teaching as do the negative commands, while if one turns from his teachings to his example, the negation and fear of life are quite lost in positive love and active helpfulness. The layman's virtues are repeatedly praised and the values of the common life of home and family amply recognized. The Buddha distinguishes between desires, points out the value of good ones and attacks only the evil ones. He sends his disciples throughout the land to preach his doctrine to all, and thus becomes himself the first foreign missionary. By both precept and example he teaches his followers that when they are reviled they should revile not again, that they earnestly cultivate an active good will to all sentient things, that they should love their enemies.

The seeming contradiction between the negative and positive sides of the Buddha's teaching is in part only a seeming one. That

there should be both negative and positive elements in any elaborate moral system is natural and even necessary: and the distinction which he draws between good and evil desires explains away much seeming contradiction. After all has been said, however, it must be admitted that there remains a very real conflict that can hardly be explained away. We shall find a similar contradiction on other matters in the Pali Canon. Evidence such as this points to contrary traditions or layers of tradition within the Canon as we have it to-day, which seem to indicate that the original teaching of the Founder was overlaid by subsequent accretions. When we consider the method by which his teachings were handed down to posterity. *viz.*, through the memories of a monastic society, the conclusion seems probable that it was the positive side of the ethical teachings now in the Canon which emanated directly from the Master, and that the negative and distinctly monkish emphasis of many passages was a later addition gradually superimposed upon the original core of the Buddhist tradition through the two centuries and more that elapsed between the Buddha's time and the fixing of the Canon under Asoka.

The Buddha in all his teaching appealed never to authority but always to reason and experience. No other of the Founders of religions was so distinctly intellectual and rationalistic. We may, therefore, fairly expect to find his ethical system to spring from a definite principle; nor is this principle hard to discover. It is, if I am not mistaken, the steady appeal to reason in the discrimination of values. The Buddha bids us look at the natural and probable consequences of different types of action, and choose accordingly. His ethics is distinctly not of the intuitionist sort, but makes a steady appeal to experience. The consequences of an act upon the welfare and lasting happiness of all those whom it in any way affects, these are the things by which it is to be called good or evil.

From this sketch of the Buddha's ethical teachings let us turn to an even more brief account of the cosmic or metaphysical side of his philosophy. Indeed an account of his philosophy should be very brief since it was his aim to have no philosophy at all. Re-

peatedly he refuses to commit himself on most of the metaphysical questions of his day. There is, however, one distinctly metaphysical question on which his followers, at any rate, have taken a definite position, namely, the question of the self. For the Buddhist Church, if I may use this expression, *i.e.*, the Buddhist Monastic order, has from early times taught officially and definitely that there is no self. The Brahmanic conception of an *atman*, we are told, is entirely mistaken. The whole *substantial* view of man's inner being, common both to all the Hindu philosophies and to all the Aristotelian philosophies, should give way to a purely phenomenalist view. Man consists of the five Khandas—the body, feeling, sense perception, sub-conscious tendencies, and cognition; beside these there is no active agent, no chooser and actor, no subject, no self.

Did this view, this "Anatta doctrine," originate with the Buddha, and did he teach and believe it? I have examined the four Nikayas with care to discover the answer to this question, and I find the evidence contradictory—a fact which suggests, once more, a double tradition within the Canon. The overwhelming majority of the passages, however, in which the Buddha is depicted as dealing with the question of the self, aim at showing that the self is not to be identified with the Khandas; and the argument usually employed by the Buddha in favour of his conclusion is the fact that the Khandas are impermanent and are centres of pain. From this form of argument the fair conclusion would seem to be that, in the Buddha's opinion, the self was something different from the Khandas, that it is real, that it is eternal, and that it is not a centre of pain. In fact, if we take into consideration his repeated reference to transmigration and personal moral responsibility, it becomes almost impossible to conceive of him as maintaining the Anatta doctrine. For the whole point of rebirth and responsibility lies in the identity of the person who dies and of him who is reborn, of the person who sins and of him who reaps the fruit of sins.

If I am right in supposing that the Buddha did not accept Anatta, this will have a decisive bearing on the question what he thought of the Arahant's condition after the death of his last body.

For if Anatta be true, then " Parinirvana " is absolute non-reality: nothing at all would be left of the Arahant. Whereas if the self is real and (unlike the Khandas) is essentially eternal, Parinirvana, though very different indeed from the personal immortality of Christianity and Islam, would be decidedly real. To me, therefore, it seems plain that the Buddha held the two following views concerning the state of the Arahant after his last death: (1) It is a very real state, very different from non-existence, (2) it differs also from what is commonly known as personal immortality: for in it the eternal self is no more connected with changing things and the impermanent world.

What were the Buddha's views about God? In the first place we must remember that he recognized and probably believed in the many *devas* of the Hinduism of his day. But these *devas* were hardly gods in any significant sense. They were merely finite spiritual beings, much like ourselves, and bound like ourselves on the " sorrowful, weary wheel " of rebirth. They are powerless to help us in any real way, and prayer to them is nonsense. Such beings can hardly be called gods. But did the Buddha believe in a divine Absolute—in an infinite Spirit resembling the Brahman of the Upanishads? There is no decisive evidence in the Buddhist Canon either for or against this view. The existence of such a Being the Buddha probably regarded as one of those purely theoretical questions the discussion of which he deprecated. Doubtless he had his own opinions on the subject, but these he consistently kept to himself.

If the teaching of the Buddha be atheistic or at least thoroughly agnostic, are we still justified in considering Buddhism a religion? I think we are. For religion, in our sense, does not necessarily demand belief in " God " : it is simply an attitude toward the Determination of Destiny: And this Buddhism certainly is. It has its cosmic as well as its ethical side. For the ultimate Determiner of Destiny is the Law of Karma. The universe, for the Buddha and his followers, is supernaturally moral. The laws of physics and of chemistry are not, for him, the ultimate rulers of the world.

They are but provisional. In the long last they must obey the Moral Law. The moral, rather than the physical, nature of one's act is what determines its consequences. The Law of Karma thus offers a substitute for God sufficient to justify us in calling Buddhism a religion.

Is it a substitute that is sufficient to supply the worshipper with all the things that God does for his worshippers? That is a different question. Certainly it does not hear and answer prayer, and (what is more important in India) it consistently leaves no room for any significant form of the mystical experience.

In this brief review of the Buddha's teachings I have, of course, left out a number of important matters. I have singled out for our consideration those points which seem to have most bearing on the question of the return of Buddhism to India. And now, before we go on to a consideration of Christianity, let us take stock of our analysis and ask ourselves whether it is probable and whether it is desirable that India or that individual Indians in any large numbers, should go back to the teachings of India's greatest son. And to be brief, it seems to me very desirable indeed that India should accept the moral teachings of the Buddha provided they are put in the positive fashion in which he first put them. His doctrine of universal love and good will and energetic helpfulness is needed not only by India but by every land and every age. But the negative emphasis one finds in much of the Buddhist Canon as it exists to-day, the praise of the monastic life, the fear of sorrow, the fleeing from the world, the suspicions cast upon many of the simple and natural values of life, the ideal of the anchorite who leaves wife and children to shift for himself and " wanders alone like a rhinoceros,"—this ideal and this teaching are not needed. India has already more than enough " holy men " of a certain sort.

If, on the more theoretical side, the Buddhism that is to be introduced is to mean the Anatta doctrine, I doubt whether it will find or deserve readmission to the land of its birth. For there is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that the Anatta doctrine taken literally is equivalent to the most extreme materialism, and carries

with it the most extreme pessimism. Man, according to it, consists of nothing but his bodily and mental states. And the Buddhist books leave us in no doubt as to the nature of these. Over and over the body is described in most loathsome terms: while the mental Khandas and the stream of consciousness are the very type of transiency, which to the Buddhist is synonymous with all that is wretched. This purely superficial stream of miserable bodily and mental states is all there is to man,—to man the highest being that we know. There is no thinking subject, no chooser and actor beneath, no free agent, no responsible moral being. What better, indeed, could we wish then that such a creature should be put out of his misery with the complete extinction that Anatta Buddhism promises its noblest products?

If Buddhism clings to Anatta I cannot feel much enthusiasm over its reintroduction into India: nor do I think it likely that such a doctrine will make appeal to the deeply spiritual people whose greatest books are the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Hinduism has taken on many forms: it has taught various and contradictory things about God and the World: but with almost complete unanimity its many schools have unwaveringly taught the reality and the eternal nature of the self.

But if I am right, the Buddha himself never taught the Anatta doctrine nor did he put his chief emphasis on the negative and monastic side of ethics. If the pure teaching of Gotama, with its recognition of a real self and its repeated stress upon overflowing love and efficient service can be brought back to the land of its birth it will bring a message which India needs.

Even the full and pure teaching of the Founder, however, will be deficient in one element which the Indian nature demands, namely, a metaphysical background and a place for mysticism. The Buddhism of Gotama is ethically lofty and cosmically impoverished. Fortunately this lack in the original and the Hinayana Buddhism is supplied in Mahayana Buddhism. I have not here the space needed to expound the metaphysics of the Mahayana. Suffice it to say that developing along lines somewhat parallel to the Vedanta, it built up at length a form of mystical idealistic monism, resembling

somewhat German and English Hegelianism, and perhaps still more the Advaita of Sankara. It hardly needs saying that such a philosophy might find a ready welcome in India. In some ways it might be more adapted to India's needs than the Vedanta itself, for while it gives to the Eternal Buddha a position very like that of Brahman in the Advaita, there is a moral connotation hovering about the Buddha's name, together with an aroma of personal inspiration, which the abstract Nirguna Brahman can never possess.

From this brief survey of Buddhism and its possible value for India, let us turn to an even briefer evaluation of Christianity. Like other great religions, Christianity is not a collection of doctrines but a stream of spiritual life. Its unity and identity are not that of a creed or an atom but that of a living organism. This is expressed in its continuous life and in certain ways of thinking and feeling and acting that are characteristic of it through the ages. But though the ways of feeling and acting are just as essential to it as are its teachings or ways of thinking, for the purposes of this paper—and in the interests of brevity—we must here confine ourselves to the more intellectual side of the Christian life. In dealing with Christianity, therefore, I shall limit myself (as I did in the case of Buddhism) very largely to a discussion of its teachings. And in doing so, let me separate its orthodox and official theology from what I shall call its philosophy.

Christianity has had a long intellectual development, and in the course of its 2000 years has produced a considerable number of creeds and official theologies. Naturally I shall not attempt even to give an outline of these various doctrines. But I must write a few words about the central conceptions of the Christian theology which dominated the nineteenth century and which gave the impetus to the foreign missionary movement. The outlines of this creed are known to most readers of this article:—the creation of the world by a personal God whose nature combined justice and love: the endowing of man with a free will, through the possession of which he sinned: the demand of infinite justice that this offence against an infinitely good Being should pay an infinite penalty: the suffering

felt by the loving God at this thought and His determination to satisfy both love and justice by sending his own Son to suffer in place of sinful man: the education of a Chosen People to prepare the way for His coming, the Descent of God's Son, in the fulness of time, to be born of a virgin, to teach and love and die upon the cross: the salvation from sin and punishment of all who believe in Him and accept Him: the necessity of accepting Him and therefore of hearing of Him as a condition of salvation: and, by logical consequence, the impossibility of salvation for those who do not accept Christ: and hence the need of Christian missions to all parts of the world.

Now there was a very noble aspect to this ancient Christian teaching:—the nature of God revealed through the highest human nature; love and justice at the heart of being: man free and responsible and immortal, made in the image of God and, therefore, capable of co-operating with God in the melioration of the world.

It need hardly be added that this theology, which inspired Christendom for so many centuries, has its obvious weaknesses. The picture that it draws of the universe must seem to the Indian almost laughably little and absurdly incredible. Its assertion of the infallibility of the Bible is refuted by the fact that certain sections of the Old Testament story are in contradiction with science, and that certain sections are in contradiction with themselves. So long as the literal inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures—or even of the Greek Scriptures—is made a part of Christian theology, no intelligent and unprejudiced person can take that theology seriously. Finally, the picture of God presented by it is morally intollerable. The vicareous suffering of Christ for man's sin does indeed make Christ an adorable figure: but it presents God as an insufferably unjust cosmic tyrant. Particularly appalling does the picture become when united with the view that Salvation is possible only through "accepting Christ." For from this it inevitably follows that all the "heathen" who have not heard of Christ are condemned to eternal punishment, or at any rate shut out from the presence of God.

For reasons such as I have indicated liberal Christians of our day have quite given up the old-fashioned, orthodox theology. It has cost a struggle and much mental agony. In Europe and America this struggle has lasted for over 50 years and we are just emerging from it. But though one will still find millions among the less educated who cling to the old theology, it is plain that the Liberals have won the day. It is not plain, however, just how much and what is left of Christianity. Many leading writers maintain that there are only two possible courses open for clear-minded thinkers: either to go back to the old theology, or to give up Christianity altogether and surrender to a thorough-going Naturalism. Thus a strange new alignment is to be seen, the orthodox Conservatives lining up with the heretical Radicals of the materialistic type against their common foe, the Liberals. If you give up the infallibility of the Bible, the belief in the virgin birth of Christ, the necessity of this belief for salvation, and all the consequences that naturally flow from these dogmas, what, we are asked, is left of Christianity?

Personally I think a good deal is left: in fact all that is or ever was of great importance. For I confess that I belong to that unpopular, old-fogey party, the Liberals. I believe with the Buddha in the Middle Way, and with Aristotle in the Golden Mean. I believe that after we have thrown aside the mythological conceptions which both the intellect and the conscience of our age find intolerable, all that was ever essential or very valuable in Christian thought still remains to us. And this residuum, I believe, is both philosophically sound and genuinely Christian. Let me, therefore, suggest briefly what seem to me the chief headings of what I might call a Christian philosophy, as distinguished from the theology which too long has identified itself with Christianity.

First as to the Bible, the so-called orthodox theology which I have outlined above is only in small part Biblical. Particularly the "plan of salvation" which has played so large a part in both Catholic and Evangelical Christianity has but slight Biblical foundation, and what it has is to be found in writings produced many years after the death of the Founder. The Bible itself is a very

human book—that is one of the splendid things about it: and the revelation which it gives is the story of the gradual development of the ideas of God and of goodness which grew up slowly through the centuries in the hearts and minds of a great people. This revelation had very crude beginnings and its early crudities are still preserved in the pages of the Old Testament: but it did not stop with them. Through meditation and life, through many bitter and many sweet experiences, through travail and suffering, especially in the lives and teachings of the great Hebrew Prophets, it steadily grew brighter and purer, until it attained its climax in Jesus of Nazareth. The Bible which gives us the story of this progressive revelation is a noble book but it is not the only noble nor the only inspired book: and its undoubted inspiration is of the same sort that one finds in the Upanishads.

Next let us consider the Christian concept of God. Christian philosophy of our day, as a matter, of course, cannot accept the anthropomorphic views of the book of Genesis. The God in whom it believes is not the Yahve of Exodus and Joshua and the rest of the earlier books in any other sense than this: that historically it grew out of the Old Testament Yahve. And yet Christianity still believes in a “personal” God. To determine with exactness how this personality should be defined is not possible. But Christianity believes that God is personal at least in the sense that He is a spiritual Being, that consciousness is at least one part or aspect of His nature, and that so far forth as He may be said to act at all, His acts and His influences have a tendency in certain directions rather than others. Doubtless His nature far transcends human personality, yet it must be at least as high as ours; and inasmuch as personality is the highest thing we know, it is a proper symbol for us to use in seeking to make the Divine Nature more real to our finite human minds.

Christianity still believes in God as the Creator, though not in the sense of Genesis. He is the source of all things and is thus the Father of all. He is what Mr. Gandhi presumably means by “Truth.” That is, He is the ultimate Reality from which all things

come. This being the case, every advance in science and philosophy is an advance for theology and religion, a deeper understanding of the Divine Nature. And furthermore, He is best revealed to us in the highest achievement of the universe with which we are acquainted, namely, in man, and especially in the greatest souls of whom we have knowledge. It is for this reason that liberal Christianity agrees with the old theology that God's nature is best revealed in men like Christ.

As to the nature of man, Christianity has a decided and a characteristic position. For Christianity is still the religion of individualism. I do not mean by this that it is anti-social—far from that—but I do mean that it stresses the reality and importance and responsibility of the human self. On this point Christianity is closer to Hinduism than it is to those forms of Buddhism which stress the Anatta doctrine: but it goes further than the Advaita Vedanta in that it refuses to merge the individual self either with other finite selves or in an Absolute Self. It is closer to Ramanuja than to Sankara. Historically Christianity has been so determined to preserve the reality of the individual, his freedom and his responsibility, that in both its Catholic, its Protestant, and its liberal forms it has been and still is rather on its guard against Pantheism. The self, it maintains, is a centre of spontaneity. It can and does begin things. Man was made in the image of God and is in his little way a creator. The world is new every moment. We are for ever sailing out on uncharted seas: and though we did not make the seas, each of us is at the helm of his own ship.

Farther than this, Christianity believes that man is immortal. The body dies; the self does not. I do not think that the Christian position on this subject is so secure as is that of Hinduism, for to the Hindu the self is *essentially* immortal, and its immortality stretches backward as well as forward. It is for this reason, in fact, that the belief in immortality is so much stronger in India than in Christendom. With this limitation, however, it may be said that Christianity shares with Hinduism its confidence in the endless life of the soul. One more thing about man must be added. In spite

of its opposition to Pantheism and its refusal to merge the individual in a World Soul, Christianity believes profoundly that the human and the Divine may commune. In Christian thought and experience there is a very real and large place for mysticism. God, says St. Augustine, is "the goal of our pilgrimage and our resting place by the way." He has made us for Himself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Him.

Christianity, like the Brahminism of the Upanishads and like both forms of Buddhism, means to be a religion of salvation. Many Christian teachers of little minds have failed to understand the kind of salvation that was held out by the Founder and that was intended by the great Christian teachers, such as St. Paul and the writer of the Fourth Gospel. For these little expositors salvation has meant going to Heaven when you die. For the great Christians it has meant the identification of one's little self with the larger self, the redirection of the will in such fashion as to identify it with the over-individual, the Divine Will, and thereby the enlarging and renewing and transforming of one's life. "I am come," said Jesus, "that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." "And this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God."

This thought would naturally lead us on to a consideration of the central point of all Christian teaching, its ethic. But in this place it was my purpose to consider only the more metaphysical side of Christian thought, and I shall postpone what I have to say of Christian Ethics to a later page.

I have tried to present the theoretical side of Christianity in both its narrower and its more liberal forms, just as I tried in earlier pages to present the two sides of Buddhism. And now I must ask concerning Christianity the same question that I formerly asked concerning Buddhism. Is it adapted to the Indian nature, is it the sort of thing from which India may well draw some elements of value?

To ask this question is to answer it. Plainly the old theology which Western Christendom is now growing out of with such diffi-

culty and such pain, has no place in India. Even if it could succeed in getting a foothold here, it would do so only to be outgrown in a generation or two. The noble and often heroic efforts of many earnest but misguided Christian missionaries to transplant into India a faith which is being rapidly rejected in Europe and America is a tragic waste of splendid energy and devotion. The more liberal form of Christian philosophy, on the other hand, can make and should make appeal to many an Indian. That God is in some high sense personal, that man is a free and responsible individual, these things India does not need to be taught as something new: but the form in which Christianity puts them may, I think, come as welcome reinforcement to these beliefs already held in the Indian mind. But the most important contribution Christianity can make to India is the figure of Jesus Christ. This contribution is already being received with deep appreciation. Through Mr. Gandhi and other Indian leaders like him, Christ is becoming a part of Hinduism. And at the risk of bathos let me add one more thing to my partial list of possible Christian contributions to India's religious life, by making use of a word which the East is weary of hearing and of which even the West is growing a little ashamed. I mean the word *efficiency*. Efficiency can be overdone. At its best it is a thing of secondary importance. None the less, kept in its proper place, it has its great value. The West has worked out methods of increased efficiency in economic matters, in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, business administration. In these matters everyone recognizes its importance. But even with the things of the spirit efficiency has its value. Notably should education be efficient: and this is as true of religious education as of other sorts. Helpfulness should be efficient: otherwise the great stores of human goodwill and compassion will evaporate in mere sentiment or emotion. Now I want to remind you of the real advantage which Christianity has for many years possessed because it has been able to conduct its religious education and administer the outpourings of its goodwill by methods of efficiency which it has learned in the West. It has spent much earnest thought on methods by which it can hand on its good tidings

and its noble ideals through groups of devoted men and women specially trained for their tasks, and it has learned to translate its good will into efficiently conducted institutions, into flood-relief, famine-relief, medical missions, and systematic business-like undertakings for the alleviation of human suffering and for the up-rooting of evil conditions from which much of human suffering springs. In short I believe that in its philosophy, in its Founder, and in its methods of applied goodwill, Christianity has something of undeniable value to bring to India, provided that, like its Founder, it "come not to destroy but to fulfill."

Perhaps a few words of more direct comparison between Buddhism and Christianity should be added to what I have written as a sort of summary before I close. And first of all let me speak of the ethical teaching of the two religions, because this was the chief interest of both the Founders and because in this they are in such striking harmony. So close, indeed, are they to each other in this matter that I shall not deal with them separately, but instead shall consider briefly what might be called their common doctrine. Both the Buddha and the Christ appeal to man's reason and his experience. Both of them, in dealing with moral matters, are supremely rational. Both make careful distinctions between higher and lower values, and justify or condemn human actions accordingly. For both, moreover, love and helpfulness is the supreme law. If we may read between the lines of their explicit teachings, moreover, both of them would seem to justify this love and service by the recognition that a normal man's real interests, the things that he loves, extend far beyond his own feelings and his own body, and include the interests of his family, his friends, and his community. Different people literally share the *same* interests, they have *common* purposes, they love the *same* causes. This being the case, the difference between the so-called selfish man and the so-called unselfish man is not that one of them loves himself and the other does not: for both love "themselves" in the same sense, and both love other objects beside "themselves" in the same sense. The difference between the two is that one of them loves a small self, and the other a large

self. A man's interests may, for the purpose of our discussion, be considered as falling into two groups, one made up of his body and its sensations, and his own private feelings, his pleasures and pains; the other composed of the more objective, more inclusive interests and causes which he loves, many of which he necessarily shares with other people. Now if we call the former of these groups the man's little self and the latter his larger self, we may say that the emphasis of both Buddhism and Christianity on love is in effect the exhortation to find one's dominant and guiding interests in the larger self, and to keep the smaller self in its proper subordinate position. This repression of the smaller for the sake of the larger self is the meaning of Christ's saying that "he who saveth his life shall lose it, and he who loseth his life shall find and save it." This is the significance of the Christian ideal of dying to live.

It is this point of view that rationally justifies the Buddhist and Christian doctrine of loving one's enemies. To love one's enemies is a difficult thing to do: but a truly great soul will be big enough to disregard even hatred toward one's little self, even wounds and death inflicted upon it, and will be able to *understand* the enemy and genuinely to wish him well. Once we have grasped this larger view of the Buddha and the Christ, we shall be able better to understand the *rationale* of their common principle of "non-violent resistance." No men have resisted evil more stoutly than they: but they knew enough of human nature to see that the least effective resistance is usually the use of violence. "If any man smite thee on the right cheek—turn to him the other also." "Hatred does not cease with hatred at any time; hatred ceases with love. This is an old rule."

Though this doctrine of loving your enemies and refusing to descend to violence is more positively and energetically expressed by Buddhism and Christianity than by any other religion, it is shared in both theory and practice by that third member of the great trio, the higher Hinduism. The three other great religions, Islam, Judaism, and Confucianism do not quite attain it, nor do they emphasize love and self-denying helpfulness in the way of Gotama and Jesus.

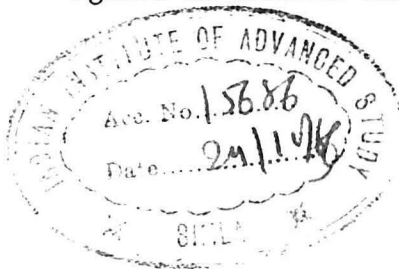
There are of course differences in detail between the ethical teachings of the two religions: but these are of such minor importance beside the great fundamental agreement that I shall not give to their consideration any of the little space that is left us. On metaphysical questions there is, as we have seen, no such close similarity between Buddhism and Christianity as subsists between their ethical principles, although on many important matters they are very close to each other. To put matters briefly, both Buddhism and Christianity are rather pessimistic about the world, and optimistic about the Universe as a whole. Both agree that the Universe is supremely moral. With the exception of certain forms of the Hinayana, both teach the immortality of at least a part of man. As to God, it may be said summarily, that Christianity is theistic, Hinayana agnostic, and Mahayana pantheistic. Towards personality there is a considerable contrast. The two Founders were in my opinion not so far apart as their followers, but the development of the Anatta doctrine in both the Hinayana and the Mahayana has made the Buddhist attitude toward individuality, personal responsibility, and real freedom quite different from that of Christianity. Buddhism is less dependent on historical facts than Christianity, is freer from authority, is more adaptable to changing and philosophical concepts, and on the whole is the most elastic of all the great religions, the most capable of adapting itself to new conditions.

The differences between the two religions are such that while they do not seriously conflict with each other, they do make appeal to rather different types of temperament and answer to different kinds of human need. For this reason they can both make their real contributions to India's spiritual life. In every great land there are many sorts of people some of whom will find their best spiritual nourishment in one religion, some in another. In saying that India needs both Christianity and Buddhism, however, I am not at all suggesting that India should be converted away from Hinduism. It would be a dreadful day for India if ever the better forms of Hinduism were destroyed or driven from it. Certainly India needs Hinduism. It also needs Islam: the avidity with which on its

first entrance Islam was accepted by millions of Indians and the loyalty their descendants have felt for it ever since show how much that simple monotheistic faith was and is needed. But both Hinduism and Mohamedanism need a spiritual rebirth. Hinduism in particular, if it is to stand before the rationalized criticism of the coming years, must have the stimulating effect of a fresh religious life within the land. India needs a revived Hinduism and a liberated Islam. But India also needs Buddhism and Christianity for their own sakes. My position on this subject is thus in some respects different from that commonly attributed to Mahatma Gandhi. It is not true that one religion is as good for a given individual as another, nor that the best religion for each one is always the religion of the land in which he was born. The forms of individual religious needs do not follow national or geographical boundaries. In India there are many Moslems and Hindus who would find what their souls need better supplied them by Buddhism and by Christianity than by their ancestral faiths; just as in Japan and Siam, in America and Europe, there are many Buddhists and Christians who would find their religious natures deepened by Hinduism.

For, let me add in conclusion, these great religions—Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Mohamedanism, Judaism—should not be considered enemies and rivals but friendly partners in the great task of nourishing the spiritual life of mankind. And never was co-operation between them and mutual assistance more needed than it is to-day. The world seems threatened with the destruction of all spiritual and hopeful views of Reality and the swift advance of a moral materialism. Happily the immense resources of the great religions are still available. But let those who in any wise influence the direction of their development see to it that they waste not their energies in fratricidal war, but that they stand shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy.

JAMES BISSETT PRATT.



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