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Box 11, Folder 48 - "Montessori and the Psychology of Religion" (E.M.S.)

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MONTESSORI AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

Our original title was Montessori and the Teaching of Religion --XXXXXXXXXXXX

On second thoughts it seemed to me better to deal with the matter in a more general way (was to use some slides) -- something more suited to a general audience than simply a Catholic one : especially as our time to-day is a bit shorter than usual . Perhaps therefore a more suitable title would be

Montessori and the Psychology of Religion .

.....

In order to illustrate my points I shall ask you to excuse my making use of some Personal Reminiscences

YOU MAY OFTEN HEAR

All the great religions of the world teach the same truths - in essence - but they differ in the manner in which they are put out .-- in their externals .

G.K.C - says - in his Orthodoxy - that it is more true to say that all the great religions are very similar in their externals but differ in their fundamental truths .

(I quote from memory)

AT ONE PERIOD OF MY CAREER I LIVED IN INDIA

Believe it or not , I went there to study the Hindu religion - (I might mention) I was born and brought up a Quaker (if you have ever heard of them) For some time I had been feeling the strait Quaker Waistcoat a bit too tight for me and was searching high and low for something more satisfying - and had come in contact with Theosophists and others who maintained that the Hindu religion was the best .

NOT HAVING MEANS OF MY OWN

I got a job as tutor in an Indian Family

(I got it through Montessori herself - for the mother had asked her to recommend a Montessori tutor)

It was a fascinating experience - but not for this occasion except that - in passing - this lady Mrs Sarabhai became a very keen follower of Montessori --

THE Indian edition of The secret of Childhood is dedicated to her ---- - and ----

A whole Montessori Course was given in the Sarabhai's estate ---

it was the one in which the material afterwards published in THE ABSORBENT MIND was given to the world for the first time.....

To return to this statement about all religions teaching the same thing in essence

THE PROCESSION

One day I went out for a walk outside the Compound and I saw an interesting and touching procession .

Though I did not know it it was a great Mahomedan Feast

I saw a family ---- father mother and children and relatives all dressed up in their best and going along . In front was a man - looked like a sort of priest - leading a goat . The goat had been washed , its horns polished , its coat brushed , and it was garlanded with flowers . They were all going off to some temple where the goat - who I must say seemed as happy as any of them happily unconscious of its coming doom - the goat was to be sacrificed .

The whole scene reminded me of something -- rather vaguely till I remembered it was a stanza in one of Keats' most beautiful and famous poems ODE TO A GRECIAN URN .

I am sure many of you - if not most - will remember it . It was inspired by a painting on a Grecian Urn which was unearthed over two thousand years after it was painted . It depicts a group of men and maidens and others going in procession through a sylvan glade in a very similar manner to what I have just described

~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Keats' poem is a work of such supreme beauty and inspiration that I am very loath to have to give only an excerpt -- but it is a matter of time . Here is the stanza

"Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?

To what green altar , o mysterious priest ,

Leadest thou that heifer lowing at the skies ,

And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed .

What little town by river or sea-shore

Or mountain built with peaceful citadel

Is emptied of its folk this pious morn ?

And little town thy streets for ever more

Will silent be : and not a soul to tell

Why thou art desolate ~~xxxx~~ can e'er return .

And just about this same time I was lent a book by a Catholic friend - which maintained (an idea quite new to me at that time) that the essence of the Mass is a sacrifice .

So you see in all these three there is an outward similarity -- a priest , and altar , a victim - and worshippers . and a sacrifice .

And yet how different

One was in honour of Allah and his Prophet - Mahommed
Another to Jupiter or Diana or some other Olympian deity .
and in the last - the Mass - the victim is "the lamb slain
before the foundation of the world .

And do not imagine that these far off sacrifices
were not real and vital to those taking part in it . Do you
remember that wonderful story in the Acts of the Apostles
Barnabas
ST Paul and Silas had just entered Lystra and on coming in
to the city STs Paul worked a miracle . It happened at that
very moment - just such another procession was under way
- and was actually passing - a priests , worshippers and a bull dress
ed garlanded for the slaughter at the Temple of Jupiter .

When the people saw the miracle --- the people said
the gods have come to earth ... Barnabas Jupiter and Paul
Mercury . And with very sound logic they said they would
offer sacrifices to these gods there and then - instead of
going to their temple . (Acts 14)

TO RETURN A MOMENT TO THE QUAKERS

The very simplest form of Christian worship
No priest or minister , no set service , no music , no prayer
book , no altar , no pulpit , no decorations , stained glass window
even no collection .

I was brought up on the simplicity of the Gospels .

And the episcopalian , Greek Church , Catholics had
all corrupted the gospel simplicity

ONE WEEK - AN ILLUMINATING EXPERIENCE

Quakers --- religion is essentially a spiritual thing
between the soul and God - immediately

These others had brought down ~~the~~ diluted the
spiritual with base matter

LEENA AND THE RICE

Mr S. would you like one of this rice it is very
special -----Ho? ? My god am s blessed it ?

Would you like to see my god

Accepted it in the spirit it was offered .

Upstairs to the Cabinet

golden image of Kráishna

a sort of Pantheon .

B.VM. ----- and Peter Pan '.

We put it in front of our gods and ask him to bless
it and give it to our friends

- a sort of sacred meal -

Mrudula AND THE LIGHTED CANDLE STICK

with five golden cups for GHI

we light it and put it in front of our god .

Those Catholics again have stolen something from
the pagans .

WAUBHANE AND INDUBHEN AT THE TEMPLE

Going round the temple

the images of the gods --- and 24 Jain Saints .

the holy water and touching themselves with it .

THE WAITER AND THE BEADS ROUND HIS BODY

What are those for ?

They are to say his prayers on .

So - there they have " pinched" the Rosary .

THE BUDDHIST PRIEST AND HIS RITE

666666666666666666666666666666666666

Fixed actions , water , a little bell and
certain prayers repeated etc .

IT SEEMED TO ME THAT ALL THIS WAS PROFEF THAT THE

CATHOLICS HAD SWAMPED THE PRIMITIVE PURITY OF THE EARLY
GOSPEL WITH ALL THESE PAGAN ACCRETIONS .

.....

BUT WHAT HAS THIS GOT TO DO WITH THE MONTESSORI
METHOD AND THE TEACHING OF RELIGION ???

DEAR FRIENDS HAVE PATIENCE --- and you will see .

But first ----

i will ask you to

"look on this picture and that "(Hamlet)

and to do it twice

FIRST CONTRAST

TWO FORMS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP (I am not concerned
here at all to try and maintain that one is any better
than the other --- I only wish to show how they differ)

FIRST "ere is a great church or cathedral

architecture , stained glass windows , colours ,
and we go into it not only at the time of set worship
but any time of day . We see many people doing different
activities . Some

praying before the altar ,

Praying before statues of the saints

Some putting flowers before the statues .

Some going round the church doing the stations
of the Cross ,

Some (in parts of the year) praying before
the Crib -- the scene of the Nativity .

Some saying their rosary

some going to confession .

some gazing at the storied windows richly light

some making the sign of the cross with holy water
or taking some of it home in a bottle

some at one of the book stalls

etc etc

There is a use of movement, quiet, controlled but individual activities --- activities of one set or another.

Now the OTHER KIND OF CHURCH

A large room - by comparison very simple and bare - with little or nothing of all sorts of things like - the stations of the cross, statues, etc and if service is not going on an empty pulpit

and in the body of the church a great vacuity and emptiness.

If you happen to go when a service is on -- it there is a congregation -- all directed by the Rev So and So who has been billed to preach - as the great attraction. (Not that he does not merit or justify his eminence - but still it is a personal eminence: quite different from the impersonal part played by the priest - whose personality unless there happens to be a sermon - is completely in the back ground.

AND NOW MY FRIENDS I ASK YOU TO LOOK ON TWO OTHER PICTURES AND COMPARE THEM. THEY REPRESENT TWO KINDS OF SCHOOL ROOMS.

THE FIRST is a gay and attractive environment

with lavish use of colours (sensorial materials the coloured beads shine in their attractiveness / and in the room a great variety of individuals are all active in one way or another - individually or in little groups - doing what they have chosen to do - become at the sensorial materials, or Ex of p. life, or the various activities for reading writing or number There is a quite bustle, a feeling of things going on, of movement, no one directing things (except occasion