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Box 08, Folder 14 - (Indian Twilight?) "Hinduism" (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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Happily, as said above, in Christianity - the good actions of individuals can have a beneficial effect on the lives of others. But this condition of things does not apply in the Oriental theory of the world. The law of Karma is just an unswerving law which no one can interfere with anymore than with the law of gravity. Each individual destiny through all his innumerable lives is essentially an isolated phenomenon.

The Inevitability of Karma

The individual can not escape the Karma which is laid up for him. That is why an Indian Babu said to a friend of mine, "Our religion teaches that it was quite right for the Priest and the Levite to pass by on the other side." in the story of the Good Samaritan. "After all," he argued, "leaving the man who fell amongst thieves to his own destiny. He was undergoing a suffering for some similar act of barbarism which he had committed in some former life. So why not let him get on with it? - He would have to go through that particular Karma of suffering anyway sooner or later, so why not let it be sooner?"

Vicarious Suffering

We are approaching here a very fundamental point of divergence, which centers around the whole question of vicarious suffering, that is the voluntary taking upon ones self, in

an act of love to God and his creatures, the sufferings of others. At the very heart of Christianity is the idea of Redemption viz that Jesus, the Man-God, took upon himself the sins of the whole of mankind.

These two differing points of view have very different practical effects, as seen in the following example. There are scores of down-and -outs who die annually on the streets of Calcutta and other large cities in the East, but it is the Christian Sisters who seek them out, and tend to them in their last hours and final agony. And it is the more logically minded Hindus who pass by leaving them to the fulfillment of their own Karma.

For the point about Karma is that it is a Law and, as such, is no respecter of persons. This is what makes the working out of the individuals destinies under the Law of Karma a lonely and forbidding thing. Each individual must reap the effects of his actions in his past life or lives; there is no escapeing it. The only "escape" which the Buddhist seeks is escape from the whole network of cause and effect - that is from the whole created universe; from the great Maya or illusion.

Different Views of Creation

For with the Buddhist the creation of the world of matter was a mistake; and Nirvana can only come to the individual who has worked out his many incarnations and has no need to

re-incarnate any further in this world of matter - of Maya the great illusion.

The Doctrine of Detachment

This is the foundation of that Buddhist doctrine of detachment "for it is action which binds us to the ever revolving wheel of existence". And therefore we must get rid of all desires, because desires lead to action, to that action which entangles us again in the great world of Maya.

Looking deeper into the matter still we can see an immense gulf between the Occidental and the Oriental points of view in this connection. In both Western and Eastern philosophies it is admitted that love must necessarily lead to actions; that love can be the cause of much sufferings. In fact, to love another intimately and with abandonment is to make oneself a hostage to fortune; for one cannot love and be indifferent to the fate of the loved one.

Love Locked Out

Now in the Eastern mysticism love is locked out for the very reason that it leads to further action; to further entanglements in the material world. On the other hand the Christian admits to binding power of love and the suffering that it may lead to but he glories in it. In fact, this reminds us of St. Augustin's famous dictum, "Love is never at

rest until it is at work".

In the West love is the very essence of the mystery of life and creation: and while it brings with it many problems it also brings with it the final solution. So much is this so that the whole matter can be succinctly summed up in this statement that "God is Love". A point to which we shall return later.

The Problem of the One to the Many

Meanwhile let us consider another important distinction between the mysticism of the East and the West. In both there exists a fundamental problem: "What is to be the ultimate relationship between the Many and the One? Between our million separate selves or personalities and God the great Supreme Unity?" In the Eastern idea of Nirvana the individual, as such, disappears, so that this fusion into The One is a "fusion of unconsciousness". The Christian God, on the contrary, pushes to the furthest limit the differentiation amongst His creatures.

Christianity therefore preserves the essential aspirations of all true mysticism; that is, to become united - to become The Other, yet at the same time remaining completely and truly ones own individual self. In fact, we may say that mystical unity does not exist except when the soul seeks to resolve the opposition between multiplicity and unity.

That is actually the underlying hunger of soul at the basis even of Oriental mysticism, if it only realized it, but as we have seen, and shall see, it cannot attain to this true fulfillment. It does not know how to bring about this fundamental unity between the One and the Many. For the Buddhist the resolution between the One and the Many is brought about through the suppression of the Many, not the fulfillment of the Many. The final One of Nirvana has nothing in common with the Many, from which it must indeed be separated, because the Many exist as a result of the confusion of the Maya - or Great Illusion.

So what our souls are really seeking is unification of the Individual with the One, but in such a manner that the Individual entity is not dissolved or destroyed. For things to be united they must exist first as separate entities, and in that unity they must still retain their individuality.

"Number in Love is Slain"

For ^{if} it is really understood in its proper significance we shall have got very near to the heart of the matter. In one of his sonnets Shakespeare says something which sheds a brilliant shaft of light on the question we are discussing. He says, "Number there in love was slain". Anyone who has ever had any experience at all in this realm knows that the love that arises between two people springs from the fact

that these two separate persons or entities - without losing their individualities - are made one in love. The very essence of the joy, that comes from love, is that the individuals who are separate and different from each other are made one in love and complement each other in this higher unity.

The Holy Trinity an Expression of Love

In fact, the very nature of the Christian God explains and exemplifies to perfection the idea of a unity of persons in love. For the Christian the everlasting and the infinite God, who created and sustains the universe, by His very nature, is a Triune Being who finds His expression in the unity of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three separate persons in one nature, each equal in majesty and power and knowledge and all perfections; therefore each to be equally worshiped and adored.

The Holy Trinity is a Mystery

It is not part of the aim of this discussion to make any attempt to throw any light on the great mystery of the Holy Trinity, or the Three Divine Persons which must always remain a mystery. The Three Persons are united in a sort of eternal society which existed before the beginning of creation. (Those who are interested in going deeper into the Mystery of the Holy Trinity should consult some standard book upon it - like that of the great St. Augustine, who wrote a book on it in

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the fourth century.

What we are trying to emphasize here is that the unity which comes through love is something which depends upon the fact that the individuals themselves are not merged or suppressed in this unity but find their fulfillment in it. That urge for self-giving which is the hallmark of true love could not exist if there were not, at least, two separate selves in this unity. Of course, there can be far more than two; in fact, there could be a whole Society of individuals united in the bond of love.

St. John, known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved", understood all this perhaps better than any other of Christ's apostles; for he never ceased to preach that unity in love which is our final destiny and benediction. It is St. John who tells us that, on the last night of his life on earth, Christ in praying to His Father on behalf of His followers made this request, "That they may be One in us, as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee". To the Christian then this fusion into one of all these separate individualities in and through love is the final consumation. The Christian God then is essentially personal; and is interested in those creatures He has created, even down to the minutest details of their lives. ("The very hairs of your head are numbered". Not even a sparrow falls to the ground but your Heavenly Father knows it").

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is of course a mystery and to comprehend it completely is beyond human understanding. How could there be three persons having each the Divine Nature and yet only One God? Somebody once made an interesting observation on this point; he said if you were to ask God the Father, "Who are you?" He would reply, "I am God the Father." But if you were to ask God the Father, "What are you?" He would say, "I am God." Similarly if you were to ask God the Son, "Who are you?" He would say, "I am God the Son." But if you were to ask Him, "What are you?" He would say, "I am God." Each would admit to Being a person (who) but at the same time would make the claim to be God "(What").

There is a logical connection between the plurality of persons in the one supreme God and the fact that God is love. For any logical mind is bound to ask eventually, "If God's very nature is to love, then in those countless aeons before He created the universe whom did He love?" For love is essentially a going forth, a giving from one person to another. There must, at least, have been, even from Eternity, two persons in the Godhead; for love can never find its expression as an isolated person however great and majestic and wise such a person may be (The Allah). (Why actually there are three persons in God forming a Holy Trinity rather than two persons forming a Holy Duality is another matter which we cannot go into here).

The Idea of God - A Person

The Christian God is essentially a Person. In fact, He is so personal that (as we have already pointed out) His Divine Nature is expressed through the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Christian God is infinite in all His attributes. He is self existent, eternal; He is the great "I Am" who was in existence before the universe was created. In this divine, eternal society of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, the God of the Christians enjoys an eternal and unspeakable happiness. Thus God is Triune; you might say an everlasting society of the Holy Trinity with each of the members completing and perfecting the joy of the others. There was no need for God to create the universe with man in it for His joy was, is and always will be complete. Yet in the exuberance of His love and generosity He did create the Universe, and Man the highest creature in it, so that all His creatures, in so far as they were capable of doing so, could share in His Divine life.

The Creation of the World

Science in its various aspects tells us a great deal about how God created the world. Astronomy, Geology, Paleography and other Branches of science tell us that this creation

was spread out over millions of years and that Man himself is the summit of that long development, "Man, the heir of all the ages in the foremost ranks of time".

The Bible tells us how God saw us. "Let us make man in Our image". So, man was created with a spiritual soul - an immaterial element - with which came his power to think in abstract ideas and act with true freedom of will. What was God's purpose in creating man? The Catechism says, "Who made you?" Answer, "God". "Why did He make You?" Answer, "To love and serve Him in this life and to live and enjoy Him and forever be with Him in the next."

The Fall of Man and His Redemption

But because man was created free he had the power to make his choice - whether to obey or disobey God. Right from the very beginning the first human beings, Adam and Eve, sinned against God; and as a consequence of this "Fall of Man" the purposed plan for human development went off the lines.

But God did not abandon this disobedient race of humans as He very well might have done. So, to put things right, God Himself - in the second person of the Trinity - without ceasing to be the Infinite God - at a particular moment in History took to Himself a human body - a human nature.

A Divine Person in Jesus

It is ill

It is important to get one point clear in regards to the doctrine of the Incarnation; that is the doctrine that God took human flesh and dwelt amongst us. The point that we have to remember is that the Person who operated through the human body of Jesus was not a human person. He was the everlasting infinite Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who had assumed unto Himself a human nature. Looked at in this way we can say that all the other people who have lived on earth or are living or will live on it are just human persons. But Jesus was not strictly a human person though He had a human nature. He was a Divine Person and took this human nature to Himself in order to function through it and to communicate directly with the human race which He had created. And not only to communicate and teach that human race but, in a mysterious way, take upon Himself, through His sufferings on the Cross, the sins - or if you like the Karma - of the whole human race in the supreme act of the sacrifice on Calvary.

It is through Jesus that we have learned the true nature of God. He summed up what God means for each one of us by describing Him as Our Father. And it was His Passion and Suffering on the Cross that set the seal on His statement that God loves us as a Father; proving forever that God loves and cares for the creatures He has made.

Heaven, Our Final Destiny

From the very beginning it was in God's plan that man should do much more than just come and live once on earth; His final destiny was to pass on, after a certain training and testing, to a life of complete happiness in the next world. As Jesus said to His disciples, on the last night of His life on earth, "In my Father's house there are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you; and I will take you to myself, so that where I am you to will be there also."

As we have said above Jesus and the Father are One in nature - both being God. Once when Jesus had been talking to His disciples about the Father in Heaven, Philip asked Him, "Lord show us the Father that you have talked about so much and it will satisfy us." Jesus replied, "Have I been here with you all this time Philip and you have not recognized Me?" Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father; So, I and the Father are One. I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." The whole aim of human existence is to prepare ourselves for that life in one of the many mansions in My Father's House."