

EDITORIAL

IT is a strange fact that while the world is so wide and free, we always seem to be fond of hiding ourselves in some dark corner which we take for our last stronghold and try to defend with all our might against imaginary enemies or evil-doers. We build a house, put up a fence or wall, guard it with gates, and lock them up at night. As with a house, so with a city, so with a state. In the latter case, however, the scale grows much larger; for the boundaries are watched by garrisons, harbours are well fortified, and on the surrounding waters are floating dreadful engines of destruction; not only that, these days the air itself is to be protected against showers of fire or the wafting of a poisonous vapour. We do not know what view the gods had in the beginning of the world, but nowadays it is not at all an enjoyable place, care-free and light upon the feet. This all comes from making one's own hole in a sombre camp called the Self.

With earthly things, this may be pardonable in a manner, for the principle of mine and thine has so far ruled here supreme. But why should we carry this shadow into a region where light alone ought to predominate? I mean by this that all kinds of teachers and propagators and representatives of religion are in some cases the worst victims of narrow-mindedness. They think they are the only keeper of the key to Heaven, and how tenaciously they fight for what they regard as their monopoly! Religious leaders often betray the meanest side of human nature. Let the worldly potentates fight, try to oust one another if they are ever so ignorant, and get the best for themselves out of the scramble. But shall we who claim to be followers of the Buddha or

Christ imitate our worldly brethren and fight among ourselves?

The world is large enough and there are so many people of so many minds: if religions differ, may not the difference be left to different minds, different characters, or different temperaments? Ought we to consider a religion an indivisible whole and to take all of it if the parts are at all taken? Are we really so perfect as to have crystallised all that is perfect in a nutshell or in a pill? When we swallow this particular pill, all ill that we have been subjected to is cured straightway, and there remains nothing in other religions which we may occasionally like to taste? Religion is not a food nor a medicine, but even when all the essential elements of nourishment are in good proper proportion concocted into one palatable dish, are we sure we do not get tired of it? Are we not tempted to taste something not quite so digestive and nourishing? Of course, I do not mean that there ought to be something in religion not quite healthy and not quite so inducive to one's spiritual welfare. But the very fact that there are more than one religion and that they are all doing well among their own circles appeals to our imagination and makes the world move more smoothly than not.

But the thing is not to emphasise the difference but the agreement; for this is the way to bring peace and harmony and help increase our spiritual welfare. The difference is individual while the agreement is super-individual. When the former is too manifest, religion loses its signification and calls forth an unnecessary conflict, even blood-shed sometimes.

The world is ready now for the plainest and loudest announcement we can make of all our religions that they are one or at least united in demanding peace on earth and glory in Heaven. And by peace we mean the prevalence of justice, fair deal, and humaneness all over the world not only among individuals but among nations; and by glory we mean the

triumphant march of spirit over matter, of light over darkness, of love over selfishness. In these we believe all religions worth the name agree and are ready to join hands with us whenever there are good opportunities to promulgate these gospels of love and light. And we believe this is the time for all religions to get united and work for the general welfare of humanity. Nations are leagued to insure peace, and statesmen and diplomats are conferring how to reduce armaments and to do away with engines of wholesale murdering; but they alone cannot accomplish a miracle, for they are lacking the spiritual background which is absolutely necessary to uproot the cause of evils lurking deep in our ideas of life. Why not then a League of Religions, or a Conference of Religions in which practical men of affairs will be helped to climb their ladder of peace and disarmament? They perhaps know how to deal with economic or international entanglements, but they are helpless to remove the cause of entanglements which lies deep in our darkened souls. This removing religions must offer themselves to do, for it is their proper function.

We must find some means to assert our position most emphatically and unequivocally that religion may not be charged as a matter of pure idealism, too weak to effect or work out its dreams.

Each religion has its virtues and shortcomings like individuals, which in fact make up its characteristic features; but as far as we can see there are no religions that will try to see one individual or nation against another; indeed, they all desire world-peace and brotherly love and the spiritual advance of all humanity regardless of colour and nationality. Such movements as a League of Nations or a disarmament conference ought to have come from the religious leaders of all nations and not from practical men of affairs. Religion has been constantly losing its spiritual hold on us, being too

busy in repairing and maintaining the old weather-beaten structure known as Buddhism or Christianity or something else. Outwardly, they retain what they have so far gained, but morally and inwardly neither of them, Buddhism or Christianity, is what each once was. They have been too ready slaves to secular power, they have supported those that were wielding the most power at the time, they have given themselves up sometimes to the despotism of autocracy, or to that of aristocracy or plutocracy; they have sometimes been a "lantern-bearer" to state absolutism and militarism. It is high time now for all religions to free themselves from all ties and to carry forward boldly the standard of love and light, disregarding all worldly conditions and facing whatever consequences their unflinching attitude may bring upon them. Let each religion be first itself with all its individual marks and then get united with others in the proclamation of the Truth which is one and eternal.

We must somehow have a world peace-congress of religions (under whatever name this may be known), in order to make the world feel the impressiveness of religious ideals which so much concern our material life; it is wrong to regard the latter as something to be put aside as not touching the spiritual side of life. To have a world league of religions means to demonstrate the fact that spirit and matter are closely interrelated and that spirit ought always to lead matter.

The above voices the sentiments and thoughts of the Editors not only individually but conjointly with the other executive members of The Eastern Buddhist Society.