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Gautama (The Buddha), 1925.

"GAUTAMA."

February 8, 1925.

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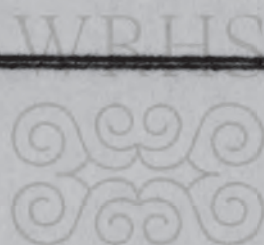
JOSEPH T. KRAUS
SHORTHAND REPORTING
Engineers Building
CLEVELAND

"GAUTAMA."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

FEBRUARY 8, 1925, CLEVELAND, O.



JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

I wish to speak this morning of the ^{Bible} founder of a religion which once upon a time was the religion of more than one-half of mankind, and which today numbers more than 135 millions of people among its worshippers. This faith never persecuted any other faith, and never won converts by the sword. It grew as a result of the peaceful propaganda of its devotees and the moral suasion of its disciples.

It is no longer a great religion in India, where it was born, but it has its millions of adherents in China, Japan and Central Asia, Korea, Siam and other parts of the Asiatic world. The founder of this religion--which is known as Buddhism--Gautama, who later on, when the truth was revealed unto him, became known as the Buddha--the Enlightened One--Gautama belongs to that marvelous period in human history comprised within the sixth and the seventh centuries before the common era--that golden age which gave rise to Zoroaster in Persia, to Confucius in China, to Jeremiah and other great prophets in Israel, to Heraclitus in Greece; a marvelous age of spiritual awakening and intellectual quest and restlessness, which has left its imprint upon all succeeding centuries and whose spiritual contributions are part of our common heritage today.

Gautama the poet was born in the sixth century before the common era. He was born in India in

the northwestern province, in what is now British India, not far from the present city of Benares. Of course legend surrounds his birth and his early childhood with miraculous attendant circumstances, just as it surrounds the birth and the life of every great religious personality; but from the mass of myth and legend a few facts may be gleaned. Gautama was born from the nobility. His parents belonged to the aristocracy of their particular clan or race; his father was a chieftan, or a prince or a king among his people, and Gautama therefore enjoyed in early youth the comforts, the advantages of noble birth; like Moses, who was raised in the palace of the Pharaoh, and like Zoroaster, but unlike Jesus, who was a carpenter's son, and unlike Mohammed, who was a camel driver. So that wealth and poverty are really no hindrances to greatness; the great man transcends them both.

Up to the age of twenty-nine Gautama lived the life of a normal youth, a man belonging to the aristocracy of India. Then something happened; a sharp break occurs in his life; he suddenly decides to leave his home, his wife and child, his friends and his comforts, and to set out as a wanderer and a beggar in search for truth. What happened was probably the result of many years of study and dissatisfaction in the soul of Gautama. The life about him did not satisfy him. Something was leavening in his soul; something was yearning for expression, and Gautama felt that in his present environment, surrounded by his dear ones and by his comforts and by his luxuries, that something would

never express itself. He needed solitude; he needed isolation to find himself.

Legend says that four things moved the Buddha to leave his home: the sight of a decrepit old man, the sight of a diseased old man, the sight of a festering corpse, and the sight of a calmsascetic. The legend holds within itself the kernel of truth. Gautama even during his youth was becoming impressed with the evil of the world, with its transitoriness, with its sorrow, with its impermanence, and he hungered for that spiritual illumination which would resolve his doubts and solve his problems and answer his perplexities which would save him from the sorrows of the world. And so he left his home and retired into the woods, and for six years he lived the life of a hermit, practicing asceticism,-- a rigorous ascetic, studying the wisdom and the philosophy of his times, meeting and holding converse with other seekers after the truth, and groping through the world of his spirit for the key to the absolute truth.

But evidently asceticism, self-mortification, did not lead him to truth, and one day when his self-privations and mortifications caused him to faint, so starved and emaciated was he, that when he was roused from his faint he decided that he had been spending six years of his life in vain; that all his time was like time spent in endeavoring to tying air into knots. Asceticism was not leading him to truth. And so he gave up that rigorous regime and discipline and returned to normal life; not to his home, to his

comforts, but to normal existence.

And then, so runs his history, great temptations beset him; the pull of his former life was strong upon him; the peace and the joy and the comforts of the early life in the home of his parents, surrounded by his loved ones,--these things began to fascinate him anew, and to tantalize him and to beckon him to return. Mara, the great tempter, was after him, and he wrestled with Mara even as Jacob wrestled with the angel of darkness, alone in the night; even as Jesus wrestled with Satan on the top of the mountain; and he fought his spiritual battles to the bitter end, until one day, under an oak tree, weakened and worn by this terrific struggle with himself, the truth suddenly dawned upon him--the Great Illumination came to him and saturated his whole being. From that moment he became the Buddha--the Enlightened One. The secrets of the universe were laid bare before his inner eye, and he knew that he had found the way; he knew that he had discovered the path which leads to beatitude, and from that day until the end of his life, forty-five years later, the Buddha became a teacher and a preacher, wandering from village to village along the Ganges river, meeting people, prince and pauper alike, giving them his new vision and the new truth which has come to him, receiving alms and bestowing benediction.

We are told that he returned to his home, to his wife, to his son; but he returned as the Buddha. He never gave up his mission as preacher and teacher, and until

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attempt to defeat dissolution and disintegration brings with it pain; so that any attempt made by a human being to preserve his individuality, his ego, his identity, his separateness--to be himself, to hold himself together as a unit separate and distinct, is to defy the law of disintegration and dissolution, and it is to incur pain and suffering and misery. So that to be is to suffer.

That is the first of the four Noble Truths of the Buddha. Now, why does existence necessarily bring pain? What is the origin of suffering? I have stated it. Stating it in another way, it is this: the origin of suffering is desire. When you want a thing you suffer for it until you get it; when you get it you are not satisfied; you want something more. In other words, gratification leads to increased hunger, and life is just one mounting fever of discontent. We feed our hunger upon the satisfaction of other things. Our zest for life--for this life or life hereafter, our very hunger for existence is, in itself, the source of our greatest discontent. In other words, the will to live is the root of all our misery. That is the second truth of the Buddha.

Now, how is this suffering to be destroyed? How is man to overcome these miseries of his life? Why, simply by destroying desire; by ceasing to want to live. That does not mean necessarily by committing suicide, but by denying this hunger for life. When you free yourself from the tyranny of your ego, from the tyranny of your sense, why,

you are a free man. When you come to think of yourself not as an individual, not as a self-sufficient, self-concerned person--a something which you must fit and hold together and protect and augment,--when you come to think of yourself merely as a wave upon the ocean, a link in an endless chain of cause and effect--the fruition of all that has gone before, and the seed of all that is to come in the future; when you come to think of yourself merely as a movement in the sea of eternal energy; when you forget yourself, your soul, your personality and your individuality, why then you all emancipate yourself from the concerns and all the afflictions which come with individuality; you emancipate yourself from desire, from lust, from hunger, and therefore from pain and sorrow. You have destroyed suffering. That is the third of the great truths.

And the last one concerns the way to get to this point where you can destroy suffering--the eight-fold path which leads the man to beatitude; and I have read those--rightness of speech, of conduct, meditation, self-mastery, and so forth. Now, these eight things are not, in the mind of the Buddha, things desirable in and for themselves, an ethical system for the sake of imitating God, or for the sake of expressing the best that is in us, or an ethical system as a result of a categorical imperative. To Buddha these eight things are merely so many helps to destroy our individuality, and thereby to destroy pain and sorrow. In other parts of his writing the Buddha speaks of the ten

chains, the ten fetters which a man must first break before he could enter that prophetic state of self-annihilation--Nirvana. He must first destroy the chain of the ^{delusion} ~~dissolution~~ of self; ^(only link - a movement) ^(Jut. p. 3) he must destroy doubt; he must destroy the belief in the efficacy of good works and ceremonies; he must destroy ⁴ sensuality, ⁵ varying passions; he must destroy ill-will and ⁶ the love of life, and the ⁷ desire for a future life, and ⁸ pride and ⁹ self-righteousness and ¹⁰ ignorance. These are the things which are stumbling-blocks in the way of the complete emancipation of the human soul.

The Buddha has a symbol for his system of religious metaphysics, and his symbol is a wheel--a wheel divided into various compartments, each compartment representing a cause and an effect, and the human being is caught in that wheel of cause and effect, ^{- chain of causation} and the human being is cast about in this ceaselessly, endlessly revolving wheel of life, and he can never get out of it unless through an effort of self-mastery and self-emancipation. The spokes of this wheel, according to the Buddha, are ignorance and the free dispositions that come to us from the past, and that continues after us in the future--the Karma--³ consciousness, individuality, sensibility, contact of our senses with objects, sensation, desire, love of life, existence, birth, old age, death, suffering.

How is man to get out of this wheel, this ceaselessly revolving? That is the whole purpose of the Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism is a religion of salvation.

^{from punishment in Hell}
but not to save a man from his sins; not to save a man from the torments of the hereafter, but how to save a man from himself; how to rescue one's being from that endless, revolving wheel of cause and effect--from life itself; because as long as life is, suffering is; and death does not end life, for the soul of man continues through an endless series of transmigrations, to go on and on through this wheel of life.

How is man to save himself from the life here and the future series of transmigrations? That is the object and purpose of the message of the Buddha. A man can save himself only by denying himself, by suppressing his individuality, by extinguishing the love of life, the love for possession, the love for acquisitiveness, the love for growth and development, the love for progress,--by extinguishing all those ^{things} that we, in the western world, regard as the fundamental instincts of life; the will to live, the will to hold, the will to possess, the will to grow. By quenching all these desires, by stamping them out, one saves himself from the wheel of life here and from the wheel of life hereafter. One becomes absolutely free and emancipated, and therefore supremely at peace with himself. ^{we reaches}

^{Anahatshira-} That was the religion of the Buddha. ^{3. Vol. X. and} You can see that a religion of this kind would lead to monasticism--as it did. Every religion which concerns itself with human salvation leads to monasticism. Christianity led to monasticism, ~~to the ideal man,~~ in the earliest centuries, and

It is not a system of speculative philosophy. He desired
it - But not ascetic. Opposed to self-mortification.

The Middle Way - Way of Peace, Calm + Compassion -
Sutta - Pitaka ~~164300~~ - ~~2 foot Bible~~

Karma - ~~p. 127~~ share in lives,
Others - oil lamp -
a new life of another being -



has ~~in it some sects~~ ^{its} to this day--~~the hermit, the monk, the~~ ^{and its} man, because when you remain in social life, in the midst of your family, you are being constantly more and more ^eunshackled by these things from which a man must free himself.

In the strictest sense of the word, therefore, Buddhism is no religion at all; it is a system of ^{ethics and psychology} ~~meta-~~ ~~physics~~--a mystic monism rather than a religion. It has no room for God; it has no room for the human soul; it has no room for immortality; ^{n for Heaven} ~~it has no room for retribution.~~ ~~and~~ X

At once you sense the difference between a faith like that of Buddhism and a faith like that of Judaism. Judaism places in the center of its thinking a personality--God; a will, a beneficent purpose--that very thing which the Buddha denies. God created the universe; and when he created inorganic matter, the inanimate, he saw that it was good; and when he created the animate world, he saw that it was good; and when he created man, he saw that it was very good.

According to Judaism the universe is not evil but good. And man was created as a personality, too. Judaism enthrones the idea of individuality. The spirit of God was breathed into the soul of man, so that man could become God-like in his soul; that is, in his personality. Man was told to rule, to develop himself to the highest. "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." Judaism did not deny the existence of evil--which fact seems to have led the Buddha to his philosophy--but in the sight of Judaism evil is not ultimate, evil is not final or absolute; evil is

a passing stage which will lead ultimately to the triumphant good. Evil, according to Judaism, is in this world as a pedagogic training and discipline for man. Evil is here so that man shall overcome it, and by his effort and spiritual exertions to overcome evil and sin and disease and wickedness, to develop and express himself and complete and perfect his soul.

Buddhism believes that progress is not only ~~unreal~~ ^{unreal} but undesirable. ~~unexistent~~ ^{- Ecclesiastes -} We have an echo of that in that passage which I read you this morning from Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And while in Judaism that is only a passing mood, the thought of a man incorporated in the Holy Scriptures because it is an authentic mood of human life, men sometimes do experience this impotence. But Judaism as such, in its creed and dogma and fundamental faith, ^{But classic} never accepted the doctrine. Judaism believes in human progress; Judaism believes in the reality of human advancement, and therefore Judaism was a Messianic religion-- a religion which placed the golden age of mankind not in the past or in the present, but in the distant future.

Some day the world will come to an end; some day all things will dissolve themselves into a new form of creation, but before the world comes to an end Judaism says human life will become perfect, and the Messianic age, the kingdom of righteousness and truth and well-being and peace will be established upon earth.

So you have these two fundamental, contrasting

views of life. The one is typically Indian--an expression of the life of a meditative, contemplative people, a people ^{to whom} ~~which does not believe in physical exertion; in what we call~~ ^{is painful} ~~civilization, in material advance; it is a religion of~~ ^{a people} ~~in love with~~ quietism and pacifism. On the other hand, you have Judaism, a religion of activism, a religion of spiritual effort and enterprise, a religion whose faith is pinned in the validity and the reality of human progress; a ^{religion} ~~Judaism~~ which conceives of its God as a Creator, constantly fashioning life, and of man as his co-worker, helping him, cooperating with him in the eternal task of eternal creativity. Many in western Europe believe as the Buddha did. Schopenhauer was a Buddhist. Many have questioned the value of civilization, and many have questioned the reality of human progress. Many have said like Koheleth: "All the rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Round and round moves the wheel endlessly. Life is just chasing after the wheel."

We cannot say that the Buddhist philosophy is wrong and our philosophy is right. Our knowledge of the universe is too fragmentary to justify us in any dogmatic affirmations or denials. What we can say is that we wish ^{and our impulse is to live} to live as if personality were worth while, and self-development were desirable, and progress were real. We wish to live as if life were worthwhile, in spite of the miseries and the suffering which it brings with it. But it also brings with it a thrill of adventure and the joy of new revelations and discoveries, and living friendships and

Stop

marvelous contacts with fine minds.

There are shadows in life, and gloom and darkness and night; there is death, there is loss, there is bereavement, and oftentimes our hearts ache for the touch of a vanished hand, or the sound of a voice that is stilled. There is all that in life, but there is also in life family love; there is also in life the devotion of parent to child and child to parent; there is also in life the joy of work, of creation, of expressing those latent, hidden wonders that are in your soul and mine; there is also in life sunshine and moments of exaltation and beauty.

We wish to live as if life were worthwhile, as if God did exist, as if this world were not a blind machine--a chain of cause and effect; as if it were controlled by wise and beneficent purpose. We wish to live as if our souls were real and immortal. We do not know, but we cannot conceive of ourselves ever dying, and so we do not need to think of ourselves as ever ceasing to be.

We wish to live as if life can become triumphant and glorious. The Buddhist differs with us. Millions of men have lived happily and well who thought differently.

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