

NOTES

There is a growing tendency among the Christians as well as among the Western people to appreciate the spiritual value of Buddhism, especially of Mahayana Buddhism, and we are glad of that. For we know that the two great world religions, Christianity and Buddhism, cannot forever be kept apart with an antagonistic attitude towards each other, and also that if the Western people want to understand the East they cannot afford to ignore the study of Buddhism, not indeed with the idea of trying to find the weaknesses of an enemy, but really to appreciate the strong points of a friend. Mahayana Buddhism with its ideals of the Bodhisattva and his self-sacrificing love and all-penetrating wisdom has singularly conquered the hearts of the Far-eastern peoples. In spite of Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism, all of which are native-grown among them, Buddhism has wonderfully succeeded in penetrating into the deepest recesses of their souls. Even when those native religions cry aloud against the influence of Buddhism as not indigenous and therefore as something to be shunned, they forget that the very vitality of their doctrines is largely drawn from Buddhism itself. There is, besides, something infinitely grand and all-embracing in the ideas of Mahayana Buddhism, which compel those who study it to admit that they are truly such.

For instance, consider the idea of the Bodhisattva's postponing the attainment of enlightenment. He does this for the sake of his fellow-creatures, which include not only human beings but all living beings, sentient and non-sentient. Every possible means (*upāya*) is utilised for the purpose. He incarnates himself in every possible form and condition, and stands to his fellow-beings in every possible relationship. He goes to hell as readily as to heaven. Even when he acts as an enemy, he is using the opportunity for the latter's con-

version and final salvation. As long as there remains one single soul to be saved, he will keep up his activity. If he thinks it best to save a man as Christian, he will not have him to be a Buddhist. The means of salvation is not limited; as his resources are inexhaustible, he always knows what to do. He is not prejudiced, nor is he one-sided. If he cannot accomplish his objects in one life, he will be reborn as many times as necessary. And when everything is accomplished, he will quietly enter into his own Nirvana as if he achieved nothing, though no human intelligence can tell when such time will ever come on earth. And, last of all, the most wonderful thing is that this Bodhisattva is no other being than ourselves only if we know it.

In Christianity, each single individual stands to his creator as an independent solitary soul; but in Buddhism each soul is not only related as such to the highest reality but to one another in the most perfect network of infinite mutual relationship. The doctrine of *anatta* (non-ego), therefore, in Mahayana Buddhism grows to be quite a positive concept full of implications which have not been imagined in the teaching of the Hinayana. The doctrine of mutual interpenetration taught by Mahayanists goes beyond the limits of history, and does not countenance the idea that all the truth and power working for universal salvation centers in one single historical personage. As a Zen master claims, the Mahayanist turns a blade of grass into a golden body sixteen feet high (meaning the Buddha) and makes it function as such; not only that, he knows also how to turn the Buddha into a blade of grass and make it function as such.

The Shin sect of Buddhism is usually regarded as most closely related to Christianity in its scheme of salvation with Amitabha Buddha as saviour and all the suffering and sinful souls as his objects of mercy. But Amitabha is not a historical personage, but a metaphysical reality created by the demand of the religious consciousness. His reality thus stands

above historical contingencies. As long as the human heart is what it is, Amitabha will continue shedding his light, love, and life all over the universe. His Pure Land is not like a kingdom of God either to be realised in this world or to be sought after death. We are constantly coming back and forth from the Pure Land of Amitabha. We can say that the Pure Land is far away from us, speaking concretely, so many kotis of miles away from this world of endurance, but at the same time it is right among us in its full realisation. The Pure Land is not the place of rest and enjoyment where we go after death, it is here if we attain enlightenment; but if we feel that enlightenment is only possible to us in the land of Amitabha, this land stands as the object of eternal longing which sits deeply in the human heart. The longing, however, is not a dream never to be realised and only to aspire after, it is a longing we somehow feel already fulfilled even while longing for it. An element of irrationality always has its place in all religion.

When Mahayana Buddhism is thus studied in its multifarious aspects, we shall hear in it a still small voice whispering directly to the inmost ear of the soul. In China the Mahayana reached its height of development as the Avatamsaka philosophy of Genju (賢首) and the Tendai doctrine of Chisha (智者) while its mystical side bloomed as Zen Buddhism under the leadership of Yeno (慧能) and his satellites. In Japan the unfolding of Mahayanistic thought was consummated in the establishment of the Pure Land school as independent sects by such religious geniuses as Honen, Shinran, and Ippen. And then we have the religion of the *Saddharma-pundarika Sutra*, which stirred up the soul of the fisherman's son to its very depths. Mahayana Buddhism has been specially fruitful in Japan. When the tide of agnosticism washed the shores of this side of the Pacific, the Japanese were thought, in fact they themselves thought, that they were agnostics, positivists, and altogether non-religious. But they

are now beginning to realise that they are after all the descendants of Nichiren, Shinran, Honen, Dogen, Kobo, and other Mahayanists. No students of the East can afford to neglect the study of Mahayana Buddhism with all its metaphysical subtleties and highly stimulating religious thoughts.

Recently the Editors of the *Eastern Buddhist* have received interesting literature from two widely different sources concerning the study of Mahayana Buddhism. The one comes from an American businessman who was once a Christian missionary in China, and the other from the German ambassador in Japan. Mr Dwight Goddard is a practical man full of religious feeling while Dr W. H. Solf is a diplomat with a deep intellectual mind. Naturally they see in Mahayana Buddhism what most appeals to their respective capacities and inclination. Mr Goddard's pamphlet (of sixteen pages and with the portraits of Christ and Buddha) is entitled "A Vision of Christian and Buddhist Fellowship in the Search for Light and Reality," and in it he proposes to establish "outwardly a Buddhist monastery but in reality a Christian Hospice." It is to be located somewhere in Hangchow or Nanking and somewhat apart from the busy city. It will be in the midst of a beautiful park whose very atmosphere is conducive to quiet meditation and the exchange of serious thought. There will be a large building that has convenience for library, lecture hall, and studies; there will be a chapel beautifully decorated and equipped for the liturgical worship so dear to the Buddhist brother, and smaller chapels for private meditation; further there will outlying buildings, a hospitality hall, and dwellings for the staff, consisting of a director, a chaplain, and two secretaries.

"The immediate objects to be secured by such a Hospice are as follows:

1. A place for fellowship and mutual exchange of thought;
2. A place to which missionaries may come for rest and

meditation; 3. A place for an annual retreat for both Buddhists and Christians; 4. A clearing house for the exchange of speakers at annual conferences; 5. A place for the accumulation and examination of Buddhist books and research material; 6. The publishing of a magazine designed to circulate among both Christians and Buddhists; 7. The publishing of books of mutual interest; 8. A place where British and American scholars may meet Buddhist scholars in a friendly atmosphere; 9. A place for the conservation of the results of research into the early contacts of Buddhism and Christianity.

"The foregoing are all immediate objects; there is the great purpose more distant but all important, which is: To provide a center from which may radiate that friendly and understanding sympathy that we believe, in the long run, will draw Christianity and Buddhism together into one native church."

Being a practical man and once a Christian missionary, Mr Goddard's appreciation of Buddhism is more practical than theoretical. The following passage quoted from his "Vision" is interesting showing what aspect of Mahayana Buddhism appeals to a certain type of Christians, when some of them refuse to see anything but idol-worship in the Buddhist temple. Mr Goddard writes:

"Buddhism is the real soul of China. If one measures it by the village temple with its one or two or three ignorant monks lounging about in their faded robes, the temple dust covered, the floor unswept from litter of orange-peel and chewed sugar cane, the idols in decay, incense ashes strewn about, hangings and decorations in dirty tatters, ignorant women kneeling and knocking their heads on the pavements in agonised prayers for some material benefit of health and comfort, he measures Buddhism in error. Even in the poorer of these crumbling, dirty village temples is a dignity and solemnity that is profoundly impressive. The surroundings of the temples and monasteries in their nature setting of park and lotus, with vistas, wherever possible, of mountain grandeur and solitude, all lift the human spirit into its own serenity and peace. The distant boom of pagoda bell, the fragrance of incense, the mystical chanting of sutras irrespective of worshippers, the rhythm of different-toned drums and gongs, the serene and

placid figure of Buddha, obscure in the half-light of the altar, all tends to intensify the spirit of worship and to allay the anxiety and distraction of earthy strife and impermanence, by thoughts of the real beauty and eternity and peace of the Pure Land, Nirvana. Multiply this by scores of thousands and you have China."

The German diplomat-scholar is far more philosophical than the American, and his interest in Mahayana Buddhism, like Professor Petzold whose articles on Tendai are well known to readers of this magazine, is speculative. He recently read an address before the Asiatic Society of Japan under the title, "Mahayana, the Spiritual Tie of the Far East." He proposes founding "a comprehensive Mahayana institute in Tokyo or Kyoto." He says, "The Buddhist Congress which recently sat in Tokyo has shown me that the foundation of such an institute is by no means a utopian idea. If then an exchange of ideas should take place between the teachers at this institute and the professors of Western universities, or if Eastern and Western scholars should be exchanged in the manner of the 'exchange professors,' I believe that knowledge of the Orient in the West and of the Occident in the East would be infinitely furthered."

According to him, it is

"A gap in our science and an anomaly in our academic education that we in the West, whether in Europe or in America, have not at any of our many universities a single chair for a religion or a religio-philosophical system which counts more adherents than Christianity. Should not this be a field for the cooperation of East and West? The knowledge of Far Eastern Buddhism is the key to the spiritual life of those races, the Chinese and Japanese, whom it is so hard for us to understand. If we in the West understand this Buddhism, we shall understand also the priests, philosophers, and poets who have worked and taught within its sphere. We shall also understand the products and the spirit of Far Eastern art. We shall no more be perplexed by the innumerable details in the religious images of Japan and China which to us are unintelligible: the deep symbolism which controls the whole thinking and feeling of these races will become clear to us; then shall we attain also to a practical understanding which will be unmeasurably useful to us in our intercourse and dealings with the men who have been endowed with the Buddhistic tradition for two and a half millenniums."

Below is Dr Solf's summary view of Mahayana Buddhism:

"Of all the systems of thought of the Far East, Buddhism alone can stand by the side of the great systems of Indian and European philosophy. This may be sufficiently demonstrated by a glance at its historical position. Buddhism, like Christianity, was in its origin not a *beginning*, but the *end* of a development of more than a thousand years. In it all the questionings and seekings of a highly civilised people, *every* problem of religion and philosophy, *every* craving for redemption and perfection find their satisfaction in a quite simple formula, or, better, in a retirement of the soul *back* to the ultimate and the simplest. And since this retirement of the soul was possible or at least comprehensible to all, this at once accounts for the immense spread of Buddhism far beyond the bounds of Indian nationality. For the *simplest* is always *that* which has also the widest *human* appeal. In this simplicity of its fundamental ideas, again, Buddhism possessed the ability to include the most diverse domains of human consciousness, and to grow in the course of its history into a system which in many-sidedness and comprehensiveness has no equal, into a structure in which practically everything can be accommodated, in which also the logical opposite appears to be equally related to one and the same fundamental thought."

All these propositions made by Dr Solf and Mr Goddard may appear somewhat visionary at the present stage of the mutual understanding spiritually between the East and the West, but they surely indicate where the wind blows among the most cultured minds of the world. The members of the Eastern Buddhist Society are in their humble way doing their best to propagate the knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism in the world so as to bring about these results desired by the missionary-businessman and the diplomat-scholar and many other like-minded who have not yet voiced their ideas but are in full sympathy with us.

Die Christliche Welt, nummer 44-45, issued in November, 1915, has quite a sympathetic review of *The Eastern Buddhist*, penned by Professor Rudolf Otto. We are thankful for his full appreciation of the work we are trying to further here in the Far East in our most unpretentious manner for the study and dissemination of Mahayana Buddhism. Unfortunately, while the fields are white already to harvest, there

are not enough hands to reap them. There are so many subjects in Mahayana Buddhism, one of the great religio-philosophical systems of the world, which we like to discuss and get reviewed by Western Christian scholars, but language stands in the way. In the many universities there are in Japan we have a number of able Buddhist scholars who are thoroughly equipped for the special fields of their study, but they are unable to express themselves in any other language than their own. On the other hand, professors at the Western universities find it difficult to thoroughly master the languages in which Mahayana Buddhism exists embedded. This is to a certain extent even the case with native scholars, for Buddhist philosophy is so highly technical, and to get well acquainted with its terminology is quite a task in itself, not to speak of the difficulty of translating Buddhist thought into other languages. There are more than a dozen scholarly magazines in Japan at present which publish learned articles on Mahayana Buddhism, but they are all sealed books to the outside world. We often think of epitomising such discussions in the *Eastern Buddhist* for the benefit of the learned world at large. But this again in itself constitutes a special field of work involving knowledge, labour, and time. We will do however our best to present in our magazine gradually what Japanese Buddhist scholars are thinking about such subjects as Professor Otto sets for them to answer in his kind and appreciative review of the *Eastern Buddhist*. We will for instance publish at an early date papers on the relation between Shin and Zen, on the doctrine of the Nichiren sect, on the unifying principles of the different Mahayana schools which generally look so confused and contradicting one another, on the Buddhist conception of sin and its redemption, etc., etc.

Something of Hinayana Buddhism is known to the West, but the real philosophical and religious foundations of Mahayana Buddhism are not yet properly understood by Chris-

tian scholars, who are inevitably more or less prepossessed though quite unconsciously against their rival religion. While the East has much to learn especially in science, economy, and organisation from the West, the latter too ought to be broad-minded enough to take in from whatever sources, whatever will broaden their intellectual outlook and help their spiritual development.

Dr Genchi Kato, associate professor at the Tokyo Imperial University, and Hikoshiro Hoshino, professor at the Hosei College, Tokyo, have published a second and revised edition of *Kogoshui* or *Gleanings from Ancient Stories* with introduction and critical notes. This is an English translation of an ancient book on the legendary history of Japan written early in the ninth century. Those who have studied *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) and *Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan) will find in the present translation a useful supplementary reader in matters concerning the tradition of the divine ancestorship of the Imperial House of Japan. The Shinto rites in the beginning of history were equally entrusted to the Nakatomi family and to the Imbe, but later the Nakatomi grew in power and the tradition transmitted in this family came to be considered more orthodox than that of the Imbe. This was not liked by the latter. In order to have due regards paid to their history and the rôle they played in it, they compiled the *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*. According to the translators this book is also a protest against the overwhelming influence of Chinese culture that came at the time sweeping over the entire court of Japan. The translation is done well and faithfully. Dr Genchi Kato is an authority on Shintoism, and we congratulate him on giving such a valuable contribution to the students of ancient Japanese religion and history. The book is published by Meiji Japan Association, Tokyo, and its price is seven shillings. Pp. VI + 121.

In England there seems to be a revival of interest in Buddhism. The Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society was founded in 1924 with the object of forming a nucleus of such persons as wish to study, disseminate, and attempt to live the fundamental principles of Buddhism as viewed in the light of Theosophy. The Lodge has a furnished room at Bloomsbury Mansions, 26 Hart street, Bloomsbury, London. Meetings are held twice a month, there is a study class and discussion and all persons are welcomed, whether Buddhist or not and whether theosophist or not. A Bulletin was issued with news of activities and short articles until its size and circulation seemed to warrant the issuing of a magazine, and now since May the monthly magazine, *Buddhism in England*, twenty-four pages bound in yellow covers with lotus design has made its appearance. It contains many interesting news and notes of the Buddhist world and articles on Buddhist subjects. We wish the new enterprise a long and healthy life.

The Japanese Government is at present trying to prepare a law regulating all the religious organisations now existent in this country, Buddhist, Christian, and Shinto. A committee chosen for the preliminary discussion of the proposed law consists of some members of the Diet, Government officers, scholars and professors connected with the science of religion, specialists in different branches of jurisprudence, and representatives of the religions. The Government's plan is have the bill ready for the Diet that is to sit towards the end of the present fiscal year. Among the various difficulties that naturally arise from the Government's attempt to regulate in one act all the religious systems in Japan standing in most complicated historical relations not only to one another but to the life of the people, there is one problem that interests us most. This is the one concerning the status of the numerous Shinto shrines scattered all over Japan. The policy of the Government has been to regard them as non-religious

institutions, and all the Shinto priests in the chief shrines are Government officials with honorary court titles and paid from the Government exchequer. The idea is to associate the Shinto shrines with ancestor-worship or hero-worship and thereby to make them function towards the moral education of the nation. But the trouble is as the matter stands that the objects of worship at those shrines are not always august spirits belonging to the Imperial Family, they are frequently some unknown insignificant spirits, even evil spirits, and, what is worse, sometimes of phallic origin. The general public of course does not know anything about it, but this does not alter the fact. Besides, all the Shinto shrines including such as the Meiji shrine, Nogi shrine, etc., also issue charms and offer prayers for the devotees. In them we thus find popular superstition, moral tradition, and religious sentiment all mixed in utter confusion. Now what the Government wants to do is to exempt them from the proposed law of religions and to treat them separately as only concerned with the moral sentiment of the people, the source of which, according to the paternal way of thinking on the part of the Government, ought to be derived from the reverence for the Imperial Family; and the Imperial Family cannot have anything to do with religion in any form. A part of the Committee however strenuously opposes such exemption made for the Shinto shrines. This mix-up is deep-rooted and historical. Buddhists will be interested in the outcome of the controversy.

While going to the press we learn the loss of another fine spirit in the death of Mr Gijo Sakurai, who was the founder of *The Young East*, a new Buddhist monthly, published only since last year in Tokyo. He was a pious Buddhist and a practical worker for the dissemination of Buddhist knowledge. It is to be greatly regreted that he had not been allowed to see a fuller development of his last enterprise in which he poured much of his energy and from which he expected much good result to grow.

The last number of *The Eastern Buddhist*, Volume III, Number 4, was dated January-February-March, 1925, and issued in December 1925. Since then no number of *The Eastern Buddhist* has appeared until now. We are very sorry that the magazine had to be suspended again. It is too great a work for the Editors to make up so many numbers in arrears; therefore as we are just at the beginning of a new volume, we have decided to begin Volume IV with the summer number, July-August-September, 1926. This will be Number 1 of Volume IV, and Number 2 will follow towards the end of the year, the volumes after this beginning in July. All subscribers will receive the full number of magazines. We would ask our exchanges and reviewers to note this matter of our temporary suspension and of our beginning again with the fourth volume. From now on we hope to proceed without interruption and beg our readers to forgive the delay which has been due to difficult circumstances on the part of the Editors.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RECEIVED

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