

## THE UNITY OF BUDDHISM

The visitor to Buddhist lands finds few things so striking as the varied and contrasting forms which Buddhism presents as one passes from the south-west to the north-east. Particularly notable, of course, is the difference between the Hinayana and the Mahayana. One familiar with the Buddhism of Burma and Siam when suddenly set down in China feels himself in the midst of an utterly new and unknown religion. In the smoke of incense and paper money, before Fos and Pusas, among the artificial flowers and votive vegetables, he gropes around, at first in vain, for something familiar. And if he has the unusual good luck to find some monk or layman who can explain to him the Mahayana philosophy, he is the more mystified, and is tempted to exclaim: By what right is all this—or any of this—called Buddhism? How, indeed, can the religions of these various lands justly be subsumed under one heading, and be called by one name?

Most fundamental, perhaps, among the contrasts between South and North is the difference in the Scriptures used by the two great schools. In theory the Tripitaka (in a Chinese rather than a Pali version, to be sure) is recognised by the Buddhists of China and Japan. But it is practically never read, and the explicit teaching of the Mahayana is to the effect that these Southern scriptures form merely a provisional statement of the truth, and have been entirely transcended by the fuller truth of the Northern School. The Southern School, in its part, refuses to recognise the Northern Scriptures as having any authority whatever: in fact, it quite ignores them. Following from this divergence in canonical scripture, an almost equally fundamental contrast is to be found in the attitude of the two schools on metaphysical questions. The

Hinayana, in obedience to the warnings of the Founder, refrains almost entirely from metaphysical speculation; the Mahayana is interested in little else. Its emphasis upon morality is relatively slight, whereas the Hinayana teaching might almost be said to begin and end with moral matters. The moral ideals of the two schools have often been contrasted: Southern Buddhism holding up as the supreme norm for admiration and imitation the self-contained and enlightened Arhat while Northern Buddhism looks upon his attainment as but a little thing and points the learner instead to the unselfish example of the Bodhisattva. The moral teaching of the Southern School still makes a good deal of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path. It is rare that one finds a Northern Buddhist who has so much as heard of these things. The Hinayana is emphatically realistic; the Mahayana as emphatically idealistic in its philosophy. In Hinayana lands while there is a recognition of a long series of Buddhas, Śākya Muni alone plays any vital part in either theoretical or practical religion. In China and Korea he is associated with two or more other Buddhas who stand quite on an equality with him, and he is compassed about by a host of Pusas, Taoist deities, and Chinese generals who often seem to form a thoroughly polytheistic pantheon, while some of them frequently take from the Buddhas four-fifths of the offerings and adoration of the worshipers. In Japan the Taoist and Chinese additions to the Buddhist cycle merely give way to the innumerable deities drawn from Shinto; and Śākyamuni, far from coming back to his own, is in three of the most important sects explicitly put on a level greatly inferior to that of some of the other Buddhas. The interest of the Southern School is fixed almost exclusively on the teachings of the Buddha; the Northern School is principally interested in the teachings of philosophy *about* the Buddha. On Southern principles there seems logically nothing for the fully enlightened Buddhist at death but annihilation, and the

Founder taught that the ultimate fate of the enlightened was one of the questions which ought not to be raised. The Northern School discusses the matter at length and usually teaches something very like a personal immortality for the enlightened soul. Southern and Northern teaching are usually alike in their insistence that salvation can be attained only through the individual's own efforts and his intellectual enlightenment; but many Chinese Buddhists and two of the largest and most forward-looking of the Japanese sects deny this, and in Christian fashion offer salvation purely through faith and grace, and by an act of will. Can religions having these enormous divergencies be still called, in any significant sense, one religion? That is our question.

Before attempting to answer this question directly it may be well to remind ourselves that at any rate Buddhism is not alone in possessing wide varieties of belief. Of the four great religions of the world, Mohammedanism is unique in being capable of formulation within the compass of relatively narrow and exact theological definition; and even here, if one contrasts Sunnis with Shiahhs, or better still, orthodox with liberals, one will find very considerable divergencies. Hinduism contains within itself ever greater contrasts than Buddhism. And what shall we say of the use of a single name to designate the religion of the Spanish peasant and the German philosopher, of the South-American half-breed, the Russian ikon-worshiper, the English high-churchman, and the New England Unitarian? In fact, it would not be difficult to point out within Christianity rather interesting parallels to many of the Buddhist variations of beliefs and practice discussed in the last paragraph.

If Northern and Southern Buddhists do not agree on their authoritative books, Catholic and Protestant Christians agree no better on the question whether the source of authority lies in a book, in a man, in a Council, or in the whole body of believers; or in fact whether there is any such thing as

authority at all. There is, indeed, within Christianity no such diversion as to the propriety of metaphysical discussion and the importance of metaphysical doctrines, as we found in contrasting the Hinayana with Mahayana. All forms of Christianity are more or less interested in problems of this nature. But the answers which different Christian bodies give to these problems vary almost as greatly as those furnished by the various schools of Buddhist thought. Well nigh innumerable are the philosophical positions carefully expounded by distinguished Christian theologians, varying all the way from a simple realistic anthropomorphic scheme like that of the old Testament to the most abstruse systems of Absolute Idealism. Particularly noticeable is this divergence when the discussion ranges about the person of the Founder. If Buddhists can not agree on the nature and position of the Buddha, no more can Christians on the nature and position of the Christ. In Christianity as in Buddhism we find again the perennial disagreement whether the religion consists in the teachings of the Founder or in the teachings of the Church *about* the Founder. And as to his nature, there is an almost continuous gradation of beliefs, running all the way from the conception of him as God himself down to the picture of him as a deluded zealot and even to the denial of his existence altogether. To match the contrast between the Hinayana unitary worship and the popular polytheism of China and Japan, we have the contrast between Unitarianism and the saint worship of various Catholic and "Orthodox" countries. If the Goddess of Mercy has supplanted the Buddha in the shrines and worship of many Buddhists, have we not a striking parallel to this in the way in which the Madonna has taken the place of both God and Christ in the hearts of many a simple Christian? And if the Pure Land Sects differ from the rest of Buddhism on the method of salvation, is not this identical disagreement to be found again within the Christian fold?

The truth is that if we try to define any of the great religions (except perhaps Mohammedanism) by means of creeds and doctrines, we shall find it altogether impossible to discover any unity in them. We shall be forced to split each of them into at least four or five quite distinct and even antithetical religions. As a matter of credal agreement there is no such thing as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Christianity.

And yet learned writers and ignorant people, literature, history, and common speech alike, continue to speak of Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and everyone understands in a general way what they mean and (except in hypercritical moments) everyone knows perfectly well that this use of the words is justified. What, then, shall we make of these things, and how shall we come at any defensible definition of the world's great religions? What do we mean when we speak of Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism?

As I have already pointed out, one thing is plain: namely, that all credal definitions are hopeless. For the truth is, the great religions of the world are not primarily schools of philosophic thought. They are something very much bigger, very much more living than any creed can be. They are, in fact, living things, organic beings, in a sense, and they can no more be identified with some form of teaching than can you or I. If we take the historical rather than the theological point of view, and consider what as a matter of fact Christianity and Buddhism have been in history and actually are in the world today, we shall see that neither of them is or ever has been a creed, but that each of them is a stream of spiritual life, one of the spiritual life of the race, taking its source back thousands of years and flowing steadily and continuously down through the ages. Each of these religions is, as I have said, an organic thing, and as such it has the same kind of unity and of self-identity that other organic things possess; not the unity of unchanging creed but the unity of a constantly yet continuously changing life.

If now we ask what constitutes the unity and self-identity of living organisms, we shall get the clue to the problem of this paper. You are the same person that you were twenty years ago, not because your body has remained unchanged, not because your mind has remained unchanged: change, in fact, has been the very condition of your being alive at all. You are the same person that you were for two reasons. In the first place, your life has been a continuous and unbroken stream from then to now, your self of today has grown out of your self of yesterday, and that grew out of your self of the day before, and so back to the beginning of your conscious existence. And secondly, you are the same with your self of twenty years ago because, in spite of innumerable changes, small and great, there are certain fundamental characteristics which were yours then and which are yours still. These principles hold of every organism and give it what self-identity it possesses. A material thing may be identified by the identity of its constituent atoms; a creed may be identified by its unchanging propositions; but a living, and therefore changing, organic being is identical with its own past self because of the continuity of its life, and because of the persistence of some of its more fundamental characters. A complex organism, moreover, possesses various organs of varied functions, developed out of and necessitated by the demands of its life and the exigencies of its environment. The eye *is* not the hand; it is very different from the hand; yet the two are one in the sense that they belong to the same organism and serve the same life. Through the unbroken continuity of growth both trace back their origin to the same parent cells, and both are informed by the same spirit and characterised by one dominating purpose, or innate tendency.

We may, I think, properly compare the great religions to living organisms. I do not mean, of course, that they are organisms in the full and biological sense of the word.

It would be as appropriate, perhaps, to compare them to rivers. For rivers, too, have the self-identity of continuity and some of them the additional identity of persistent character. But the comparison of the religions to living things seems to me rather better; for religions struggle for existence and adapt themselves to new environments and to changing environments in almost biological fashion.

But whatever figure we use, it is, I trust, now clear that we have a right to speak of "Christianity" and of "Buddhism" and to attribute to each of them a certain unity and self-identity. For each of them is connected with its own past and its own origin by the unbroken transition of a continuous growth, and each of them can be shown to possess certain persistent characters in spite of an enormous amount of constant change. In short, it may be said that each of the great religions has its own controlling genius, which remains fairly constant underneath the almost endless branchings of its variations.

It is, of course, no part of our task here to deal further with the other great religions;<sup>1</sup> but if I am to sustain my thesis that in a real sense there is such a thing as Buddhism I must treat in somewhat greater detail those characteristics on which its unity and self-identity depend. The continuity of Buddhism must be patent to all readers of this paper. To me at any rate there are few phases of the spiritual life of man more interesting or more impressive than the growth and development and migration of Buddhism. Buddhism has been a pilgrim, beginning its career in a little town among the foot hills of the Himalayas, wandering down the river valleys and over the great plains and across the moun-

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<sup>1</sup> I have made some suggestions toward this in the case of Hinduism in Chapter VI of *India and Its Faiths*; and more specifically on the question of Christianity in a paper entitled "Again What is Christianity?", published in the *Hibbert Journal* and in an address on "The Nature of Christianity" printed by the Peking Union Medical College in 1924.

tains; a pilgrim, and after many years an exile, driven from its mother land and making its way through many a hardship and many a danger into strange countries and among strange peoples. Much of its early possessions it has carried with it, much it has left aside, much it has found in the new lands which it valued and which it has made its own. But throughout its long course there has been no break. Each phase of its career can be traced to the preceding phase, or to the reception by it of some tributary stream. Its course has been like that of a great river which with its tributaries drains an entire continent and, with many a bend, pushes its irresistible, majestic way to the sea. It has had the continuity of an individual life, the continuity of an organic species, the continuity (from another point of view) of the Hegelian dialectic.

All this I trust, is plain enough. Not so obvious, perhaps, are those persistent characteristics which help to make it, in all its ramifications and in all its history, still one religion. I shall not, of course, maintain that all those who burn incense in Buddhist temples or employ Buddhist monks at funerals are Buddhists, any more than I should hold that every ikon-worshiper is necessarily a Christian. What I mean is that there are certain qualities of character and feeling, of point of view, conduct, and belief, which may properly be called Buddhist, and that these are not confined to any one school of Buddhism, whether Hinayana or Mahayana, but are to be found in all those who by common consent would be considered typically Buddhist, from southern Ceylon to northern Japan. These qualities, I hold, transcend not only nations but centuries, and unite the earnest follower of the most up-to-date Japanese sect with the earliest disciples of the Founder. Taken together they constitute what, in a rough and general way, might be called the Spirit of Buddhism.

As fundamental among these qualities I would point out first of all a certain attitude, a certain feeling, a certain way of looking at things, a certain point of view, which is

hardly to be described and for which I can think of no better word than the German *Innerlichkeit*. Our English *inwardness* perhaps suggests it, but not so well. Buddhism constantly lays its emphasis upon the subjective as having more importance than the objective. It is interested primarily in psychology and seeks in psychology for the solution to all important questions. Its glance is ever turned inward, and the events that go on within the soul it regards as immensely more significant than anything in the outer or material world can possibly be. Only in the inner life does it feel at grips with reality. This has been its point of view from the beginning; and with this fact in mind one sees that the development of the Mahayana idealistic metaphysics is not so out of keeping with the simple teaching of the Founder as at first it seems to be.

With such a view of relative values it is natural that Buddhism in all its forms should regard as of primary importance the cultivation of the inner life. Self-discipline and self-control are the first aims of its earnest adherents in every land. It is for this reason, I suppose, that whatever else of the teachings of the Founder it may have forgotten, Buddhism has never ceased to inculcate the Five Precepts—the five great rules of self-control. These are the primary requisites for reaching the supreme goal, which, whether it be that of the Arhat in this life or of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the spaceless worlds, or of the simple Shinshu believer sitting upon his lotus in the Western Paradise, consists in the attainment of a spiritual freedom and an inner Peace that the external world can neither give nor take away. Other religions have taught the value of an independent spiritual calm, but no others have given it such repeated and almost exclusive emphasis. Once this is gained, the Buddhist feels, nothing else counts. He who through strenuous culture of the inner life has attained to this spiritual freedom, who has won the Great Peace, may snap his fingers at whatever comes.

The inner nature of this supreme goal has determined inevitably the characteristic form which the Buddhist moral teaching and moral training have assumed. The destruction of desire, as the chief enemy of inner peace, was the burden of the Founder's most significant and original sermons, and for long years this aim, embodied in the Four Noble Truths, seems to have constituted a large part of Buddhist teaching. The Four Noble Truths, as I have pointed out, form no real part of Northern Buddhism today, and there is no general attack upon desire as such. But the essence of the matter has been retained in the persistent attack which Buddhism the world over constantly makes upon Lust and Worry. In the insatiable nature of sexual desire and in the steady sapping of our inner strength that comes from anxiety, Buddhism sees the two great dangers to our Freedom and our Peace, and against these it launches its attacks, in every Buddhist land, with something of the same vehemence and systematic earnestness that the early Brothers and Sisters put into the practice of the Noble Eight-fold Path. In all these things the Northern Buddhists are at one.

As a reinforcement to these two great attacks upon Lust and upon Worry, or rather, as the principal offensive of the entire campaign, Buddhism when in earnest, in every part of the world, brings all its forces to bear against self-centeredness and self-interest, against that common pre-occupation with one's own possessions and schemes and wishes and rights which is so notoriously incompatible with the calm life of the spirit. I do not mean that all "Buddhists" do this: but all these in every land who would be singled out as notably and characteristically Buddhist are distinguished for this effort. The attack launched by the Founder upon self-centeredness has never ceased to have its influence upon Buddhism in all the lands to which it has been carried. Sometimes, the Buddhist emphasis on the inner life has resulted in a sophisticated sort of spiritual selfishness, quite as

ugly as the more brutal and naive form which it has displaced; but there can be no doubt of the fact that the Buddhist point of view and the Buddhist training have resulted in great efforts, both North and South, to get rid of the more aggressive and obvious forms of selfishness. This has been reflected in the *anatta* or non-ego doctrine of both Hinayana and Mahayana, and in the readiness and eagerness of many Buddhists to merge the individual in the Absolute. It is seen more persistently in a trait which I think everyone must feel who has much to do with Buddhists who are steeped in the thought and training of their religion, namely, a kind of "negative-self feeling" (to use McDougall's term) a kind of humility, an unwillingness to put themselves forward, a dislike for the aggressive attitude which seeks to emphasise Number One. This lack of aggressiveness is one of the most marked of Buddhist traits. It stands out in strong contrast to the large-footed, self-advertising, red-blooded, self-gratulatory efficiency of the West. For that matter, it is, of course, a characteristic not only of Buddhism but of the East in general; but in the East itself it belongs peculiarly to Buddhism. It is at the heart of much of Buddhist pacifism. Your typical Buddhist would rather give up his rights than fight for them. "Positive self-feeling" and the instinct of pugnacity have been as nearly eradicated by the Buddhist training as perhaps they ever are or can be in human nature. There is little longing in the Buddhist for a fight as such, or for that positing of the self, that assertion of one's own will, which is at the bottom of so many an altercation. Moreover, nothing that one can fight for is worth so much as that inner peace which a fight is certain to destroy. There is a kind of gentleness in the Buddhist nature which I think everyone must feel.

But this is not the gentleness and non-aggressiveness of weakness. It is not fear that prompts it. Behind it there is a spiritual strength of a quiet sort, a power of passive

resistance that might well astonish a western prize-fighter, forever feeling of his biceps. The non-aggressiveness of the typical Buddhist is a kind of strength in reserve; it is the gentleness of the strong man who refuses to push his own way in a crowd, or of the reflective man who is convinced the game is not worth the candle. Partly as an outgrowth of this gentleness of spirit, partly in obedience to the never-forgotten exhortations of the Founder, partly out of contagion from the example and influence of his mesmeric personality, Buddhism in all the lands to which it has gone has never ceased to preach and to practise universal pity and sympathy for all sentient life. *Ahimsa*, harmlessness, is the first law. No other religion, except perhaps Jainism, carries so far this fellow-feeling for all living things, enfolding in its merciful arms even the lowest forms of animal life. As everyone knows, it influences even the details of the monks' diet, and is not infrequently seen in what seems to us phantastic forms, as in the refusal of conscientious Buddhists to kill snakes or mosquitoes. Not only so. This feeling of pity sometimes defeats its own end, as in the refusal of Buddhists to put a suffering animal out of its misery. For the roots of it are emotional rather than reasoned. The unwillingness of Buddhists to kill animals is often explained in the West as due to the belief in transmigration and the consequent fear of destroying in the animal some deceased friend or relative. There is no doubt that the transmigration theory has something to do with it, setting the whole animal kingdom, as it does, on something like an ultimate equality with man and thus inducing a respect for our brute relatives which in the West is difficult to grasp. But I am sure there is more in the attitude of the Buddhist than this. It is by no means purely as a matter of reasoned theory that he feels for the lower forms of life and dislikes to kill them. The feeling of pity is quite as fundamental and original as the theory.

Naturally, not all Buddhists obey the law of *Ahimsa*.

Buddhist laymen often eat meat and nearly all of them eat fish. But this exception to the law is recognised as an exception, and he who practises it knows that in so doing he is not acting wholly as a Buddhist should. The necessities of this present evil world make it very difficult for all save the monks to follow completely the councils of perfection. Nor would I assert that pity for all sentient things and harmlessness toward all human beings are displayed by every Buddhist, any more than efficient love for one's neighbour is seen in every Christian; but I believe it is true that whoever in the lands of the East is conspicuously devoid of these traits is by common consent regarded as a very poor Buddhist, no matter how many candles he may burn to the Fos and Pusas, to the Butsus and Bosatsus. It is not without significance that the only members of the Buddhist cycle who are real rivals in popularity of the Buddhas are the Goddess of Mercy and Jizo. There are loved, I am very sure, not only because they may prove helpful to the worshiper, but because the Buddhist consciousness the world over holds in most reverend esteem and most enthusiastic admiration the qualities of sympathy and helpfulness which they embody. In China they will tell you that the Chinese learned reverence from Confucius and pity from the Buddha. Much the same thing seems to be true of Japan. Whatever be the sins of Buddhist monks, and they are frequently many and serious, they usually have the reputation, in all lands, for real feeling of sympathy; and if they teach anything to the layman it is likely to be the law of harmlessness. In the more earnest and consistent Buddhists, lay or cleric, South or North, this sympathy often blossoms into genuine love and a real desire for positive helpfulness.

Another outgrowth of the inwardness, gentleness, and lack of aggressiveness which are so basic in the Buddhist character, is an unusual degree of intellectual tolerance and liberality of thought. This tolerance for the opinions of others

has an intellectual or theoretical root as well. It is in part the natural result of the lack of any absolutely authoritative book, Church, or Pope. Buddhism has never had a theory of literal and plenary inspiration. The Founder seems regularly to have based his teachings upon his own experience or the common reason of the race. Hence, in Buddhism it is extremely rare to find any trace of that bigotry which has been all too common in religions which like Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, claim to possess a uniquely inspired and infallible book. In the case of the Mahayana, moreover, this natural tolerance has been reinforced by a theory of different grades or degrees of truth, and the possession of a world-view wide enough to make room for most scientific hypotheses and most non-Buddhist philosophies as approximate pictures of certain aspects of Reality. The universal Buddhist belief, moreover, that there is no absolute division between the sheep and the goats, but that most of us are both goats and sheep at the same time, the conception of many heavens and many hells and many conditions of rebirth in this world, with the refusal to shut the door of effort in the face of any sinner, however vile, or to believe that anywhere in the universe there is a gate bearing the inscription "Who enter here leave hope behind"—all these considerations make it natural for the Buddhist to recognise many ways of salvation besides just his own. In an oft-quoted parable in the *Lotus of the Good Law*, the Buddha shows not only that in the Eternal Heavens there are many mansions, but that there are many "vehicles" by which one may reach them. Over and over again have I asked monks in both Hinayana and Mahayana lands whether sincere Christians who lived according to their best light could be saved. In only one case, so far as I remember, have I received a negative answer; and frequently I have been assured not only that Christianity if followed out conscientiously leads to the same ultimate goal as Buddhism, but

that a good Christian is really a good Buddhist, without knowing it.

I have dealt thus far with the fruits of what I have called Buddhist *Innerlichkeit* on their positive side. There are also negative results which are quite as characteristic and which must not be passed over. Like other things, Buddhism possesses *les défauts de ses qualités*. The constant preoccupation with the inner and the great emphasis laid upon it naturally works a corresponding neglect of the outer. The typical Buddhist usually pays relatively slight attention to the external world. The consequence of this is seen in the lack of practical efficiency and of serious practical effort so often pointed out in the great majority of consistent Buddhists. A good Buddhist is likely to be "an ineffectual angel." Buddhists are not greatly interested in the regeneration of this evil world, and though they may wish for it in a mild way they are too busy cultivating their own inner lives to do much toward it. The morality which they preach and practice is mostly of a personal sort. It is in danger, in fact, of being largely of a negative sort. It is not insignificant that the Five Precepts—the one set of moral laws taught with emphasis over the entire Buddhist world—are all phrased in negative form. Earnest and efficient effort for social morality, for the reform of society, for cooperation with others in making this a better world, for positive and effectual helpfulness toward one's neighbour—these things are by no means incompatible with Buddhism, in a sense they may even be the natural outflow of Buddhist pity, but there is much in Buddhism that makes them difficult; and, as a fact, except among the modern sects that have been prodded into activity through Christian competition, they are rare. In all these ways of practical and efficient helpfulness and positive as well as loving service, Buddhism is far behind Christianity.

There are, of course, other causes for this contrast between Buddhism and Christianity besides the fundamental

contrast in the genius of the two religions which I have been discussing. Foremost among these are the racial and economic factors. No one will question the obvious fact that the western races, on the whole, are more practically efficient than the eastern races. The reason for this may be what you like, but the fact is undeniable. The western races are also more aggressive, they have a larger share of the sporting, combative spirit than have most orientals. Now it is quite thinkable—I should say quite probable—that if, by some chance of history, Buddhism had gone west and Christianity east, Buddhism would have been the aggressive, practically efficient religion and Christianity the inactive one. The economic situation has reinforced the contrast of tendency within the two religions so largely brought about by racial characteristics. The charitable institutions and the missionary activities of Christendom have been made possible by the surplus wealth of Christian lands. In the West the population has never caught up with the food-supply in the way it did ages ago in the East. It is perhaps more than a coincidence that Protestant missions date exactly from the period at which Protestant countries, as a result of the industrial revolution, began to have an excess of wealth. And it is, of course, perfectly plain that the possession of political and military power, as well as wealth, has done much to make possible the actual development of Christian missions. I do not think these racial and economic factors when combined are enough to explain the contrast in outer activity and efficient helpfulness exhibited by the two religions. I think the original teachings of the Founders, and the ideas developed by their successors must be taken as co-causes in developing the differences we find. All these factors have doubtless had their influence.

Whatever the causes may be, however, there is no doubt that most Buddhist morality and good will are tinged with a certain passivity that is unfortunately almost as characteristic of Buddhism as that morality and that good will themselves.

It did not, indeed, characterise the Founder; and innumerable cases of thoroughly consistent Buddhists probably might be cited who did not share it. It is perfectly thinkable and (as the Shinshu in Japan demonstrating) it is practically possible that Buddhism may come to possess the active virtues of positive efficient achievement in the external world. But thus far it has done so only in exceptional cases; and its passivity and disregard of social, political, economic, and material conditions is a natural if not a necessary corollary of Buddhist *Innerlichkeit* which is even more unfortunate than its passivity and which must be pointed out. The inner life is necessarily a private life. As William James expressed it: "the breaches between thoughts belonging to different personal minds. . . are the most absolute breaches in nature." It follows that one can do relatively little of a direct sort for the inner life of others. One may, indeed, teach morality and give instructions in Zazen. But most of the work of self-cultivation must be done by one's self. By one's self and consequently for one's self. When the chief business of life is the culture of one's spirit, the constant preoccupation with one's own inner life and one's advance in virtue naturally tends to breed much of the self-centeredness which Buddhism is so deeply concerned to destroy. Only, as I have indicated above, it is a peculiar form of self-centeredness, a kind of sophisticated spiritual priggishness and selfishness, which is indeed far removed from the brutal aggressive self-love which Buddhism constantly attacks, but which is hardly more attractive though it may be much less harmful. The belief in Karma and in the acquisition of merit, with all that this means for future lives, also contributes to this most undesirable result. With the baser sort of Buddhist, the whole thing frequently boils down to a kind of spiritual materialism in which the merit to be acquired by each good deed is nicely calculated, and the cash value of virtue in this or another life is ever present to the mind's eye.

Fortunately, Buddhism possesses still a further characteristic which may in time, and possibly at no distant time, to a considerable extent counteract the unfortunate consequences of its inveterate inwardness. I refer to its remarkable elasticity and its ability to respond to new needs. Of this I shall have something more to say before the close of this paper. Already, in fact, in both Siam and Japan the needs of the times are bringing out in Buddhism qualities of practical and efficient activity in the external world which show that passivity and selfishness are by no means inevitable and unescapable consequences of its inward nature. And it is possible that these new movements within Buddhism may be only a foretaste of what is yet to develop.

In addition to the qualities I have discussed there are certain fundamental beliefs which all schools of Buddhism hold in common, the more important of which should be mentioned in this connection. Perhaps the most basic of these is the universal confidence of all Buddhist in the ultimate dominance of the universe by spiritual forces. Southern Buddhism is atheistic in a sense, and neither Southern nor Northern Buddhism has anything to say about creation or a creator. But both schools believe emphatically that the universe itself is supernaturally moral. The fundamental law of Reality, dominating all laws of the material world, is the law of Karma, that whatsoever a sentient being sows, that he shall reap: that virtue and vice have their never-failing recompense. This faith Buddhism of course shares with Hinduism, from which, in fact, it borrowed it. Following naturally from this basal doctrine is the correlative belief in the unimportance of physical death. The laws of matter being so subordinate to the laws of spirit, it is unthinkable on Buddhist presuppositions that the accident of bodily death should put an end to the life of the spirit. It is conceivable, think some members of the Southern school, that absolute enlightenment may bring so full completion that conscious-

ness as we know it will cease, at the expiration of bodily life; but mere bodily death by itself can not possibly have any such momentous influence upon a member of the spiritual world. What form the future life may take is a matter of detail upon which different schools and different individuals disagree, though all accept transmigration as a partial solution. This common acceptance of the doctrine of transmigration, indeed, deserves more emphasis than I have space here to give it, as one of the great credal bonds that hold the entire Buddhist world together. But more important still is the spiritual and moral conception of the universe which I have been discussing, the basal faith that nothing on the physical plane can destroy the life of the spirit, and that not only the spiritual but the material world is ultimately governed by moral laws. On these great doctrines all Buddhists are firmly agreed.

One other common belief, moreover, should be mentioned, namely, the recognition by all Buddhists that their religion in its present form owes its reintroduction upon this earth to the great Indian Teacher, Sakyamuni. Together with this historical belief and this recognition of indebtedness goes the sense of gratitude and loyalty to him which loses in intensity, to be sure, as one gets farther away from the scenes of his earthly life, yet which has still a certain strength even in distant Japan. Connected with this item of the common Buddhist creed there is the further belief, accepted by all, in a series of supernaturally enlightened beings, the Buddhas, of whom Sakyamuni was one, who out of pity for all sentient things from time to time appear upon the earth to reinstate a knowledge of the way to salvation.

Before concluding this paper I must say one further word about a final quality in Buddhism which I have already mentioned and which has been and must of necessity be of great importance in the life of the religion. I refer to its remarkable elasticity and adaptability. Wherever Buddhism has gone,

it has manifested this characteristic and manifested it in a superlative and unique degree. I do not think there is another religion that possesses so much of it. Buddhism has been emphatically a missionary religion. Its transplanting to new lands has been accomplished never through conquest or through migration but solely by the spread of ideas. Yet almost everywhere it has gone it has so completely adapted itself to the new people and the new land as to become practically a national religion. This has been partly due to the tolerance and liberality of its thought, to which I have already referred, a tolerance which it has exhibited both within and without. With the most extremely rare exceptions Buddhism has held no heresy trials and has carried on no persecutions. With daring catholicity that approaches foolhardiness it has recognised every form of rival as a possessor of some degree of truth. Its confidence in the inclusiveness of truth, and of its own truth, has been so great that it has taken up into itself all sorts of foreign cults and superstitions and seemingly incongruous and inconsistent beliefs. The doctrine or policy of "*hoben*" as the Japanese call it, or "accommodation", has been applied to an extent that astonishes every western student who reads of it for the first time. The conception that the beliefs and the gods of other religions may be true and real in their way, that they may be symbolic expressions of the truth which we possess in its fullness, hardly dawned upon the western world prior to our grandfathers' time, and before that was guessed only by an occasional Lessing or *Nathan der Weise*. But from the earliest introduction of Buddhism into Japan and even into China, when our Christian predecessors were anathematising each other over an iota subscript, the Buddhist missionaries and thinkers were accepting into their religion all sorts of native beliefs as dim and symbolic expressions of the Eternal Dharma.

That Buddhism has carried this tolerance and liberality too far for its own good is beyond question, and is recognised

today by all Buddhist leaders. The adoption of the innumerable deities of the Shinto pantheon as merely Bodhisattvas under new (and extremely long) names helped indeed to win over the Japanese people, but it brought into Buddhism a mass of primitive and superstitious cult which did much to put the religion into the degenerate condition from which it suffered for so many of the mediæval centuries. Fortunately, its rival came to its rescue and through the effort of Shinto scholars who despised Buddhism a reform within Buddhism was initiated which has been carried on with increasing success to our own day. In China the situation has been and is much more serious. The welcoming of Taoist deities into Buddhist temples has been carried on with so liberal a hospitality that not infrequently the guests have deprived their host of all the best room and in some cases have turned him out of doors altogether. The deplorable condition of Buddhism in some of the more distant provinces of China is in part due to an excess of tolerance and an extreme extension of the doctrine of symbolic interpretation.

Yet when not carried too far this liberality, this elasticity and adaptability of which I speak, are undoubted elements of strength. Change is a necessity of life, a sign of life: in its readiness to change its outward forms and to adapt itself to all sorts of new conditions Buddhism has shown itself very much alive. When transplanted to a new land it has acted exactly as a virile biological species acts under similar circumstances. It has made the adaptations necessary to the new conditions, it has responded to the new stimuli with an inventiveness and a youthful energy that betoken an almost inexhaustible store of life and strength. Never troubled by an excessive love of consistency, that "vice of little minds", never bound to an absolutely authoritative Past, never committed to an unchangeable loyalty to that which has been believed *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*, it has been able to develop its philosophy and its cult according to the fresh and

changing needs of the peoples it has sought to feed. Prejudice and hostility have not stood in its way. Its rivals it has regularly sought to make into friends and allies; and when they refused this relationship and declared open war upon it, it has not been too proud to learn from them and adopt such of their methods as seemed adaptable to its needs. Christian missionaries frequently ridicule the Japanese Buddhists for their adoption of Christian hymn tunes and their imitation of the Y.M.C.A., the Sunday School, the Salvation Army, and other Christian methods and institutions. As a fact this action on the part of Buddhism is a token of its life and its wisdom. If it were the dead thing some missionaries depict, it could not thus adapt itself to the new needs of the new day. This unique ability to adapt itself to new conditions, to develop new organs and functions, is inherent in the fundamental nature of Buddhism. As I have more than once pointed out, the inclusiveness of its philosophy puts it in a better position to make room for new scientific discoveries and new philosophic hypotheses than can either Christianity or Islam. It can also deal with its own outgrown beliefs in a symbolic fashion which must be the envy of religions more explicitly bound to definite and authoritative creeds. The unity that it possesses, the spirit that holds it together, as I have tried to show, are not of the credal sort and not endangered by the new developments which a new age may demand of it.

The results arrived at in this Essay are, therefore, not without their bearing on the question of the prospects of Buddhism. In particular, the peculiar elasticity of Buddhism puts the whole matter in a different light from that in which it would appear were we considering only the actual conditions from what might be called a quantitative point of view. A religion with the kind of self-identity and unity I have described and with the power of adaptation to changing conditions which Buddhism possesses is far from moribund. Such

a religion has still a mission to perform in this world: and provided it has wise and awakened leadership it may face the future with head erect and with a growing confidence.

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