

## *Buddhism and Christianity\**

**A**MONG the five great religions to which nearly nine-tenths of present-day humanity belong, Buddhism and Christianity have been the most frequent subjects of comparison. And rightly so. Because, together with Islam, and unlike Hinduism and Chinese universalism, they are 'world religions,' that is to say forms of belief that have found followers not merely in a single though vast country, but also in wide regions of the entire world.

Buddhism and Christianity, however, differ from Islam in so far as, unlike the latter, they do not stress the natural aspects of world and man, but they wish to lead beyond them. A comparison between Buddhism and Christianity, however, proves so fruitful mainly because they represent, in the purest form, two great distinctive types of religion which arose East and West of the Indus valley. For two millenniums, these religious systems have given the clearest expression of the metaphysical ideas prevalent in the Far East and in the Occident, respectively,

The similarities between these two religions extend, if I see it rightly, essentially over three spheres : (1) the life history of the founder, (2) ethics, and (3) church history.

1. The biographies of Buddha and Christ show many similar features. Both were born in a miraculous way. Soon after their birth, their future greatness is proclaimed by a sage (Asita, Simeon). Both astonish their teachers through the knowledge they possess, though still in their early childhood. Both are tempted by the devil before they start upon their public career. Both walk over the water (Jātaka 190 ; Matth. 14, 26). Both feed 500 and 5,000 persons respectively (Jātaka 78 ; Mark 14, 16ff) by multiplying miraculously the food available. The death of both is accompanied by great natural phenomena. Also the parables ascribed to them show some similarities, as for instance the story of the sower (Samyutta 42, 7; Matth. 13, 3), of the prodigal son ('Lotus of the Good Law,' Chap. IV; Lk. 14), of the widow's mite (Kalpanamanditika ; Mark 12).

From these parallels some writers have attempted to conclude that the Gospels have drawn from the Buddhist texts. But this contention goes much too far. If there is any dependence at all, of the stories in the

Gospels on those of India, it could be only by oral tradition, through the migration to the West of certain themes which originated in India, and were taken over by the authors of the biblical scriptures. But that is in no way certain, because many of those similarities are not so striking as to exclude the possibility of their independent origin at different places.

2. Both Buddha and Jesus based their ethics on the 'Golden Rule.' Buddha told the Brahmins and householders of a certain village as follows: "A lay follower reflects thus: 'How can I inflict upon others what is unpleasant to me?' On account of that reflection, he does not do any evil to others, and he also does not cause others to do so" (Samyutta 55, 7). And Jesus says in the Sermon of the Mount: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matth. 7, 12; Lk. 6, 31).—this being, by the way, a teaching which, in negative formulation, was already known to the Jewish religion (Tob. 15, 4).

Also the principle "Love thy neighbour like unto yourself" (Lk. 10, 27) which, in connection with Lev. 19, 18, was raised by Jesus to a maxim of ethical doctrine, is likewise found in Buddhism where it was given a philosophical foundation mainly by the thinkers of Mahayana (Śāntideva, beginning of Śikṣāsamuccaya). As to the injunction that love should also be extended to the enemy there is also a parallel statement by the Buddha. According to the Majjhima Nikāya No. 21 he said: "If, O monks, robbers or highwaymen should with a double-handled saw cut your limbs and joints, whoso gave way to anger thereat, would not be following my advice. For thus ought you to train yourselves: 'Undisturbed shall our mind remain, no evil words shall escape our lips; friendly and full of sympathy shall we remain, with heart full of love, free from any hidden malice. And that person shall we suffuse with loving thoughts; and from there on the whole world.'"

A practical proof of the love of enemies was given, as the report goes, by the Buddhist sage Āryadeva. After a philosophical disputation, a fanatical adversary attacked him in his cell with a sword, and Āryadeva was fatally wounded. In spite of that, he is said to have helped his murderer to escape by disguising him with his own monk's robe. Schopenhauer, and others after him, believed, in view of these ethical teachings, that the Gospels "must somehow be of Indian origin" (Parerga II, §179), and that Jesus was influenced by Buddhism with which he was said to have become

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acquainted in Egypt. For such a supposition, however, there is not the slightest reason, since we encounter similar noble thoughts also among Chinese and Greek sages, and, in fact, among the great minds of the whole world, without having to assume an actual interdependence.

3. Also the historical development of both religions presents several parallels. Both, setting out from the countries of their origin, have spread over large parts of the world, but in their original home lands they have scarcely any followers left. The number of Christians in Palestine is very small to-day, and on the whole continent of India proper, there are present not even half a million Buddhists. The brahmanical counter-reformation starting about 800 A.C., and the onslaught of Islam beginning about 1000 A.C., have brought about the passing of already decadent Buddhism in its fatherland, while it counts millions of devotees in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, China, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, and so on. It is strange how little that fact of the disappearance of Buddhism from the land of the Ganges has been apprised by even many educated persons in the West. Some still believe that Buddhism is the dominant religion of India proper, though out of a population of 400 millions, about 95 millions belong to the Islam, and 270 millions are Hindus (that is devotees of Vishnu and Shiva) among whom the caste system prevails, with Brahmins constituting the hereditary priestly gentry.

It is also significant that to-day the overwhelming majority of the followers of Buddhism and Christianity belong to a race and linguistic group different from those of their founders. Buddha was an Indo-Aryan; but, with a few exceptions, most of his devotees are found to-day among the yellow races. Jesus and the Apostles were Jews, but the main contingent of Christians is made up of Europeans speaking Indo-Germanic languages. This shows, very strikingly, that race, language and religion are entirely different spheres. There is perhaps a deep law underlying that fact. Nations of foreign blood accept a new religion with such a great sympathy and enthusiasm probably because it offers them something which they did not possess of their own, and which therefore supplements their own mental heritage in an important way. This holds true also in the case of Islam, since, among the nearly 300 million Mohammedans, those of the Prophet's race, the Semites, are in a minority compared with the Muslims of Turkish, Persian, Indian, Malayan and African extraction.

In the course of their historical development and their dissemination among foreign nations, Buddhism as well as Christianity have absorbed much that was alien to them at the start. One may even say that, after a religion has gone through a sufficiently long period of development and has been exposed to divers influences, more or less all phenomena will appear which the history of religion has ever produced. Buddhism and Christianity, originally, had strict views on all matters of sex, but in both certain sects appeared again and again, which were given to moral laxity or even taught ritual sex enjoyment, as in Buddhism the Shakti cults of the 'Diamond Vehicle' (Vajra-yana), or in Christianity certain gnostic schools, medieval sects and modern communities. Buddha and Christ reject extreme asceticism, but there arose numerous zealots who not only advocated painful self-mortification, but even castrated (as the Skopzi) or burned themselves. Pristine Buddhism taught self-liberation through knowledge. Later, however, a school arose which considered man too weak to win salvation by himself, and instead, expected deliverance by the grace of Buddha Amitābha. These Amitābha schools have developed a theology which, to a certain extent, presents a parallel to the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith. In Japan, the most influential of these schools, the Shin sect, has even broken with the principle of monastic celibacy, and thereby produced a sort of Buddhist clergy of the Protestant type. On the other, hand, Tibetan Buddhism has created a kind of Ecclesiastical State with the Dalai Lama as its supreme head.

Both Buddhism and Christianity teach to transcend the world. And, in conformity with the idea of the supremacy of the spiritual life over the conventions of the world, in the monastic order or the church community all class distinctions had to cease. The Buddha taught: "As the rivers lose their names when they reach the ocean, just so members of all castes lose their designations once they have gone forth into homelessness, following the teaching and the discipline of the Perfect One" (Aṅg. 8, 19). And the Apostle Paul wrote (Gal. 3, 28): "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

These postulates, however, did not change conditions prevailing in worldly life. Social reforms were entirely alien to the intentions of Buddhism and Christianity in those early days. In various countries and up to modern times, there were not only house slaves, and even temple slaves, but even in Christian countries, slavery was abolished only in the 19th century (Brazil 1888).

Finally, both religions have in common certain features of cult and forms of worship. I mention here only: monasticism, tonsure of the clergy, confession, the cult of images, relic worship, ringing of bells, use of rosary and incense, and the erection of towers. There has been much controversy about the question whether and to what extent, one may assume mutual influence with regard to these and several other similarities, but research has so far not come to an entirely satisfactory conclusion.

Though in many details there are great similarities between Buddhism and Christianity, one must not overlook the fact that in matters of doctrine, they show strong contrasts, and their conceptions of salvation belong to entirely different types of religious attitude. Buddhism, in its purest form, presents a religion based on the conception of an eternal and universal law, a conception found in various forms in India, China and Japan. Christianity, on the other hand, belongs, together with the teaching of Zoroaster, the Jewish religion and Islam, to those religions that profess to have a divine revelation which is manifested in history, and these religions have conquered for themselves all parts of the world west of India. The contrast between Buddhism and Christianity will become clear by objectively placing side by side their central doctrines. I shall base that comparison on what are still to-day, just as nearly 2,000 years ago, the fundamental doctrinal tenets of both religions, and shall not consider here differences of detail or modern interpretations. Since I may assume an acquaintance with the teachings of Christianity, I shall begin each subsequent discussion of single points, with a very brief statement of the Christian doctrine concerned, following it up with a somewhat more detailed treatment of the different teachings in Buddhism. I hope that, in that way, I shall be able to bring out clearly the differences between these two religions.

1. Christianity differs from all great world religions first of all in that it gives to the personality of its founder a central position in world history as well as in the doctrine of salvation. In Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Judaism, and still more so in religions having no personal founder but being products of historical growth, like Hinduism and Chinese universalism, in all of them it is a definite metaphysical and ethical doctrine promulgated by holy men, which is the very centre of their systems. For the Christian, however, it is faith in Jesus Christ that is the inner core of his religion. This evinces most clearly from the fact alone that the 22 scriptures of the New Testament contain only comparatively few sermons of Jesus concerned with doctrinal matters, while by far the greatest part of

the Buddhist Canon is devoted to expositions of the Buddha's teachings. In the scriptures of the New Testament, from the Gospel of St. Matthew up to the Revelation of St. John, the most important concern of the authors was to demonstrate that Christ was a supernatural figure unique in the entire history of the world. Christ's redemptory death on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and his future advent, are therefore the core of the Christian doctrine of salvation.

Buddha's position in Buddhist doctrine bears in no way comparison with these features of Christianity. For the historical Gautama was not the incarnation of a God; he was a human being, purified through countless rebirths as animal, man or angel, until finally in his last embodiment, he attained by his own strength that liberating knowledge which enabled him to enter Nirvana. He was one who pointed out the way to deliverance, but did not, by himself, bestow salvation on others. Though also to him a miraculous birth has been attributed, yet it was not described as a virginal birth. The whole difference, however, of the Buddha's status from that of Christ is chiefly demonstrated by the fact that a Buddha is not an isolated historical phenomenon, but that many Enlightened Ones had appeared in the past, teaching the same doctrine; and that, in the future too, Buddhas will appear in the world who will expound to erring humanity the same principles of deliverance in a new form. The later Buddhism of the Great Vehicle (Mahayana) even teaches that many, if not all men carry within themselves the seed of Buddhahood, so that after many rebirths they themselves will finally attain the highest truth and impart that to others.

2. But even the historical personalities of Jesus and the Buddha differ widely. Jesus grew up in a family of poor Jewish craftsmen. Devoting himself exclusively to religious questions, he was a successor of the Jewish prophets who enthusiastically proclaimed the divine inspirations bestowed upon them. As a noble friend of mankind, full of compassion for the poor, he preached gentleness and love for one's neighbour; but on the other hand, he attacked with a passionate zeal abuses, for instance when he showed up as hypocrites the Scribes and Pharisees, when he drove from the Temple the traders and money-lenders; and held out the prospect of eternal damnation to those who refused to believe in him (Mark 16, 16). With the conviction of being the expected Messiah he preached the early advent of the Heavenly Kingdom (Matth. 10, 23). With that promise he primarily turned to the 'poor in spirit' (Matth. 5, 3), because not specu-

lative reasoning, but pious and deep faith is the decisive factor : What is hidden to the clever and wise, has been revealed by God to the babes (Matth. 11, 25).

Gautama Buddha, however, stemmed from the princely house of the Sakyas that reigned on the southern slopes of the Himalaya. He lived in splendour and luxury up to his 29th year, then he left the palace and its womenfolk, and went forth into homelessness as a mendicant. After a six years' vain quest for insight spent with various Brahman ascetics, he won enlightenment at Uruvela. This transformed the Bodhisattva, i.e. an aspirant for enlightenment, into a Buddha, that is into one who has awakened to truth. From then onward, up to the eightieth year of his life, he proclaimed the path of deliverance found by him. He died at Kusinara about 480 B.C. Buddha was an aristocrat of high culture, with a very marked sense for beauty in nature and art, free from any resentment, and possessed of a deep knowledge of man's nature. He was a balanced personality, with a serene mind and winning manners, representing the type of a sage who, with firm roots within, had risen above the world. In the struggle with the systems of his spiritually dynamic time, he evolved out of his own thought a philosophical system that made high demands on the mental faculties of his listeners. As he himself said : " My doctrine is for the wise and not for the unwise." The fact that his teaching had an appeal also for the uneducated, is explained by his great skill in summarizing in easily intelligible language the fundamental ideas of his philosophy.

So far we have found the following difference between Buddhism and Christianity : Christianity, from its very start, was a *movement of faith* appealing to the masses : and only when it won over the upper classes, a Christian philosophy evolved. Buddhism, however, was, in its beginnings, a *philosophical teaching of deliverance*. Its adherents were mainly from the classes of noblemen and warriors, and of the wealthy middle-class, with a few Brahmins. Only when Buddhism reached wider circles it became a popular religion.

3. The teachings of all great religions are laid down in holy scriptures to which an authoritative character is ascribed surpassing all other literature. Christianity regards the Bible as the "Word of God," as an infallible source of truth in which God, by inspiring the authors of these scriptures, revealed things that otherwise would have remained hidden to man. Contrary to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, atheistic Buddhism does not know

of a revelation in that sense. Nevertheless it possesses a great number of holy texts in which the sayings of the Buddha are collected. That Canon comprises those insights which the Buddha is said to have won by his own strength through comprehending the true nature of reality. It is claimed that everyone who, in his mental development, reaches the same high stage of knowledge, will find confirmed by himself the truth of the Buddha's statements. In fact, however, Buddhists ascribe to that Canon likewise a kind of revealing character, in so far as they appeal to the sayings of the 'omniscient' Buddha which are regarded by them as the final authority. The interpretation of the Buddha word, however, has led among the Buddhists to as many controversies as Bible exegesis among Christians.

We shall now proceed to describe the fundamental tenets of Christian and Buddhist doctrine. In doing so, we shall have to limit ourselves to the general principles which, for two thousand years, have been common to all schools or denominations of these religions. I shall first speak about the different position taken by Christians and Buddhists towards the central questions of religion, that is God, world and soul, and later proceed to a treatment of their teachings on salvation.

4. The central tenet of Christian doctrine is the belief in an eternal, personal, omnipotent, omniscient and all-loving God. He has created the world from nothing, sustains it, and directs its destiny ; he is law-giver, judge, the helper in distress and the saviour of the creatures which he has brought into being. Angels serve him to carry out his will. As originally created by God, all of them were good angels. But a section of them turned disobedient, and, breaking away from the heavenly hosts, formed an opposition to the other angels, a hierarchy which under its leader, the Satan, strives to entice man to evil. Though the devils' power is greater than that of man, it is restricted by the power of God so that they cannot do anything without God's consent, and at the end of the days they will be subjected to divine judgement.

The Buddhists, on their part, believe in a great number of deities (*devatā*) which direct the various manifestations of nature and of human life. They also know of evil demons and of a kind of devil, *Māra*, who tries to turn the pious from the path of virtue. But all these beings are impermanent though their life-span may last millions of years. In the course of their reincarnations, they have come to their superhuman form of existence thanks to their own deeds ; but when the productive power

of their deeds is exhausted, they have to be reborn on earth again, as humans. Though the world will always have a sun god or a thunder god, the occupants of these positions will change again and again, in the course of time. It is obvious that these gods with their restricted life-span, range of action and power, cannot be compared with the Christian God since they cannot, be it singly or in their totality, create the world nor give it its moral laws. Hence they resemble only powerful superhuman kings whom the pious devotees may well, to a certain extent, solicit for gifts and favours, but who cannot exert any influence on world events in their totality.

Many *Hindus* assume that, above the numerous impermanent deities, exists an eternal, omniscient, all-loving and omnipotent God who creates, sustains, rules and destroys the world. But the *Buddhists* deny the existence of such a Lord of the Universe. Because, according to them, in the first place, no such original creator of the world can be proved to exist, because every cause must have another cause, and secondly, an omnipotent God will have to be also the creator of evil and this will conflict with his all-loving nature ; or, alternatively, if he is to be good and benevolent, he will have to be thought of without omnipotence and omniscience, since otherwise he would not have called into existence this imperfect world of suffering or he would have eliminated evil. Buddhism, therefore, is outspokenly atheistic, in that respect. The world is not governed by a personal God, but by an impersonal law that, with inexorable consistency, brings retribution for every morally good or evil deed. The idea that there are numerous deities of limited power can be found also in other religions ; and the ancient Greeks, Romans and Germans believed that, above the gods, there is *Moir*a, *Anangke*, *Fatum* or *Destiny*, which eventually rules everything. For the Chinese the highest principle is the 'Tao' which sustains the cosmic order and the harmony between heaven, earth and man. With the Indians, there appears already in Vedic times the idea that gods and men are subject to the moral world-order, the *Rita* (*rta*), and from about 800 B.C. this idea is linked with the doctrine of *Karma*, the doctrine of the after-effects of guilt and merit. According to that doctrine, every action carries in itself, seed-like, its own reward or punishment. After death, an individual, in accordance with his good or evil deeds, is reincarnated in the body of either an animal, a man, a deity or a demon, in order to reap the fruits of his previous actions. This retribution occurs automatically, as a natural, regular occurrence, without requiring a divine judge who shares out reward and punishment.

As to the differences between Buddhism and Christianity, in the present context, we may say that the same functions which in Christian doctrine are related to the concept of a personal God, are in Buddhism divided among a number of different factors. The natural and moral order of the world and its periodical rise and fall are preserved by an impersonal and immanent cosmic law (*Dharma*). The retribution for one's actions operates through the inherent efficacy of these deeds themselves. Helpers in need are the numerous, but transient, deities, while the truths of deliverance are revealed by human beings evolved to the perfection of *Buddhas* (*Awakened Ones*) who therefore are also made objects of a cult and of devotion. Saviour, however, is each man for himself, in so far as he has overcome the world through wisdom and control.

The homage paid to the Buddha, as it may be observed in Buddhist temples, has a meaning quite different from the worship of God in Christian Churches. The Christian worships God in reverence due to the creator of the universe and the ruler of all its destinies ; or he does so in order to be granted spiritual or material boons by God's grace. The Buddhist pays homage to the Buddha without expecting that he hears him or does something for him. Since the Buddha has entered into *Nirvana* he can neither hear the prayers of the pious nor can he help them. If a Buddhist turns to the Buddha as if to a personality that actually confronts him, his act has a fictive character. The devotee expects from his act only spiritual edification and a good *Karma*. This theory as advocated to-day by orthodox Buddhism, has, however, often been altered in practice and in the teachings of some of the Buddhist schools. But even those who think it possible that a Buddha may intervene in favour of a devotee, regard the Buddha only as a Saviour, a bringer of deliverance, and not as the creator and ruler of the universe.

5. According to Christian doctrine, God has created the world from nothing, and he rules it according to a definite plan. The stopping of the cosmic process comprises the end of the world, the universal resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgement, the eternal damnation of the sinners and the eternal bliss of the pious in a heavenly Jerusalem descended to earth. Until the 18th century, it was believed that the entire world history comprised only 6,000 years, though the time of the creation has been calculated differently. The Byzantines made their world era start on the 1st of September 5509 B.C. while Luther dated the creation at the year

3960 B.C. Although the calculations about the beginning and the end of the world process—mainly based on the statements about the generations between Adam and Christ (Matth, 1, 17 and Lk, 3, 21)—have been abandoned in recent times, yet for Christianity the view that the historical fact of creation and salvation constitutes a single and unrepeatable event, remains a guiding principle.

Buddhism, however, knows neither a first beginning nor a definite end of the world. Since every form of existence presupposes action in a preceding life, and since Karma produced in one existence must find its retribution in a future one, Buddhism teaches a periodical cycle of cosmic rise and fall, evolution and dissolution. Since the number of living beings that produce Karma, is infinitely vast, and the unexhausted Karma of beings inhabiting a world which is in the process of dissolution, has to find realization in a newly arising world, worldly existence will never come to an end, however large the number of human beings may be that reach deliverance. There is another essential difference between the Christian and the Buddhist conception of the world. Buddhists have always assumed an infinite number of world systems situated next to each other in space, each of which consisting of an earth, a heaven above and a hell below.

6. According to Christian views, man is composed of body and soul. While the body is formed of matter in the mother's womb, the soul is a special creation of God, from nothing. A soul is a simple, spiritual, immaterial substance. Maintained in eternal existence by God, the soul continues also after the dissolution of the body at death, and receives from God the rewards of its deeds, either in heaven or hell. At the end of time, God causes a resurrection of all flesh and unites again the souls with their former bodies. By the fact that thus the whole man, i.e. not only his soul but also his body, received reward or punishment, the bliss of the heavenly realm or the torment of eternal damnation is felt with still greater intensity. In Christianity, the significance of life on earth and of the decisions made in it, has been enhanced to the utmost through the idea that it is man's conduct during that short life-span which determines the soul's destiny for all eternity.

Also many Indian systems are based upon that anthropological dualism. It is the conception of an infinitely large number of eternal and purely spiritual souls linked, since beginningless time, with bodies formed by particles of primordial matter. The souls are thought to change these

bodies in the course of their existences, until they become free of them on attainment of deliverance. In contrast to all Indian teachings of deliverance, and most others, Buddhism denies the existence of eternal substances, essentially unchangeable. What appears to us as matter, actually comes into being only through the natural co-operation of a multitude of single factors like colours, sounds, odours, tactiles, spatial and temporal qualities, etc. Also what we call 'soul,' is only a play of ever-changing sensations, perceptions and cognitive acts, combined into an entirety, yet being devoid of any underlying entity. It is only because some of these complex phenomena seem to have a relative stability, that men believe in the existence of matter or soul. But in truth, only dharmas exist, i.e. 'factors of existence' that arise in functional dependence on each other, and cease again after a short time. This doctrine of the Dharmas is the characteristic teaching peculiar to Buddhism. It was developed by the Buddha into a philosophy of becoming from an idea still noticeable in the Vedic texts ascribing positive subsistence to everything that exists, including qualities, events, modal states, etc.

In that respect, Buddha is a precursor of Hume and Mach who likewise declared any substance to be a fiction. But for the Buddha, the doctrine of the Dharmas combines with the acceptance of a moral law governing the efficacy of all actions. Just as nothing occurs without producing some effect in the physical world, so every morally good or evil act is the cause of definite effects. Though, when a being dies, a combination of factors is dissolved which had previously formed a personality, yet the deeds performed in the life now passed, become the cause of a new and separate being's birth. The newly born is different from the being that had died, but it takes over, as it were, the latter's inheritance. Thus the stream of the factors of existence is continued also after death, and one life form follows the other without break. Since any act can have only a retribution of limited duration, Buddhists do not know eternal bliss in heaven or eternal torments in hell, but believe that the inhabitants of heaven and hell are later reborn again on earth.

7. Christianity and Buddhism agree in their strong emphasis on the impermanency of all things. In Christianity, the suffering, inherent in the world, is the outcome of sin, and sin is disobedience towards God's commandments. Because Adam had sinned, all his progeny is afflicted with Original Sin. Man is too weak to free himself from sin by his own strength. Therefore, God in his compassion became man in Christ, and

died, as a vicarious redemptory sacrifice for all humanity. Through Christ's sacrificial death all men have become free from the power of sin, but that vicarious salvation from evil becomes reality only if man opens himself to divine grace through his faith in Christ.

The idea of collective guilt and collective salvation is far from the Buddhist's way of thinking. According to Buddhism, everyone accumulates his own evil and everyone has to work out his own deliverance. The entire Christian conception of sin, as a matter of fact, is alien to the Buddhist. If man has to suffer in punishment for his misdeeds, it is not on account of his disobeying divine commandments, but because his actions are in conflict with the eternal cosmic law and therefore produce bad Karma. In general, the suffering which is life is for a Buddhist not stamped with the mark of sin, but carries only the character of impermanence and insubstantiality. This inherent characteristic of existence is the cause of life ever ending in death, of life with its aimless and meaningless wandering through always new forms of being. It is that what basically constitutes life's suffering. And the cause of this woeful conflict is a thirst for sense-enjoyment, an attachment to existence, a will to live, a passion that either craves for possession or wants to escape. All these propensities and impulses have their original source in ignorance, that is in lack of insight into the true nature of reality. He who sees that neither in the internal nor in the external world anything can be found that abides; and that there is also no Ego as a point of rest within the general flux of phenomena; who is aware that there is no self either as the eternal witness or temporary owner of sense perceptions and volitions—such a one, through that very knowledge, is set free of selfishness, of hate, greed and delusion. By a gradual process of purification, extending through aeons over many existences, he finally discards the illusion of self-affirmation. Through mindful observation, keen reflection and meditative calm he eliminates all selfish propensities, and sees also his own personality as a mere bundle of Dharmas, i.e. processes of natural law that arise and vanish conditioned by functional relations. Dispassionate and without attachment, he pervades, as the Buddhist scriptures say, "the whole world with his heart filled with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity" (Dīgha No. 13). Without clinging to life and without fear of death he waits for the hour when his bodily form breaks up and he reaches final deliverance from rebirth.

8. The definite and perpetual state of salvation which is the redeemed person's share according to Christian doctrine, is conceived as an eternal life in the heavenly kingdom. If, after the second advent of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgement, the final kingdom of God has been established, then, after the old world's destruction, on a new earth, the redeemed ones will live in an inseparable communion with God and Christ.

The Buddhist conception of Nirvāṇa presents the most radical contrast to Christian eschatology. The Christian hopes for infinite continuation of his entire personality, not only of his soul but also of his body resurrected from dust to a new life. The Buddhist, however, wishes to be extinguished completely, so that all mental and corporeal factors which form the individual, will disappear without a remainder. Nirvana is the direct opposite of all that constitutes earthly existence. It is a relative Naught in so far as it contains neither the consciousness nor any other factor that occurs in this world of change or could possibly contribute to its formation. Not wrongly, therefore, has Nirvana been compared to empty space in which there are no differentiations left, and which does not cling to anything. In strongest contrast to the world which is impermanent, without an abiding self-nature and subject to suffering, Nirvana is highest bliss, but a bliss that is not *felt*, i.e. beyond the happiness of sensation (Ang. 9, 34, 1-3). In the conception of the final goal of deliverance there is expressed the ultimate and most decisive contrast between the Christian and the Buddhist abnegation of the world. The Christian renounces the world because it is imperfect through sin, and he hopes for a personal, active and eternal life beyond, in a world that, through God's power, has been freed from sin and purified to perfection. But the Buddhist thinks that an individual existence without becoming and cessation, and, hence, without suffering, is unthinkable. He believes, though, that in future, during the ever-recurring cyclical changes of good and bad epochs, also a happy age will dawn upon mankind again. But that happy epoch will be no less transient than earlier ones have been. Never will the cosmic process find its crowning consummation in a blessed finality. Hence there is no collective salvation, but only an individual deliverance. While the cosmic process following unalterable laws continues its course, only a saint who has become mature for Nirvāṇa, will extinguish like a flame without fuel, in the midst of an environment that, with fuel un-hausted, is still aburning.

9. The different attitude towards the world and its history tallies also with the dissimilar evaluation given to other religions by Christians and Buddhists respectively. Christianity being convinced of the absolute superiority of its own faith, has always questioned the justification of other forms of faith. Buddhism, however, does not believe that man has to decide about it within a single life on earth. The Buddhist, therefore regards all other religions as first steps to his own. Consequently, in the countries to which Buddhism spread, it did not fight against the original religions found there, but tried to suffuse them with its own spirit. Therefore Buddhism has never claimed exclusive, absolute or totalitarian authority. In modern China, most Buddhists are simultaneously Confucian and Taoists, and in Japan, membership of a Buddhist sect does not exclude faith in the Shinto gods. This large-hearted tolerance of Buddhism is also illustrated in its history which is almost free from religious wars and persecution of heretics.

The fundamental doctrines of Buddhism and Christianity as outlined here and accepted as concrete facts by the majority of the faithful, have sometimes been interpreted by thinkers of both religions in a rationalistic or in a mystical sense, and these interpretations have modified the meaning of these doctrines considerably. In our present context, however, we cannot enter into a treatment of these transformations. By doing so, our comparative study would lack that firm ground required, which, for a historian's purpose, can be provided only by the authoritative and clearly outlined tenets of the respective teachings.

Though Buddhism and Christianity differ from each other in their respective views about world and self, about the meaning of life and man's ultimate destiny, yet they agree again in the ultimate postulates of all religious life. For both religions proclaim man's responsibility for his actions and the freedom of moral choice; both teach retribution for all deeds, and believe in the perfectibility of the individual. "You must be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect" (Matth. 5, 48), says Jesus. And Buddha summarizes the essence of his ethics in the words: "To shun all evil, to practise what is good, to cleanse one's own heart: that is the teaching of the Enlightened Ones."

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