

THE THEOLOGY OF MAHAYANA BUDDHISM.

BY WILLIAM MONTGOMERY MCGOVERN.

[CONCLUDED.]

We next come to a consideration of the Jodomon. It must be remembered that this school represents that division of Mahayana which teaches its followers to aim at Buddhahood through being reborn at death in the Pure Land through the mercy of the universal Buddha. It is natural, therefore, that especial worship should be given to the Divine in his mercy or wisdom aspect, rather than in his garb of mere law or will. Accordingly, instead of giving especial reverence to the Dharmakaya as in the other sects, the divisions of the Jodomon have as their special object of worship the Sambhogakaya, or, to give it its personified name, Amitabha. Probably in the early days of Jodomon the reverence paid to Amitabha was not nearly as exclusive as it is now. The Dharmakaya or Vairochana was very probably considered the highest being in reality, the supreme acme of perfection, but while admitting its superiority, the Jodomon sects made the worship of Amida their especial object, just as in the Roman Catholic Church, while every orthodox believer admits the inferiority of the Virgin Mary to the Supreme Creator, yet certain congregations and orders of the Church make the extension of her worship their *raison d'être*.

Henotheism, however, runs strongly in man, and gradually, as the worship of Amida as the patron saint of the school was intensified, the conception of his nature and powers were amplified. Nor must it be forgotten that while especial emphasis had been laid, in the Shodomon, upon the Dharmakaya, yet, theoretically at least, each member of the Trikaya was supposed to be equal, so that the exaltation of Amitabha was made easier. Meanwhile, as was natural, since the Sambhogakaya grew to receive most of the worship which had hitherto been given to the Dharmakaya, it also took over

many of the supposed attributes of the latter until at last, instead of corresponding to the Christian God the Holy Ghost, Amitabha became equivalent to the First Person of the Trinity.

The nature of both the Dharmakaya and the Sambhogakaya, strange to say, led very easily to this change. The Sambhogakaya was always a trifle more personal than the Dharmakaya, just as God the Father is generally, however unconsciously, considered more personal than the Holy Ghost, and accordingly the Sambhogakaya was much better fitted to play the part of the great guiding power of the universe, the principle which makes and unmakes worlds. Its power to receive, transmute and irradiate the spiritual energy of the devotees is one which should of its nature belong to the fountain-head of divinity, while, on the other hand, the very vagueness and universality of the Dharmakaya fitted it, when stripped of its absolute supremacy, to act in the role of the Holy Spirit.

The change, once begun, was soon completed, so that soon, in the Jodomon at least, Amitabha found himself the One Supreme without a second. All Mahayana is essentially monotheistic in the sense of admitting but one universal Buddha, but Jodomon is far stricter in its monotheism than is Shodomon. Both schools, while teaching but one fountain-head of divinity, admit the idea of countless emanations or manifestations which have often been personified into separate deities. But while Shodomon lays special emphasis upon the fact of their being manifestations, Jodomon is no less insistent in pointing out the one source. We find the priests of this denomination preaching, "Bind all men into union by means of the One Name. Turn all men to the one and only Buddha. . . . This is our central idea."⁴ In the Jodomon, so stern is its monotheism that Amitabha is no longer merely the Sambhogakaya, he is the other two bodies also, and such Buddhas as Vairochana and Sakyamuni are considered as but passing reflections of the one Transcending Light amidst the countless other hordes of those who hold their power by virtue of Amitabha's imputed glory.

In the temples of the Path of Good Works (Shodomon) we

⁴ It is to be noted, however, that very little emphasis is laid upon this feature of the Jodo doctrine, and that every year its importance is decreasing, especially in the most progressive of the Jodo sects, the Shin. Avalokitesvara was originally a Hindu (some say Persian) male deity to whom we find a chapter devoted in the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*. In China the sex was gradually changed. In old Chinese pictures the figure is frequently represented as bisexual, one half being male and the other half female. In Japan the female aspect has tended to predominate, and the deity is even represented with a child in her arms, the similarity to the Christian Virgin Mary of course being obvious.

find images of innumerable gods and Buddhas, while in those of the Path of Pure Land (Jodomon) often all images are done away with and we find only scrolls (Jap. kakemono) inscribed with the words "Namo Amitabhaya Buddhaya" (Chin. "Omito Fu," Jap. "Namu Amida Butsu"), which is, "Glory to the Buddha of Boundless Light." At the most, beside the images of Amitabha are those of his manifestations Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta (Jap. Kwannon and Seishi), the former being the personification of Amitabha's love and mercy and the latter of his wisdom. Except for this point, however, the doctrines of the two schools of Buddhism are identical, for in both we have the three bodies, the twofold division of the Sambhogakaya and of the Nirmanakaya, the latter being further subdivided into two parts. On the whole it may be said that the doctrines of the Jodomon on the subject are the more advanced and logical.

IV.

The other chief feature of the religious aspect of Mahayana, and one which it shares with Hinayana, is its worship of the Buddhas, or those persons who have gained the highest goal of human endeavor. In fact, this doctrine of Buddhism may well be considered its most distinctive principle.

In spite of its great importance in the Buddhist speculative system, however, many grave mistakes and misrepresentations continue to exist in the Western mind, and even in many of the books which purport to expound the Buddhist faith. These various misunderstandings of the true nature of the Mahayana conception of Buddhahood are, of course, far too numerous to mention. There are three, however, which may be said to be of especial importance.

The first of these—of which mention has already been made—is that tendency which seeks to identify the terms Gautama or Sakyamuni and Buddha. It is most essential in an attempt to fully understand the fundamental principles of Buddhism to bear in mind the fact that the word Buddha is not in any sense a proper name and is, in fact, nothing more than a title of religious honor which may be bestowed upon any person who has reached a certain stage of advancement. Buddha might well be translated "enlightened sage," denoting a sort of spiritual rulership, and may therefore be no more properly limited to one person than the word "king." It is, in this connection, interesting to note that a similar statement can, etymologically speaking, be made of the Christian term "Christ," the proper meaning of which is simply "the anointed one."

While in orthodox Christianity, however, the word Christ has become limited to one person, orthodox Buddhism has all along maintained that the persons to whom the term Buddha is applicable are unlimited, both as regards time and number. Whenever, in the past, spiritual darkness has fallen on a people a divine "teacher of gods and men" has appeared to preach "the gospel glorious in its beginning, glorious in its middle and glorious in its end," and we are assured by Mahayana that the divine will never be so lacking in compassion as to allow a similar time of need pass by unheeded.

Furthermore, we are even told (implicitly by Hinayana, and explicitly by Mahayana) that each of the great world-teachers, each founder of a world-religion, has been more or less a perfect Buddha, consequently worthy of worship, and the message which he brought, worthy of acceptance. Mahayana not only puts forward, as does Catholicism, the claim that it is not merely a thing of the historical ages, but that it has, under forgotten or unknown sages, always existed, and that in future times under future Buddhas it will continue to live, but also that it is the truth of which all the prophets of the world have had a glimpse. Accordingly Buddhism, and especially Mahayana, rejects with some asperity the use of the unqualified word "Buddha" when used as a synonym for Sakyamuni, since to the words "Buddha said," etc., a query as to *which* Buddha was meant might at once be raised; except, naturally, in such cases as when the historic Gautama has previously been specifically referred to in the same passage.

The second and even more subtle and therefore invidious mistake is that concerning the nature of Buddhahood. The statement is often made that according to Buddhism, existence is an unmitigated evil which it is necessary for one to endure until one reaches Buddhahood or extinction. This conception of Buddhahood, however, is very far removed from the true one, for Buddhahood in itself has nothing whatever to do with extinction, one way or the other. Neither is it, as some persons erroneously suppose, the idea that a person freed from the wheel of life and death gains an unending existence in some part of Paradise. In reality, Buddhahood is nothing more than a state of mind obtainable anywhere and at any time. The extinction in Buddhahood is no more than the extinction of desire, and amidst the innumerable other synonyms for the term perhaps the most expressive is "the Great Peace." In ordinary life, we are torn by many conflicting desires and emotions which leave us far from peace of mind; but in attaining Buddha-

hood, the "Mr. Hyde" side of our nature is extinguished and accordingly supreme happiness and serenity is the result.

Another prominent conception in connection with Buddhahood is supposed to fathom the great secrets of life and realize those truths which others can only believe.

We know that it is a fundamental doctrine of both branches of Buddhism that as long as *tanha*—the desire for life—persists, rebirth on earth is necessary. A Buddha, therefore, having extinguished his *tanha*, is no longer bound upon the wheel of life and death. The query, however, as to whether or not his personality persists after death is left by Buddhists largely an open question, the followers of both Hinayana and Mahayana being divided on this point. It may be said in a general way, however, that Hinayana favors the idea of personal extinction, while Mahayana teaches that individualities remain, at least the Dharmakayas and Sambhogakayas. In fact, we read in the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra* of the various persons who have gained "complete extinction" (Nirvana or Buddhahood) who came from their various Buddha-fields to hear Sakya-muni preach. The *Saddharma Pundarika*, or the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law (Jap. Myohorengekyo), is perhaps the most important of the Mahayana sects. It is, however, far from being the only sutra bringing out this point; in fact, practically all the sutras dealing with the subject at all contain the same idea. Mahayana is not dogmatic at all, however, and each person is left to form his own conception.

The above two misconceptions refer to Buddhism as a whole, while the remaining two refer to those points where Mahayana differs from Hinayana and where the difference has been too often overlooked. The first of these is on the universality of Buddhahood. In Hinayana the highest goal to which the vast majority of mankind may aspire is arhatship or mere personal freedom from the wheel of existence. Buddhahood, the state of supreme and perfect enlightenment, may only be reached by one man in the course of one cycle of human evolution. Hinayana also teaches that there are some of the Buddhas, termed Pratyeka Buddhas, who do not openly and universally proclaim the Dharma—in contradistinction to the great Buddhas, such as Sakyamuni, who make it their duty to preach the law for the salvation of all mankind.

In Madhyimayana (Apparent Mahayana), the stepping-stone from Hinayana to the true Mahayana, Buddhahood is, as we have seen, divided into three distinct stages, arhatship, Pratyeka Buddhahood and Buddhahood proper. According to this system, any one

may aspire to whichever stage he desires, but once decided there can be no turning back, once an arhat always an arhat, once a Pratyeka Buddha always a Pratyeka Buddha, etc., so that while whoever may desire to do so may become a Buddha, yet in order to reach this high degree one must continually direct one's efforts toward this end. True Mahayana, however, while maintaining the threefold division, declares that these are merely temporary and that the final goal of all, whether primarily arhats or Pratyeka Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, is supreme Buddhahood. This idea is one of the most prominent features of Mahayana; in fact, the first half of one of the most important Northern Buddhist scriptures, the above-mentioned *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*, is given up to expanding the idea and giving parables and allegories supporting it.

In this connection another point of interest comes up. In Hinayana and the early stages of Mahayana, when Buddhas were considered few and far between, it was easy enough to limit the appearance of the Buddhas to one particular place or country, and the Hindus, always rather proud and exclusive, maintained that no Buddha could be born out of the continent of "Jambudvidpa" which they identified with India.

Naturally this idea was not attractive to the non-Indian countries. Consequently, we frequently find statements by Japanese and Chinese priests to the effect that while it is true that no Buddha could be born outside of "Jambudvidpa": yet their own countries should be considered as being comprised within the sacred continent. As a matter of fact, however, the Mahayana conception of the universality of Buddhahood gradually relegated the "Jambudvidpa" idea into the background. Every one, says Mahayana, may reach the supreme goal regardless of time or place or condition of birth—and not only that, but the gaining of Buddhahood consisted in fully realizing that one had always been in possession of the Buddha nature. Consequently, Mahayana became more and more a universal religion until finally all traces of nationalism and continentism and racial feeling were swept away, and we cannot but rejoice that this was so. Mere nationalism and sectarianism must forever be things of the past.

The last and perhaps the most important of the various misunderstandings of the nature of Buddhahood as conceived by Mahayana is the tendency to look upon the Buddhas as *merely* glorified men. It is quite true that the Buddhas *are* men and have throughout the former history of evolution been only men, winning their exalted position by the exercise of their spiritual powers. Their

difference from ordinary humanity consists solely in degree and not in kind. Originally they were subject to all the temptations of life, and, in their pre-Buddhic days, not only were they subject to temptation but they very frequently fell and became drunkards and rouses. Gradually, however, as they learned the fleetingness of temporal and unworthy pleasures and sought after that happiness which is eternal, they, by extinguishing their lower natures, attained to Buddhahood.

And yet the Buddhas, as well as being human, are divine. Something of the nature of their divinity we noticed when dealing with the question of the Trikaya, but it would be well to go into the subject more thoroughly in the present connection.

The divine as taught by Mahayana is practically synonymous with goodness or enlightenment, so that, logically, wherever goodness is manifested there to a corresponding extent is God. ("Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name there am I.") Accordingly, the Buddhas, since they have succeeded in destroying their lower natures, must be regarded as divine inasmuch as they are all good. They are not merely the instruments for the manifestation of divinity, but actually the Divine himself.

The usual expression is that by a long process of evolution the Buddhas "become one in essence with the Divine," so that in their divine aspect they are worthy of all adoration and worship. The phrase is indeed true and for the most part expresses the idea to be conveyed. The human aspect raises itself up to such a height that it becomes united with the Divine (though maintaining at the same time a separate individuality) so that the appearance of a Buddha is equivalent to the incarnation of the Supreme. We must, however, reiterate the caution made before not to allow the phrase to run away with us so to speak, and give a false impression. "Becoming one in essence" would seem to imply that at present we are not one in essence but that we subsequently become so—thus engendering the idea that Buddhahood is absorption into the Godhead and hence annihilation. We are all of us, even now, at least unconsciously, one in essence with Amitabha, and Buddhahood consists only in realizing that fact. Buddhahood, then, consists rather in consciously recognizing one's unity of essence with the Supreme and the consequent explicit expression of it."

We have a similar conception even in orthodox Christianity. God, we are told, is absolutely omnipresent, and accordingly he is here with us wherever we are, though we are unable to see him. In Christ, the Godhead was not more present in *quantity* (the

quantity of Godhead being everywhere the same) but merely in quality, the expression being more perfect than elsewhere, the universal presence more explicit. The only essential difference is that Christianity limits the divine incarnation to one man, while Mahayana makes God universal in his efforts toward human salvation.

In fact, the similarities between the Christian view of the Incarnation and that of Mahayana, except for this one point, are far more numerous and of far greater importance than might at first thought appear possible, and we may even use the Athanasian Creed, the very typification of Christian orthodoxy, to show how close the resemblance is. The comparison will further act to bring out more fully the Mahayana doctrine.

The so-called Athanasian Creed, it is needless to say, is divided into two sections, the first dealing with the dogma of the Trinity and the Godhead in general; the second, with the incarnation. The former, except, of course, for its damnatory clauses, may be said to be accepted in its entirety by Mahayana though Mahayana, perhaps, brings out the idea more philosophically, more lucidly and less paradoxically than does the Christian symbol. It is the latter part, however, which now claims our attention.

“For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man.” Understand by Jesus Christ the Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Nirmanakaya and its many manifestations, and we find Mahayana accepting the same doctrine. Every Buddha is both divine and human: he is divine inasmuch as he reflects, manifests, or is consciously one with, the Supreme, while at the same time he is distinctly human in another sense.

“Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood.” Here the Mahayana conception is most clearly expressed. In each Buddha’s divine aspect, he is not only equal to God but he actually *is* God. In this respect he is omnipresent and eternal, out of space and time. He is superior to everything else. He is the unthinkable—the unknowable—the One without a second. Nevertheless, in his human aspect, the Buddhas are necessarily inferior to the Absolute. Having a physical body (even though it be for the salvation of the world), each Buddha is, *de natura*, limited—form and space being limitation, and limitation inferiority, for the first requisite of the Absolute is that he be unlimited. The human Buddha, therefore, is equal to the “Father” as touching his divinity and inferior to him as touching his personality.

“Who though he be God and man, yet is not two but one Christ.” We here come to the question of the nature of the personality of the divine incarnations, a matter which greatly troubled the early Christians, and which was the cause of many of the disputes and sects which rent the primitive Church. On this point there were two principal heresies: one the Eutychian, which declared that Christ had not only one person but also but one nature; the other the Nestorian, which declared that there were in Christ two distinct persons which were joined together in some mysterious way. The orthodox view, as every one is aware, is that Christ was but one person, but of two natures—the divine and the human, and strange to say, this view is the one held by Mahayana as regards the Ojin. Each person is but one person naturally, he is not two distinct persons joined together, while at the same time he has, as we know, two different natures, the human or the limited, and the absolute or divine. As does Christianity, Mahayana declares that the object of worship is not the human aspect but the infinite.

Next in the Athanasian creed comes the phrase which is most strikingly Mahayanistic, namely: “One not by the conversion of the Godhead into the flesh, but by taking of the manhood unto God.” This article is most important since it seems to contradict the usual orthodox conception on the subject. Indeed, how the expression made its way into the creed at all is very perplexing, and considering the character of its supposed formulators, it has never been satisfactorily solved. Orthodox Christianity is apt to run contrary to its teachings and to declare in effect at least, that it was the taking of the Godhead into man that constituted the incarnation—as, in fact, the very expression incarnation shows. God, in the modern Church, is supposed to have felt remorse for the results of the Fall; emptied himself of his divinity and became man. According to Mahayana and the plain literal interpretation of this part of the Church’s strictest standard of faith, it is rather a question of the human nature being gradually elevated until a divine nature is acquired, or rather, until the divine nature, which is always latent, is developed.

It can be easily seen from the above that the Mahayana doctrine of the incarnation is far nearer to the doctrines of orthodox Christianity than is the conception held by the so-called liberal Christians and Unitarians of to-day, who teach that Jesus was purely a man though inspired of God, for the Buddhas are as truly divine as the Catholic would make the Christ. They are not only “men sent of God,” but actually God himself, God manifested in the flesh. “The

Lord became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory—glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” We have, then, the strange paradox of the Unitarians who call themselves Christians denying the divinity of Christ and the non-Christian Mahayanists affirming it, for, as we have already seen, according to Mahayana Jesus must be counted among the Buddhas and accordingly must be looked upon as divine.⁵

v.

The Northern Buddhist doctrine corresponding to the Christian doctrine of the incarnation being thus more or less explained, a word or two must next be added in regard to one more striking similarity concerning the character and the work of the great saviors of man, namely, that which has been called the vicarious atonement. This dogma, as presented by orthodox Christianity, has been the object of much severe criticism in recent years, and the present tendency seems to be to drop a vast amount of the crudity with which the idea was formerly associated. In this search for a new interpretation, a knowledge of the Mahayana outlook on the question may prove of interest.

The Christian view, of course, is that man, owing to his innate corruption arising from the Fall, would be condemned to the eternal fires were it not for the fact that Jesus made a complete atonement for the sins of the world by dying upon the cross. In Buddhism, of course, there is no eternal damnation or never-ending hell into which a man may be thrust, but the idea of an atonement is expressed by the technical word *parinamana* or the “turning-over of merits,” a doctrine which is restricted to the Northern branch of Buddhism.

Both Hinayana and Mahayana teach the doctrine of karma, or the reward of merit. It is the sowing and the reaping of which St. Paul speaks, or the law of cause and effect which is the key-note of all modern sciences. It is, in a word, the responsibility for actions. It is the same law which says that when two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen are put together that water is the result, which declares that evil deeds will bring unhappiness, and

⁵ It is interesting to call to mind in this connection the fact, to which attention was first invited by F. Max Müller, that Sakyamuni (under the name of Josaphat—a corruption of the Sanskrit term Bodhisattva or Bodhisat—is one of the regularly canonized saints of the Roman Catholic Church. The details of how the discovery was made may be found elsewhere, so that it is only necessary here to note the fact that the founders of the world’s two largest and greatest religions have thus received mutual honor at the hands of their followers, although the canonization of Gautama may have been done unconsciously and as the result of a singular misunderstanding.

virtuous ones their due reward. Thus both Buddhism and Christianity agree that justice will finally prevail.

In both Hinayana and Mahayana, though chiefly in the former, much is heard about the 'stock of merits.' This stock of merits is as convenient as a modern bank account. Every good deed which is performed leads to an increase in this stock, and, oppositely, every vice to its diminution. Buddhist believers are told to look after their stock of merits carefully, to direct them toward the attainment of Buddhahood—in other words, not to exhaust them in obtaining useless rewards, but to reverse them for the attainment of the supreme goal, just as a father might advise his son not to waste his patrimony in order that by saving he might purchase a valuable estate.

Now according to Buddhism all the Buddhas are free from sin. Consequently, according to this law of Karma, as a result of their purity and holiness, their stock of merits should be of so high an order that all the things of the world should lie at their feet. Wealth, power and luxury should be theirs. They should be temporal, as well as spiritual, rulers.

As a matter of fact, however, we know that the very opposite of the above is the case. That not only are they not wrapped in luxury, but that they are the object of scorn and even of persecution. "The birds have nests and the foxes have holes, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." In the case of Christ, whom as we know Mahayana would regard as a Buddha, crucifixion is supposed to have been his reward for his ceaseless endeavors for the salvation of man's soul.

Hinayana entirely passes over this phase of the matter, but Mahayana attempts to show that all the various things of the world are within the Buddha's reach, but that they turn over the rewards of their merits which would otherwise secure such things, for the sake of mankind at large. Instead of enjoying the fruit of his good works himself, the Buddha gives it to the world at large that it may benefit the more. In the legends which have arisen about Gautama and Jesus we find the story of the Evil One offering them the temporary sovereignty of the world, only to be rejected by both in order that they might go forth as homeless wanderers for the salvation of sentient beings.

Before closing the question of the Parinamana it would be well to compare the idea with the teachings of material science. To many persons versed in scientific knowledge the idea of the turning-over of merits may seem repugnant as being incompatible with the

strict principle that the law of cause and effect is irrefragable and unchanging. The law of the universe will not be changed simply because one man died, as Christianity avers, or merely because he verbally renounced in favor of all mankind the fruit of his actions, as we find the conception in Mahayana.

This statement, however, but shows a complete misunderstanding of the Buddhist doctrine. As a matter of fact, we find instances of the Parinamana in every-day life. A man may struggle for years and finally, after amassing a fortune, give it to the world at large without injuring the law of cause and effect. A man of unusual strength may remove an obstacle in the road which can be done by no one else so that all may pass more freely and not a single law of science be broken. Yet these are both instances of the Mahayana conception. Or take the case of a man who after long years of study and practice of medicine has reached a position where he can demand enormous fees from wealthy patients, yet gives all of his time to the curing of charity cases. In this case his stock of merits is his surgical skill which he could use for his own benefit but instead uses for the benefit of the world at large. In such a manner, says Mahayana, have all the Buddhas, by their long course of evolution, reached a position where it was quite possible to stay away from the present world with its attendant evils, or, if they appeared in it at all, to become the absolute masters, while on the contrary they gave the fruit of their evolution (their wisdom and knowledge) to all sentient beings.

The Mahayana view of the turning-over of merits, it will have been seen, by no means implies the destruction of the law of Karma or of cause and effect, but merely the transmutation of it which is as scientific as the law of the transmutation of energy.

We can see from the above that the Mahayana doctrine on the subject and that held by Christianity have much in common. The principal difference is that, as in so many other cases, the Christian idea is apt to be more narrow and more limited than the Mahayanist. In Christianity the atoning work is confined to one man, though, indeed the Catholic doctrine of supererogation suggests a somewhat wider scope, while in Buddhism, naturally, all the Buddhas are supposed to have turned over their merits for the sake of all sentient beings. Furthermore strict Christian orthodoxy is apt to consider that the atonement consisted only in the crucifixion, while Mahayanism holds that it was not merely one instance but a line of conduct persistently maintained. In Buddhism the cross would be only the final and supreme link in the complete chain. Christianity is bound

to admit, however, that the whole life and even the birth of Christ were in the nature of a vicarious atonement since thereby he suffered innumerable persecutions in order that man as a whole might be saved. The atonement has long been considered a stumbling block to the belief in Christianity by intellectual and scientific persons, but if Christianity were only to give to this doctrine an interpretation similar to that of Mahayana, it would become one of orthodoxy's strongest bulwarks in its attacks against materialism.

Certainly, in any case, the doctrine of the Parinamana is a beautiful one, for while, according to Hinayana, one may only do a deed of kindness for the sake of acquiring merit, according to Mahayana it may be done quite without thought of the accruing reward—simply out of pure altruism.

VI.

There remains now to make mention of but one point before bringing this article to a close, and that is the method of the attainment of Buddhahood. We have already observed that in the Mahayana system every one is finally to become a Buddha, so that the next thing of importance is to know what method one must pursue in order to gain, according to Mahayana, supreme and perfect enlightenment.

This is another one of the many points on which Mahayana and Hinayana fundamentally differ. In Hinayana, salvation is to be obtained solely through good works—through bringing one's stock of merit to maturity. A man continues to whirl upon the wheel of life and death until he has accomplished sufficient good works to free him from it. Every present that a man gives, every kind word that he speaks, every poor man whom he keeps from starving causes him to advance so far toward and nearer to the attainment of the final goal.

That this idea had, and has, its good points cannot be doubted. It encourages kindness and charity: it is active in increasing benevolence and might at first sight appear superior to any other. Its great weakness lies in the fact that it is scarcely logically compatible with the Buddhist doctrine that Buddhahood is not a place of existence, or even of cessation of existence. If that were so, it is quite conceivable that the mere performing of good works would enable one to be born there. It must be remembered, however, that Nirvana and Buddhahood are primarily states of mind obtainable anywhere and everywhere, and that consequently obtaining these depends, logically, upon the proper regulation of the mind, which is

the Mahayana view of the subject, agreeing, on this point as on so many others, with Vedantic doctrines. Mahayana, except perhaps the sects of the Pure Land division, the Jodomon, is not always very explicit as to its *not* being good works which results in the gaining of Buddhahood, but it is very much so in declaring that it is through a proper system of absolute realization. Accordingly, the Mahayanists attempt to reach this by a proper systematic mind-cultivation. Consequently, as far as Mahayana goes, the performance of good works has only an indirect effect, inasmuch as (1) it reacts favorably upon the mind, and (2) as it may tend to bring about a rebirth under conditions more favorable to the attainment of perfect peace.⁶

Not only, however, does Mahayana affirm that it is the mind which is the direct cause of gaining Buddhahood, but it also warns its followers against being too self-confident as to their spiritual state owing to the performance of acts of physical charity. An instance of this occurs in the case of the famous Bodhidharma, who brought the Dhyana or Zen-sect from India to China. Shortly after his arrival in the latter country he, it is said, was invited to the court of the emperor Mu and proceeded to the capital, Chin Liang. Upon being received in audience, the emperor said to him, "I have built many temples, copied sutras, ordered monks and nuns to be converted. Is there any merit, sir, in my conduct?" To which Bodhidharma laconically replied, "None at all, your Majesty."

This might appear brutal at first sight and scarcely true, but in reality it might be that instead of merely not obtaining any merit for his actions, the ruler might have actually been the worse off for them, inasmuch as they cultivated pride, arrogance and self-satisfaction, thus placing him further than ever from supreme enlightenment. While Hinayana places more emphasis upon the amount of the gift that is bestowed, Mahayana emphasizes the spirit in which it is given, agreeing thereby with the Christ's teaching of the widow's mite. Hinayana would be apt to regard two gifts of equal pecuniary value, one given out of a desire for renown and the other out of pure altruism, as of equal spiritual value, while Mahayana would be apt to judge the gifts themselves to be of no value whatsoever, but only the idea which each giver had in mind.

Like Protestant Christianity, however, Mahayana, while teaching that the performance of good works does not necessarily tend

⁶ I may as well mention here that in Shodomon, the Holy Path division of Mahayana, Buddhahood is to be gained through knowledge, and in the Jodomon through faith.

toward spiritual enlightenment, yet declares that spiritual enlightenment is necessarily attended by the performance of good works. One may give to charity and yet be far from holy, but one cannot be holy and not give to charity to the best of one's means. Good works necessarily follow the path of spirituality, and so Mahayana bids its followers to aim after the spirit, teaching that the letter will take care of itself.⁷

Now that the means of the Mahayana way to Buddhahood have been ascertained, there remains but to study the roads and the routes to be trodden, some idea of which may be gained from the accompanying chart:

The Lesser Vehicle (Hinayana)	{	For Sravakas and Pratyeka-Buddhas	
The Greater Vehicle (Mahayana)	{	1. Shodomon	{
			Gradual
			Abrupt
		2. Jodomon	{
			Gradual
			Abrupt

The two routes of Hinayana, Sravakaship, and Pratyeka Buddhahood, have already received due attention, as well as the fact that even they result finally in Buddhahood, though they do so but indirectly. That there is but one goal must also, of course, be said for the various Mahayana roads, though they are supposed to lead to it far more directly. There are two ways of classifying the Mahayana paths to Buddhahood. The first is by the time taken to attain the goal. In Hinayana and the Gradual School of Mahayana, the supreme goal may only be reached by long and arduous courses of evolution. There are many stages in the road to Buddhahood (ten are usually enumerated) and each one must be passed before the next one can be obtained. In the abrupt school of Mahayana, however, the perfect peace may be obtained at one leap. Buddhahood, according to this school, consists in realizing that we have always been Buddhas, and this may be done at any moment. A drunkard might become a Buddha in the twinkling of an eye were it only possible for him so suddenly to perceive the true nature of his own being, just as Protestantism teaches that it is possible for a hardened sinner to become regenerate in a second's time.

⁷ In most of the Mahayana sects this doctrine does not prevent the continued prohibition of the eating of meat, marrying, etc., but in the Shin sect, where the idea is carried to its logical extreme, even these prohibitions are dispensed with as being contrary to the spirit of the Buddha.

The other method of classification (and the two methods bisect each other) is between the Shodomon and the Jodomon, the chief distinctions between which we have already observed. The Shodomon teaches its followers to seek for supreme enlightenment here on earth, by a proper system of discipline. This discipline may not take one the whole length of the path in this life, but it will at least aid one in one's development so that several stages may be passed. At death one will be reborn in one of the numerous heavens or hells which Buddhism declares to exist, according to the stage of development at which one is, varying in each case in the intensity of bliss or suffering according to past actions. None of these heavens or hells are permanent, all men being finally destined to reach the supreme goal, which is higher than the most blissful heaven.

At the end of the allotted time in one of these abodes, one is reborn in this world, likewise in a condition governed by actions in a previous birth.⁸

And so the process of birth and death goes on until Mokshā—Nirvana—is attained. This must be accomplished only after innumerable lives, according to the gradual division of the Shodomon; or in this life, according to the Abrupt School. As it works out in actuality, however, the differences between the two schools on this point are of little or no importanec.

Of far more seeming importance is the distinction between the Shodomon and the Jodomon. While Shodomon teaches its followers to seek Buddhahood here upon earth, Jodomon encourages its followers to gain that goal by being reborn in the Pure Land (Jodo, hence the name of the school) or the Sukhavati of the universal Amitabha, a sort of penultimate heaven. Buddhahood being obtainable anywhere, as we have already observed several times.

Theoretically, the attainment of Buddhahood, in all Buddhism, gives one power over nature and all the elements—practically, however, as Shodomon is to-day, Buddhahood is merely a mental state with no corresponding physical reaction; in other words, the supreme state is purely mental. In Jodomon, however, the practice of intense faith (not mere belief) in Amitabha on the part of the devotee is

⁸ Most of the Mahayana sects, in permitting the ancestor worship which seems to be inherent in the Oriental mind, make a proviso that persons are not to be worshiped after the lapse of one hundred years, as they may well have reincarnated by that time. All Mahayana asserts, however, that the discarnate period may, and usually does, last a much longer time. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Buddhist conception of rebirth differs somewhat from other systems teaching a similar doctrine, in Buddhism there being no ego-soul to transmigrate from birth to birth.

supposed to develop the Sambhogakaya (Hoshin), or the body of bliss of each one of us, which is always latent, so that at death, by thus being able to use this body (the complete use of which means Buddhahood) we are able to go to Jodo—the supreme paradise.

The Ojo (salvation or going to Sukhavati) of the Jodomon consists of two phases—one of the regeneration which takes place in this life. It is the true entrance into Jodo, which like Buddhahood is quite as much a state of mind as a place.⁹ By the exclusive adoration of the universal Amitabha, the Amitabha within each of us is awakened, and accordingly the Buddha nature of each of us in our Sambhogakayas is made manifest. We are thus inhabitants of Jodo all the time that we are on the earth.

The second phase comes at the moment of death, when the physical vehicle, so to speak, is cast aside, and only the Buddha body remaining. We are then materially in Jodo, in Amida's land, in the City of Light. On earth, as we know, however, the degrees of development vary greatly with different people; accordingly the degree of the development of the Buddha body likewise varies. Consequently there are degrees even in Jodo. These are classified into two main heads, (1) the Kwedo, or the apparent Pure Land, where the mere believers go and those whose faith has only been half-hearted; and (2) the Hodo or the True Land where are gathered together those whose faith has been pure and undefiled.

Even in the Jodo school, however, there is the distinction between the Gradual and the Abrupt doctrines. In the Gradual school which is represented in Japan by the Jodo sect proper, the attainment of Jodo is only a step in the road to Buddhahood. There the external conditions of life being somewhat less incompatible, the attainment of supreme enlightenment is rendered easier and quicker. In the Abrupt school, however, of which the powerful Shin sect is representative, rebirth in the Pure Land is itself equivalent to reaching Buddhahood.

The real differences between the four schools, however, are very slight and even the distinctions between the Jodomon and the Shodomon is far more apparent than fundamental; in fact, as it works out, there is practically no difference at all, the two divisions being but different aspects of one whole process.

⁹ Reincarnation is the reappearance of the Karma, or the fruit of the action set in motion in the previous life. In Buddhism the soul is both and neither the same in two successive lives. Owing to the limited space at my disposal, however, I am forced to refer the reader to the numerous books on the subject by other writers.

The way in which this seemingly impossible fact comes about is this: In the Shodomon, while the process of evolution is slow and the round of birth and death continuous, yet finally all men will attain to Buddhahood and be able to use their Sambhogakayas or Buddha bodies. This, however, is exactly what constitutes the Pure Land. Accordingly, it may be said that even the Shodomon teaches that all men will be reborn in the Pure Land.

In the Jodomon, where the mode of progress is somewhat different, the following is the course of evolution.

The <i>Woso Yeko</i> (Going)	}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Teaching (<i>Kyo</i>), as set forth in the sutras 2. Practice (<i>Gyo</i>), the reciting of the name of Amido 3. Faith (<i>Shin</i>), or believing in his will to save 4. Attainment (<i>Sho</i>), or being reborn in Jodo and becoming a Buddha 	}	Cause
The <i>Genso Yeko</i> (Return)	}	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Coming back to the world of suffering to save all fellow-beings 	}	Effect

This last is most important, and is a point which is often overlooked in considering the doctrines of the Pure Land Sect. Its presence puts an entirely different aspect upon affairs. Instead of Jodo being merely a place of eternal beatitude, it is rather a place where one having reached peace oneself, prepares oneself for helping on the course of evolution.

The Shodomon and the Jodomon, then, take but different times for going through the same process. In the Shodomon, one is first whirled upon the wheel of life and then enters Jodo; in the Jodomon, however, one first reaches Jodo, and then "for us men and our salvation" repeatedly returns to life to guide the footsteps of those less faithful and less progressive along the path to what the Jodoists poetically call the Eternal City of light and life.