

## THE RELIGION OF ENLIGHTENMENT.

BY THE EDITOR.

**B**UDDHISM has rightly been called the religion of enlightenment, for the basic plan of the faith is to be guided by wisdom, illustrated by the light that is shed on our path, enabling us to make sure and firm steps. Hearers of the Word, as soon as converted, are generally reported to utter the following confession :

“Abhikkantaṃ bhante abhikkantaṃ bhante, seyyathā pi bhante nikkujjitaṃ vā ukkujjeyya paṭicchannaṃ vā vivareyya mūlhassa vā maggaṃ ācikkheyya andhakāre vā telappajjotaṃ dhāreyya cakkhumanto rūpāni dakkhintīti, evam evaṃ Bhagavatā anekapariyāyena dhammo pakāsito esāhaṃ bhante Bhagavantaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi dhammaṃ ca bhikkusaṅghaṃ ca, labheyyaṃ Bhagavato santike pabbajjaṃ labheyyaṃ upasampadaṃ ti.”

“Excellent, O Lord ! this is excellent ! As one raises what has been thrown down, or reveals what has been hidden, or tells the way to him who has gone astray, or holds out a lamp in the darkness that those who have eyes may see the objects, just even so has the Doctrine been made clear by the Lord in manifold exposition. And I, even I, take refuge in the Lord, his Doctrine and his Order. May the Lord receive, as a lay-disciple, from this day forth as long as life endures, me who have taken refuge [in him].”

When the Buddha died, he inculcated adhesion to the truth, the Dharma (in Pāli, *dhammo*), but did not insist on obedience to the detailed regulations of the Order ; on the contrary, he said that the members of the Order, whenever they saw fit to do so, should be at liberty to abolish them all, insisting at the same time upon their adhesion to Discipline (*Vinayo*) in the larger sense. The Buddha meant to say that the regulations are temporary only, made for special purposes, to suit definite conditions ; but the case is different with regard to truth, the basis of all religion and conduct, its application formulated by the Buddha in his Doctrine and Discipline which in Pāli are written as one word : *Dhammavinayo*. Yet even here he does not mean his disciples to accept any theory on trust, not even on his own authority, but requests them to rely on themselves and to be lamps themselves. He said :

“Ānando, dwell as lamps unto yourselves [literally, self-lamps or self-islands, for *lamp* and *island* are the same word in Pāli], refuges to yourselves, having no one else for a refuge; [be] lamps of religion (*dhammo*), religious refuges, having no one else for a refuge.” (*Book of the Great Decease*, Chap. 3.)<sup>1</sup>

The lamp has thus become a significant symbol in Buddhism, and in one of the Buddhist parables we are told that the light of lamps possesses the mysterious quality that by lighting other lamps it loses none of its own radiance or usefulness.<sup>2</sup> To divulge the doctrine is one of the main duties of Buddhist disciples, and by spreading “the glorious doctrine,” the *Kalyāṇo dhammo*, as Buddha calls his religion, far from sustaining any loss, we can only be ben-



Attadīpā viharatha, attasaraṇā, anaññasaraṇā, dhammadīpā, dhammasaraṇā, anaññasaraṇā. (*Decease Book*, II.)

efited. Here the saying becomes literally true, that “by giving, we gain; by scattering, we lay up treasures; by imparting wealth, we grow rich.”

The idea of light as an emblem of the religion of enlightenment has found a beautiful expression in one of the Gandhāra sculptures which we here reproduce from a photograph. We see a teacher holding up a lamp and a disciple looking up at it and worshipping the light with folded hands.

<sup>1</sup> The translation of this famous passage was specially made for the present quotation by Mr. Albert J. Edmunds of Philadelphia, the translator of the *Dhammapāda* (*Hymns of the Faith*.)

<sup>2</sup> *Gospel of Buddha*, p. 168.