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NOTES AND STUDIES

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPEMENT OF BUDDHISM

ORIGINATED in the low valley of the Ganges in the fifth century before our era, Buddhism spread rapidly, first in India, then over the rest of Asia, from the Sunda Islands to the steppes of Siberia. Though later it receded before Islam, it still seems strong and able to renew itself. In Eastern Asia, where national feeling has no extensive sphere of action and ancient civilizations are in a state of decline, it is at the present time one of the forces capable of resisting confusion, or of bringing order into chaos.

Just as Christianity helps to maintain a certain moral unity in Europe and in America, religious sentiment under the ensigns of Buddha and of Mahomet is to-day almost the only link uniting the peoples of Asia. Elevated above economic rivalries, civil wars, and race antagonism, Buddhism remains a principle of peace and a symbol of union. To every spirit curious of the past and uneasy as to the future the history of this age-long religion offers an astonishing spectacle.

Buddhism was, as has long been noted, a doctrine relying upon the lower classes of Indian society. In this respect it seems directed against the caste system. Nevertheless, it is necessary to make a distinction. When one speaks of the castes of India, there is a tendency to confuse two very different notions. If we say that there are two higher castes, that of the Brahmans and that of the Kshatriyas, we give to the word 'caste' a very general value, analogous to that of the word 'class' in our language. In other cases we apply the term 'castes' to narrow groups, resembling both the clan and the corporation, the cohesion of which is assured by obligations having a religious character: it is forbidden to marry and to take meals with members of another group.

To caste in the narrow sense Buddhism is not opposed. Furthermore, it does not pretend to abolish the great social classes, or to put the subject on a level with the sovereign. It made, however, every effort to destroy the omnipotence of the Brahmans. For they had

propagated a doctrine which made them superior to other men and, as it were, divine. All merit is derived from sacrifices: the Brahman, who alone is qualified to offer them, is therefore assured of great spiritual and material profits, and the system of caste, which provides a legal justification for the actual situation, consecrates the triple preponderance—religious, economic, and social—of the Brahman class. Buddhism, from its very beginning, rebelled against the excesses of this régime, and in so doing manifested with a new vigour a tendency which was already stirring the masses, not only in the whole of India, but also in other countries.

The Vedic religion was founded upon the efficacy of sacrifice; all merit, and consequently all happiness, is acquired by offering victims to the gods. But against this principle conscience and reason protest. Knowledge and morality, do they not confer a superior power and prestige? The holy man will then be not the Brahman, but rather he who knows the truth and practises virtue. Religion should no longer be formal, exterior to the individual; it is a principle of life, at once knowledge, fervour, and benevolence.

So, while the Brahman caste drew from the doctrine of sacrifice its dignity and wealth, the new conception of religion tended to destroy these privileges. The cleric was superior to the Brahman; it was to him that the offerings should be made. At the same time the principle of heredity, which is the foundation of caste, was found to be seriously impaired. Indeed, if holiness is within reach of every one, it is vain to pretend that birth confers a moral superiority. In the eyes of the sage there is no caste: the nobility of the Brahman is but an illusion. In short, we find at the origin of Buddhism a social movement having relation to a purer sentiment of morality and religion, and tending to ruin the privileges of the Brahman caste.

If we desire to class the influences which favoured this manifestation, we must look beyond the frontiers of India. In Iran the establishment of the Achaemenian dynasty had been preceded by a religious reform, similar to that from which Buddhism emerged. At the two extremities of Asia Hebrew prophecy and Chinese Taoism were contending, the one against the rich, the other against orthodoxy. Finally, in Greece we see the tyrants upheld by the people against the aristocracy.

In such wise, towards the middle of the first millennium before our era, a great crisis was upheaving the whole of Asia. But in each country new aspirations took a particular shade. In Iran it was especially the resistance of the farmer against the excesses of a brutal feudalism; in Palestine it was the opposition between the rich and the poor. In India the struggle was not confined exclusively to the

farmers or the poor. Divers elements were banded in a common hostility to Brahman domination: adventurers of low extraction who had become kings, leaders of caravans, and merchants enriched by trade, ascetics, sophists, philosophers, condemned by Brahman orthodoxy. Even in India itself the movement varied according to the regions: in the countries of ancient Aryan colonization, such as the high valley of the Ganges, the dissidents formed small closed societies, where an esoteric teaching, the doctrine of the Upanishads, was transmitted; in countries incompletely colonized the resistance of the Brahmans was less strong, and opposition broke out openly. Then appeared popular religions, Buddhism, Jainism. If Buddhism has eclipsed Jainism and other local sects, that is probably due to the protection of the powerful kings of Magadha.

These despots, who from the time of Buddha had set up their hegemony in the lower valley of the Ganges, succeeded during the time of Aśoka in extending their domination over the greater part of India.

Buddhism, Jainism, the doctrine of the Upanishads, other sects now forgotten, rose at the same epoch, responding to the same needs, to the same secret aspirations. And, doubtless, it was by no mere chance that all the Indian provinces were convulsed at the same time: about 512 before our era Darius subdued the Panjab, and the conquered region formed a satrapy in the heart of the Achaemenian empire. This shock seems to have shaken the whole of India, determining everywhere the crystallization of elements which for centuries had remained amorphous.

Under this foreign influence India was affected by new ideas which were to be essential factors of the Buddhist religion. It was first the notion of the 'universal monarch', conceived probably in Babylon, that at an early date spread towards the East and helped, especially after the Achaemenian conquest, to incite the Indian masses. It was a cardinal notion in the religious, social, and political order; for the king of kings, a personage more than human, dominated all the aristocracy; he was the refuge of the humble; suppressing disorder and opposition, he created a new order. The diffusion of this notion among the masses of the people explains the joint progress of Buddhism and of Magadhan imperialism. While stabilizing their sovereignty, the kings of Magadha appeared in the eyes of the peoples as universal monarchs. In like manner Buddhism became in its growth the manifestation of the new order. The law of Buddha was the law of the Empire, and in the memory of the faithful the Buddha, who was primarily no more than a holy man, changed little by little into a legendary monarch, a king of kings.

Certain traits, common to Buddhism and to the religion of Zoroaster, are perhaps to be explained likewise by an influence of Iran upon India. There is, first, the importance accorded to the dogma of retribution after death. In the Vedic religion, very different in this respect from later doctrines, the merit which is gained by sacrifice produces happy effects in the near future. If anything is left of it in the kingdom of the Manes, it is because the future life does not differ essentially from the present. It is quite another matter in the Zoroastrian and Buddhist morality: of small moment is this short life; the sage should think only of happiness after death. While the wicked man will be reborn in a wretched condition, the good man will have a part in a divine happiness. Marvellous hope for the humble, whom this apotheosis will console for all the woes of the present.

India seems also to have borrowed from Iran eschatological ideas and belief in a Messiah. After a cycle of years this world where we are will be destroyed. Then will appear the Saviour, Saoshyant in the religion of Zoroaster, Maitreya in that of Buddha.

These notions and these dogmas formed a coherent whole, firmly welded together. Once granted that the monarch is superior to the Brahman, that merit is not gained by sacrifice, and that holiness is accessible to all, a new order is of necessity established; unlimited perspectives are opened to the humble; the spaces of paradise and of hell are peopled; saviours become numerous both in the past and in the future.

The contact established between India and Iran by the Achaemenian conquerors and maintained by the caravans circulating between the two countries may explain certain traits of the Buddhist religion. There remain, nevertheless, other elements which cannot be traced back to any foreign model: the Buddhist ideal is one of gentleness and goodness, and the smiling joy of the first apostles is the expression of a benevolence which extends to every being. Herein Buddhism was in its time unique; it was not the necessary result of impersonal forces; it was the pious work of its fervent initiators.

A miracle, we may exclaim; but this is not a satisfactory explanation. We should rather prove that the remedy had issued from the excess of the evil. Caste spirit is particularist to an extreme degree; he who lives thereby believes in a limited fellowship; the morality derived from this source is founded entirely upon the sentiment of honour, that is, upon the prejudices inherent in each condition. For this morality of honour Buddhism substitutes that of goodness. The man who is free from caste is in fellowship with all men, with all beings; he comes forth from a narrow compartment to become consolidate with the universe, and the sentiment which he had of dignity is consequently

changed into one of humility and gentleness; his repugnance in regard to other beings gives place to compassion and love. The country where the caste system had been the most tyrannical was just that where men were first to free themselves from the prejudices of their condition. It was through a reaction against caste that the early Buddhists created a morality in which all men could share, and it was in such wise that they founded the first universal religion.

What was the teaching of the Buddha and of the first saints, his followers? It is impossible to say with certainty. It was an oral teaching concerning which we have no satisfactory testimony. The codification of the Scriptures did not take place until several centuries after the death of Śākya-muni, when the religion had already been profoundly transformed and generations of doctors had added enormously to the treasure of the sacred words. The essential thing was the sentiment of veneration for the Master, which joined men of every condition into a brotherhood. This sentiment, experienced sometimes at the first call, opened the soul to a universal charity; it was truly a new life, and without study, without a novitiate, the neophyte became a 'son of the Śākyas', that is to say, a spiritual brother of Śākya-muni.

It was a religion without clergy and without monasteries: small groups leading a wandering life, teaching and begging their food. Among the new converts some were added to the band of wanderers, others remained at home, ready to share with their brethren the product of their toil. Wandering preachers and stay-at-home donors, these two divisions of the Church, felt themselves a single fellowship. During the season of rains journeys became difficult; the preachers then received the hospitality of the householders. The beginning and the end of the rains were marked by solemn reunions which constituted the two great feasts of the year.

Simplicity of liturgy and of doctrine; a spirit of humility and of charity among the neophytes; a small number of groups living on the border of the Brahman society—such were the characteristics of nascent Buddhism. How many metamorphoses were necessary before this religion, so modest in its beginning, could in the end cover Asia with monasteries!

Alien, at its origin, to Brahman society, Buddhism proceeded to modify itself on the Brahman pattern: it was inspired by Brahman ideas, adopted Brahman institutions. There was here the same phenomenon of endosmosis which was subsequently repeated between Christianity and the Pagan world.

Brahmanism itself, after radical tendencies had made their appearance, shewed more flexibility and diversity. The doctrine of the Upani-

shads, aimed in principle against the religion of sacrifice, was accompanied by a sectarian movement which tended to ruin the ancient Vedic edifice. The Brahmans, threatened in their privileges, held their ground with much skill. Adroit opportunists, they succeeded in reconciling tradition with novel doctrines. Little by little the Upanishads were incorporated into the Veda. Buddhism found itself in conflict no longer with an antiquated and moribund religion; the conflict had to be with a system restored and rejuvenated. Finally, Brahmanism, after having been within an ace of destruction, held its positions.

It is impossible here to mark all the vicissitudes of this conflict. Summarily it may be reduced to a powerful offensive of Buddhism during the time of the Magadhan empire, followed by a counter attack of the Brahmans after the dismemberment of that empire.

After the expedition of Alexander, who raised aloft again the image of the universal monarch, the Magadhan dynasty of the Mauryas enlarged its domination in the lower valley of the Ganges. These princes, of low extraction, proceeded to realize in person the popular Buddhist ideal of the warrior king, protector of the Law. It was Aśoka, emperor (about 250 B.C.) and disciple of Buddha, who formed the first plan for the political unity of India. Even religious unity seemed on the point of being realized; missionaries penetrated into the neighbouring countries. But this imperial work was ephemeral. In order to confirm it, the toil of many generations was requisite. Aśoka had no successor capable of completing his task. After him the empire fell to pieces. The dynasty of the Śuṅgas, which succeeded that of the Mauryas, favoured the Brahmans and showed itself hostile to Buddhism. In the third century the Buddhist faith seemed destined to surmount every obstacle; after the second century came the revenge of Brahmanism.

Let us no longer regard things from a political angle. What exactly happened? The Brahman system, founded upon caste and upon the prestige of an age-long tradition, could not be seriously damaged in the Central Region, within the territory of ancient Aryan colonization, which extended from the middle Indus to Benares. The Buddhist contagion was rapidly propagated in outlying districts, among peoples dissimilar in blood or incompletely colonized; but the heart of India remained almost intact.

Furthermore, Buddhism, even from the beginning of its expansion, had been continuously affected by the domination of its rival. Apparently, the first disciples of the Buddha were spirits simple and humble, in whom qualities of heart took the place of knowledge and cleverness; the Brahmans were proud and pedantic. The Buddhists

repeated in the Magadhan dialect the short teachings of the Master; the Brahmans quoted the Veda, the threefold science which for ages had been set forth in a rich and imposing language, Sanskrit. The sons of the Śākyas did not rest until they also possessed a literature, a canon, and a sacred language. These ambitions were perhaps suggested to them by Brahmans who had been instructed and converted, such as that Kāśyapa the Great who takes a leading part in the narratives of the First Council. Once the descent to a lower plane was made, it was not long before the chiefs lost the humility of the early disciples; Brahman pride won its way into the Church. Soon there was an incessant effort on the part of story-tellers to embellish the origin of Buddhism. By them the condition of the early saints was exalted into that of kshatriyas and scions of noble houses.

At the same time the legend of the Buddha was amplified, and the physiognomy of the Master tended to become fixed, with the traits of a superhuman king. A king's son, he is born in a palace. His birth is miraculous, and his mother, Māyā, dies seven days after bringing him forth. Still young, he surpasses the doctors in knowledge and wisdom. He leaves the world, gains distinction by terrible austerities, but recognizes the vanity of these practices. Then he retires beneath the sacred tree. Māra, chief of the powers of evil, tries in vain to seduce him. Śākya-muni triumphs over the Evil One and, absorbed in his meditation, discovers the chain of causes which produce that nescience, the destruction of which leads to Wisdom. From this time he is the Buddha, the Awakened. He betakes himself to Benares and, even as a king promulgating his law, he proclaims the four truths: pain exists; desire is the origin thereof; renouncement destroys it; the way leads to this deliverance.

One would seek in vain to distinguish in this narrative the real from the legendary. It is not a human biography. The image therein reflected is that of a hero already almost divine.

The apotheosis of the Buddha during the ages which followed his death brought about a modification of the Buddhist mythology and cult. The first generations of the faithful had adopted the gods of the Brahmans, Brahmā, Indra, &c., and the goal of the devotee was the attainment of the abode of the gods. These beliefs and this hope endured during the succeeding ages; but the Buddhas, as divine beings, became superior to the ancient gods; their relics were the object of a cult; it was held that, having passed beyond the world of inferior gods, they had penetrated within the abode of perfect felicity, conceived of first as the heaven of Brahmā, afterwards as a distinct stage, Nirvāṇa.

At the same time, while the beliefs were transformed, the constitution of the Church was profoundly modified. The principal fact is the

foundation of a monastic order, lodged in permanent habitations. Till then the wandering preachers had dwelt outside of villages, begging their bread and occupying fixed abodes only during the rainy season. Two opposite tendencies soon became manifest among them: some, the more severe, the rigorists, isolated themselves in the jungle; the others were banded together under the guidance of an ancient sage. In the end the latter prevailed; community life became the general rule. As bands numerically large could not receive, during the season of rain, a householder's hospitality, room was provided for them in grottoes or in special buildings. Little by little these temporary shelters, the upkeep of which was provided by donors in the neighbourhood, prolonged the sojourn of their guests and were changed into permanent monasteries.

To the anarchy of the early times, when the lack of constraint and the promiscuity of the sexes sometimes engendered disorder, there succeeded an ordered life with strict obligations. The necessities of a common life imposed a rule, a hierarchy, and soon an ordination, a novitiate, penalties. By the side of the pure doctrine the discipline became an important part of the sacred texts; casuistry was developed.

From this time the Church was divided into two groups, separated by obstacles not easily surmounted: on one side the laity, still in the world, a sort of Third Order, under obedience to a few rules; on the other side the religious of the two sexes, grouped in monasteries of monks and nuns, strangers to the world, elevated by a novitiate and a sacrament to an eminent dignity. This constitution was unlike that of the primitive Church, where preachers and householders, donors and beggars lived together during the rains, feeling strongly the ties of fellowship and being on the same moral plane. The equilibrium was disturbed: the laity took a lower place, the religious a place constantly higher, and this schism was the cause of important consequences in morals and religion.

The situation of the religious in contrast to that of the laity was not very different from that of the high castes, of the 'twice born', with respect to the Śūdras, the uninitiated. The sentiment of this inequality introduced into the Buddhist communities a particularist spirit, a latent pride, such as dominated Brahman society. These sentiments became still more strongly marked when the religious had been graded into distinct categories, corresponding to various degrees of knowledge and of sanctity.

One now perceives resemblances, which cannot be fortuitous, between the developement of the doctrine and that of the community. We have seen that above the ancient paradise of the early believers Buddhist speculation had in the end formed the conception of a less gross, a purer

abiding place, at first identified with the world of Brahmā, then further removed under the name of Nirvāṇa. It is there that the Buddhas, and with them the saints, the 'perfectly awakened', attain their end; but the common herd, the laity, can scarcely pass beyond the abode of the ancient gods. In this way the aristocratic tendencies which begin to appear in the new constitution of the Church are manifested also in the dogmas. Equally with the community morals and religion have a double aspect; one morality for the humble, for those remaining in the world, and another morality for the religious and the saints; there is a religion of paradise and a religion of Nirvāṇa. For the simple good behaviour is enough; it is the old morality of the sons of Śākyas. For the saints rarer virtues are required, knowledge, meditation, ecstasy. Modified in this way by ideas which were strange to the primitive Church, in great measure borrowed from Brahman society, Buddhism proceeded to pursue its developement and to produce new fruits. Meanwhile a powerful reaction, excited by these new tendencies, created a rival Buddhism, that of the Great Vehicle.

Either harassed or, from the second century before our era, persecuted in the countries of the ancient Aryan colonization, the chiefs of the Buddhist Church adopted a new policy: they availed themselves of the neutrality, or the protection, of foreign monarchs. Henceforward the new converts belonged to a great assortment of races: Muṇḍas and Dravidians in the south, Greeks, Scythians, Parthians in the north-west. The result of this policy was the propagation of Buddhism beyond the frontiers of India; for the people of the Dekhan, merchants and navigators, were in constant relation with the populations of the southern seas, while those of the north-west would journey in caravans towards Iran, Central Asia, and China. On this latter side the penetration was singularly facilitated by the foundation of the Indo-Scythian Empire, when King Kanishka became a convert to Buddhism. This event was of an importance comparable to that of the conversion of Aśoka. In becoming a disciple of Buddha the latter had installed Buddhism for a time in India; Kanishka opened definitely to it the gates of Asia.

The movement of expansion, which was pursued during the second century under the victorious Greek Menander, and later, after our era, developed under the Scythian king Kanishka, was fruitful in results. As neighbours of the Brahman grammarians and versifiers, the Buddhists had created for themselves a literature; in contact with the new races art and philosophy were made to flourish.

During the first centuries the generations of the faithful had transmitted orally among themselves, in the language of Magadha, a certain number of sermons and of precepts in verse, attributed to the Buddha. When the faith spread to the West, new texts were compiled and

a sacred language was adopted, the Pāli, more prone to archaisms, and in consequence more venerable, than the Magadhan dialect. Corresponding to the Vedic Canon, with its Three Vedas, a Buddhist Canon was finally established, comprised of three 'Baskets' of the Law. Then, as this canonical literature was more to the taste of the monks than of the profane, for the latter were written works less austere, destined to facilitate conversions: stories, apologues, dramas. These works of the imagination were compiled often in Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Brahmans. The most celebrated of them are attributed to the poet Aśvaghosha, who lived towards the beginning of the Christian era.

Vedic India was almost ignorant of the plastic arts. Indian art, in its perfection, was due to the coming together of very diverse elements, Aryan culture, Buddhist fervour, foreign techniques. The earliest was that of architectural sculpture, which, after successful attempts during the reign of Aśoka and later at Barhut, attained at Sānchī a perfect mastery. Here it would seem as though inspiration had come, not only from Iranian models, but also from an ornamental art, created by the artisans of the Dekhan. In the schools of Mathurā and of Gandhāra sculpture and architecture were developed in mutual independence, and the dominant influence was that of the Greek statuary artists.

More obscure are the origins of Buddhist philosophy. In this domain also earlier ages had left a heritage meagre enough, and the first disciples of Śākya-muni seem to have had little taste for pure speculation. One of the most ancient philosophic texts, 'The Questions of Milinda', consists of a dialogue between the king Milinda and a Buddhist doctor. It is probable that the spirit of the sons of the Śākyas was sharpened by contact with Greek rhetoricians. Be that as it may, Buddhist philosophy, despite its many points of resemblance with Greek doctrines, chiefly with the logic of Aristotle, is nevertheless original. Its principal postulates are as follows.

There is no essential difference between spirit and matter. The mind, as well as the objects of the world of the senses, is formed of elements, joined by the law of numbers. A fixed number of elements is necessary in order to form a material molecule or a psychic molecule. A group of these aggregates gives the illusion of an ego and of a sensible thing; but nothing is permanent. All the component parts are dissolved and recomposed again incessantly; all is transitory; there is neither an immortal soul, nor a personality, nor a mind. The very Buddhas are not excepted: their being is illusive, temporary, unreal.

By what road did the Buddhist thinkers arrive at this astounding nihilism? Probably by starting from a system analogous to Pythagorean arithmology. At first they believed in the reality of the numbers, a belief which led them to deny all substances. Everything is in an

incessant flux; only the number of elements is constant. In this way appearances go on existing; in this way the illusion of a personal ego endures.

One asks how the Buddhist religion survived the proclamation by its priests of a system which undermined the foundations of all metaphysics, insisted on the illusory character of human and divine beings, denied the immortality of the soul and consequently the retribution of actions. We have seen that Buddhism had a twofold aspect, and that a purified doctrine had been distilled from the popular religion. The laity remained indifferent to the progress of the critical spirit; only an *élite* among the clerics were clearly conscious of the new ideas. The religion of the greater number was not directly affected by it; but the distance between the categories of the faithful was still more widened, and the unity of the Church was still further threatened.

At the same time when the *élite* withdrew in a certain degree from the Church the ideal of the saint became superhuman and almost inaccessible. Perfection became henceforward a synonym for indifference and impassibility. To the fervour of the early disciples, transported with zeal for the salvation of creatures, there succeeded an insensible and haughty detachment: the Arhat is the type of the new saint. One must not loiter to save other beings: the urgent duty is to enter into nothingness, in order to escape from desire. This is what pride and the contemplative spirit have made of a religion of love and universal sympathy.

The excess of aristocratic monachism and of complete nihilism led to an awakening of religious sentiment and a return to the original morals. From the first centuries of our era the reaction took shape. The aspirations and beliefs of the early disciples of the Buddha had not entirely disappeared; they had been preserved under layers of the popular doctrine. Revived by certain spirits, they once more aroused zeal and enthusiasm. The new school was called 'The Great Vehicle'; it was, in fact, a more human Buddhism, depending more widely on the masses of the faithful. The sects to which it was opposed received by contrast the name of 'The Little Vehicle'; and we find Buddhism in this way definitely divided into two rival schools.

The saints of the Little Vehicle sought their individual emancipation. To this egotistical aim there was now opposed an ideal of collective salvation. No longer was there any haste to enter into Nirvāṇa; the duty was to extend the Good Law for the good of beings, even if one must remain long in the whirl of reincarnations. In order to recover this altruistic ideal, it sufficed, moreover, to meditate upon the example of Śākya-muni, who during innumerable existences had devoted himself to the salvation of all; indeed, the partisans of the Great Vehicle were

candidates for the condition of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas. Every competition was allowed; no good will was discouraged; each one could be a future Buddha. An altruistic morality, an ideal accessible to all; in this way the Great Vehicle was opposed to the individualistic and aristocratic spirit of the Little.

The conquests of the philosophic spirit were not abandoned; but its negations appear as the reverse of a positive mysticism. Nirvāṇa remains a purified abiding place, ineffable, transcendent; but it is no longer nothingness. The limits of the ego are effaced, as well as the apparent characters of spirit and matter; but there is fellowship in the sentiment of the universal life. This mysticism inspired later the incomparable artists of China and Japan.

On the other hand, the mythology was enriched. At the time when the community was filled with future Buddhas the cosmic spaces were likewise peopled with Bodhisattvas. The most powerful of these mythical beings were no other than the ancient Indian gods, disguised as saints of the Great Vehicle. So, little by little, all the Hindu pantheon was incorporated into Buddhism; and this syncretism was not without danger; for the doctrine of the Great Vehicle ran the risk of being submerged under a flood of strange elements: magic rites, formulas of sorcery, popular superstitions. The menace, much to be feared in India, was equally serious among neighbouring peoples.

Asia offered a field, almost unlimited, for the activity of the apostles of the Great Vehicle. They, in their turn, started on the routes followed by their predecessors, and soon the adepts of the two Vehicles were numerous in all the regions visited by the missionaries. In this vast spiritual empire a fairly great diversity was soon to shew itself.

In India, which had remained faithful to the régime of castes, the progress of Aryan colonization was always increasing the field of Brahman orthodoxy and repulsing Buddhism. The Musulman invasion gave it the finishing stroke. It was driven out, and it kept two territories only, not within the boundaries, Nepal and the island of Ceylon.

In the neighbouring countries of the Southern Seas the school of the Great Vehicle had at first the advantage; but it did not succeed in keeping it. In the Sunda Islands, where so many ruined monuments still bear witness to the power of Buddhism, Indian culture was eclipsed under the Musulmans. In Indo-China Buddhism is still alive; but the Little Vehicle has won a final victory in Siam, in Cambodia, in Burma —one finds even to-day a renaissance of Pāli studies.

On the other hand, in Central Asia, as in the other countries to the north of India, it is the Great Vehicle that has triumphed. In Mongolia and in Tibet, contaminated by ancient local cults, it has taken on a peculiar colour. The living Buddhas who are venerated in certain

lamaseries and are reincarnated from generation to generation have, no doubt, been conceived after the likeness of ancient genii, who formerly would manifest themselves in the body of one possessed.

The doctrine of the Buddha penetrated about the beginning of the Christian era into China; but during the first centuries its progress was hindered by the hostility of the official classes and the absence of direct relations between India and the world of China. In 399 the pilgrim Fa-hien set out to visit the Holy Places; and in 518 the Empress Wu, of the Tungusic dynasty of the Northern Wei, sent to the Indies the ambassador Sung Yun. From that time Buddhism, better known, spread through all classes of society. Sanskrit and philosophy were studied; the sacred texts were translated. Under the glorious T'ang dynasty pilgrims like Hiuan-tsang and Yi-tsing were at the same time hardy explorers and eminent scholars and saints. To the prestige of a great empire was added the glory of a very noble art; sculptors under the Wei, poets and painters under the T'ang, drew their inspiration from the mysticism of the Great Vehicle. Chinese civilization then shed its light on the whole of Asia.

Already accompanied by the new religion, it was propagated in Corea and in Japan. In this latter country the regency of Prince Shotoku (593–622) marks the beginning of an era of prosperity. A convinced Buddhist, he organized monasteries and favoured arts and study. The union of Church and State, of art and faith, was especially fertile in the eighth century, during the Tempyo period, one of the most brillant of Japanese history.

In the countries of Chinese civilization religious life is dominated by an ideal of filial piety, from which comes ancestor worship. In order to satisfy these aspirations, the Buddhism of the north developed in large measure rites in aid of the departed, ceremonies in honour of the dead. This common orientation has not prevented the adepts of the Great Vehicle from being divided in China as well as in Japan into a certain number of sects.

Some invoke by preference Maitreya, the future Saviour. Others, more numerous, rely on the mercy of Amitābha. This Buddha, who reigns in the west, assisted by the Bodhisattva Kwan-Yin, receives in his Paradise the souls of his devotees. As for the sect of Dhyāna, or Meditation, the name of which has, in Japanese, become Zen, its adepts are recruited more from among the higher classes. According to the theoreticians of the Dhyāna wisdom is acquired by intuition; it is the fruit of concentration of thought; it is not expressed by words. This contemplative mysticism has inspired the most profound works of Japanese art, those in which matter and subject are to the artist but a pretext for the suggestion of the Ineffable and the Divine.

After this rapid sketch there should be a summing up of the points. The progress of Buddhism in each country has been followed by a strengthening of the central power, by a revival in literature, art, and philosophy. This is especially noticeable in India during the time of Aśoka and of Kanishka, in China during the T'ang dynasty, in Japan during the Tempyo period. No doubt it would be imprudent to conclude that the higher forms of social and religious life are always the product of an intense religious sentiment. But it would at least appear that human culture finds in religion an efficacious stimulant. The fact is that in the history of Asia Buddhism is frequently revealed as one of the principal factors of civilization.

A second point that deserves to be noted is the flexibility of Buddhism, its faculty of adaptation to the most diverse surroundings. The activity of its first apostles is astounding; it was not long before they had conquered all the lower valley of the Ganges. Then, in order to vie with the Brahmans, they endowed themselves with books of the law, a canon of sacred texts. They become dialecticians in order to dispute with the Greeks. From that time their future seemed to be assured, and Buddhism becomes contemplative: in the peace of their cells the Arhats, indifferent to all about them, found in anticipation Nirvāṇa. Meanwhile distant peoples aspired to become acquainted with the Law; then new disciples arose; the ancient virtues flourished anew: the rule and the dogmas were adapted to the needs of propaganda. Within the last fifty years circumstances have again changed. Great industries begin to transform the Far Fast. Problems are presented which the chiefs of Buddhism are not at a loss to meet. Already their attention has been directed this way, and social works have been undertaken to aid the proletariat of the great cities.

As to that which constitutes the very essence of the doctrine there has often been a misapprehension on the part of European scholarship. Buddhism has been defined as an atheistic religion. This phrase emphasizes too much the secondary and transitory appearances. From the beginning the Buddhists have recognized the existence of superior beings, of whom they attempted to make themselves the equals, not by vain practices, but by the perfecting of the individual. At first these superhuman beings were the ancient gods of the Brahmans. Little by little the veneration of the Buddhas and the saints was introduced; but it was not long before these lesser divinities were merged into a supreme entity, Nirvāṇa. In the end Nirvāṇa itself was no longer a positive reality. At this stage atheism was no more than one of the aspects of complete nihilism.

The essential character of this religion is not so much the nihilism towards which it tends as the initial sentiment of independence with re-

gard to the gods. The instant he has rejected the belief in the efficacy of sacrifice man claims to deliver himself. Soon the cult of the Buddhas was developed, and humanity was in danger of being subjected to new gods; the philosophers tried to eliminate this menace: the critical spirit suppressed by denial all the supports which man seeks for outside of himself. Nevertheless, this nihilism was not the end; it was an intermediate stage, at which was elaborated the mysticism of the Great Vehicle. Doubtless the majority of believers could never reach the summits whither the doctors sought to guide them. They still honoured relics and sacred trees. To-day in many a province the mass of the faithful is given over to superstitious excesses. But the tradition is not forgotten. Already there is a prospect of revival, for which European activities are perhaps responsible. Asia, uneasy, deceived by modern civilization, returns once more to question the ancient sages. A regenerated Buddhism will perhaps calm troubled souls and guide the peoples towards a new destiny. JEAN PRZYLUSKI.

(NOTE.—We are indebted to the kind offices of Professor F. W. Thomas for the translation of the foregoing article.)

A NEGATIVE FORM OF THE GOLDEN RULE IN THE DIATESSARON?

'IT is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, in the tract on the Sabbath (fol. 31 a), that a heathen once came to Shammai to be made a proselyte on condition that he might be taught the whole Law whilst he stood on one foot. Shammai drove him away, and he went and put the same question to Hillel, who promptly replied: "What to thyself is hateful to thy neighbour thou shalt not do: this is the whole Law, and the rest is commentary."'[1]

The famous saying attributed to the Jewish Rabbi is in Aramaic, that is Jewish Aramaic. I wonder if it has ever been pointed out that precisely the same negative form of the Golden Rule which the saying contains was current among Christian writers in the sister dialect of Syriac. In his edition of the Old Syriac Gospels Professor Burkitt quotes it from Aphraates under Matt. xix 19,[2] but there was no occasion there to mention Hillel. The only example from a Syriac writer given by Gotthold Resch in his large collection of texts of the negative Rule is one from the Armenian version of St Ephraim's commentary on the Pauline

[1] Dr Charles Taylor *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (1886) p. 9. Hillel is said to have lived at Jerusalem *c.* 30 B.C.–10 A.D.

[2] *Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe* i 110, 111.