

THE CHRISTIAN ELEMENT IN CHINESE BUDDHISM

By JAMES W. INGLIS

ONE of the great problems of the history of religion is the rise of the Mahayana form of Buddhism, which now prevails in various phases from the foot of the Himalayas to Japan. What is involved may be seen when I quote a leading authority :¹ ' Professor Max Müller talks of "the broad foundations on which all religions are built up, the belief in a divine power, the acknowledgment of sin, the habit of prayer, the desire to offer sacrifice and the hope of future life." No one of these five is found in Buddhism, yet he calls Buddhism a religion.' Now with the exception of sacrifice all these are found in the Mahayana, for by Buddhism Rhys Davids means solely that form which prevails in Ceylon and which rests on the Pali canon.

The Chinese developments of this religion have lain somewhat outside of the beaten track of research. Most western writers take their stand on the Pali scriptures, which are supposed to represent 'pure' or 'primitive' Buddhism. Those, again, who study the Mahayana are inclined to look to Nepal or Tibet for their sources, although both of these represent late forms of development. The Chinese canon, on the other hand, covering the period from the first to the eleventh century, shows us the formation and growth of many schools. On one side stands the Lesser Vehicle (Hinayana), including translations similar to the Pali books and the literature of other schools more or less divergent. But the larger part belongs to the Great Vehicle (Mahayana), with which we are here concerned.

¹ Rhys Davids, *American Lectures*, p. 5.

In comparison with what is presumed to be the original system founded by Sakyamuni, the history of Buddhism shows both a fall and an ascent. The fall is only too well known. Polytheism and magic are the two downward forces which have degraded almost every department of the Mahayana, and which caused its extinction in the land of its birth. But in the earlier Mahayana as it came to China we find a purer influence, which persists through all the time of degeneracy as if borne on an undercurrent against the tide of superstition and folly.

How then are we to account for this? Not to speak of Buddhists themselves, who accept the Sutras on their own statement as the actual words of the Buddha, it is usual among critics to maintain that the whole is either a legitimate development of early Buddhism, or is due to importations from Indian, Iranian and Scythian sources. But there are others who not only make the rise of the new Buddhism contemporaneous with the spread of Christianity, but who see in its higher teaching the result of the impact of the Gospel on the Asiatic world. This was suggested by Samuel Beal,¹ and more recently by the late Arthur Lloyd,² professor in Tokyo, who advocated his theory with great charm of style. Professor Lloyd has been criticized by French savants for inaccuracy, and undoubtedly some of his statements do not bear scrutiny. Some again ascribe the similarity in the two religions to a parallel force that operated at the same time in India and in the Roman Empire, that is, they regard both as natural products of the human mind working under similar conditions. But still the question remains, why here alone among all the ethnic religions should there be these resemblances? The following pages may at least make out a case for inquiry, and whether or no there has been Christian influence on Buddhism, we must still face the

¹ *Abstract of Four Lectures*, 1880: *Buddhism in China*, pp. 138, 155.

² *Wheat among the Tares*, 1908: *The Creed of Half Japan*, 1911.

problem how an alien faith can come so near to our own, and yet be so remote.

I propose first to study the main stream of the Mahayana, and then to turn to the Amida sects which, notably in Japan, give us most cause for thought.

I

SALVATION. The legend of Sakyamuni describes his birth as an incarnation. In a previous age he had been a pupil of another Buddha, but at death he ascended of his own will to the Tushita paradise, where he taught his principles to the celestial beings. These were engrossed in pleasure, or rapt in meditation. None had any thought of pity for this world. He alone 'with heavenly eye surveyed from afar the world beneath, and saw men creating all manner of evil karma and sorrow beyond hope of deliverance.' Thus he conceived the will to be reborn on earth, that by his teaching he might save men.

But the distinctive doctrine of the Mahayana is its theory of the Bodhisattva (Chinese 'Pusah'), by which a career of beneficence is thrown open to all. The Lotus Sutra speaks of Three Vehicles (Yana); the first being those who seek Nirvana for themselves, the second being hermits who have insight into all truth, and the Great Vehicle, formed of those who live to save others.¹ A Chinese writer says, 'The Lesser Vehicle only save themselves, and do not consider others. But the Pusah with great pity reflects—I and all living are together in the bitter ocean of birth and death, what method may be found for universal deliverance?' Hence it is said that the Bodhisattva refrains from entering Nirvana out of love, in order to save others; and it is the duty of the good Buddhist to make vows which have this efficacy. Thus 'to awaken the world with the voice of truth, and rend the net of error, to scatter

¹ *Sacred Books of the East*, xxi. p. 80.

cares and lusts, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear the burden of all living and love them as sons.' ¹

Yet we must never forget that the fundamental conception is salvation by enlightenment. 'The idea of Buddha as a saviour of men seems to be a development of his character as a sage.' ² And the aim of salvation is to attain Nirvana, or escape from suffering by ending the ceaseless round of transmigration, this and not sin being the fundamental evil. The enlightenment which thus delivers is nothing more than to have right views on the vanity of all things. Hence a great part of the literature is occupied with subjects that do not concern us directly as Christians, the theory of perception, the limits of knowledge, the reality of the phenomenal world. We incline to say that this has no more to do with Buddha than the philosophy of Kant has with Luther. But here is just the weak point. It is salvation by metaphysics.

But there is a further step. The vow of Bodhi implies that the aspirant to enlightenment can save others by his own good works. These have merits which by the power of his vow are transferred to the credit of others. A recent work closes with these words: 'May the readers take the Bodhi vow, behold Buddha, and like him save all.' Now if it is open to any man thus to become a saviour of the race, the method by which his merits are transferred must be quite transcendent, if not occult.

THEISM. The Pali scriptures treat the Indian gods as good fairies who assist in the proclamation of Buddhism; they are not eternal or almighty; the idea of creation is definitely rejected; and prayer is condemned as contrary to the doctrine of karma. In all this Buddhism has Indian philosophy for company.

But no man may turn his back on God—'Thou hast beset me behind and before'—and it is notable how a system which begins by dethroning the pantheon of

¹ Zendo.

² Beal, *Sacred Books of the East*, xix. p. 292 n.

popular belief is still haunted everywhere by the conception of the divine.

The first step was the exaltation of the Buddha, until he ascended the vacant throne of Brahma himself. At what time he became a god it is impossible to say, because in Indian thought there is no great gulf between man and God. Then we find Docetism, the theory that he was superhuman in his whole life, everything human merely assumed in condescension to our weakness. The next step appears in the Lotus Sutra, where Sakyamuni is only conventionally the name of a historical person, and is really used to signify the Eternal. Instead of the Indian sage, who 'has passed away utterly, after this life no beyond,' we have one who still lives and will live to future ages, his nirvana being only assumed. 'If Buddha always lived on earth without perishing, men of shallow virtue would fail in reverence. Therefore for an expedient it is declared that the Buddhas rarely appear, so that men hearing this may long for Buddha with thirsting soul.'¹ While there is no suggestion of one supreme ruler, and the divine majesty is rather promoted by indefinite multiplication, 'as the sands of the Ganges,' there is yet a tendency in this book to concentrate devotion on the sole person of the glorified Sakyamuni.

Another phase appears in the doctrine of the Three Bodies (trikaya). Nirmana-Kaya (Chinese hwa-shen, body of transformation) is Buddha incarnate and visible to the world as Sakyamuni, 'great teacher, merciful father of all living.' Sambhoga-Kaya (pao-shen, body of recompense) is the glorified Buddha, visible only to the saints. Dharma-Kaya (Fa-shen, spiritual body) is absolute Being, invisible, omnipresent; the real as opposed to the phenomenal, in which all differences are merged, and there is therefore no individuality.

This doctrine has of course been vulgarized in practice by having the names of three Buddhas attached to it;

¹ Chinese version, cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, xxi. pp. 300-303.

but the original conception shows that the thinking mind could not rest in the historical Buddha, but reached out after the infinite, while it inevitably failed to combine this with personality.

SIN. A recent author says: 'The widest possible concept for the unideal, expressed by Christians in the word sin, is for Buddhists comprised in the word dukkha (suffering) as the more truly ultimate term.'¹ The Vinaya (Ritual) in the Pali edition allows nothing for the idea of sin. The rules of the order are read in the hearing of the monks. The question is then put three times, 'Are you pure?' As no answer comes, the reader continues, 'They are pure herein; therefore they keep silence. So I understand.'²

The Mahayana shows a great advance on this. It was introduced to China in the second century by An-shih-kao, called prince of Ansi (Parthia), 148-170 A.D. He translated a confession-ritual, in which the following passages occur:

The disciple shall enumerate his transgressions *in former lives from countless ages until now*, sins of deed, word and thought, whether he has himself committed them, or caused men to do so, or rejoiced at seeing them done, such as cursing, envy, lying, cheating, unbelief. He shall say: 'I confess before the Buddhas of the ten regions, I will not commit such offences, neither in this world nor in worlds to come. Buddha can see all and hear all, I dare not deceive him; if I have sins, I dare not cover them, henceforth I dare not repeat them.'

There is a considerable penitential literature, in which the phrases marked in italic recur as a set form. The standard classification of sins is 'covetousness, rage, folly,' called the three fires or poisons. The whole is elaborated and amplified in the writings of Zendo. Thus:

Be merciful and count not my iniquities that are like the grass on the ground; receive my confession and accept me; the sins already committed may they be destroyed, the sins not yet arisen may they never come to life, the good already done may it increase, the good not yet done may it come to life.

Buddha said, I am manifested specially to destroy your sins, now declare

¹ Mrs Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, Home University Library, p. 157.

² *Sacred Books of the East*, xiii. p. 2. Chinese versions agree.

your sins of heresy in former worlds, confess before the chief monks, prostrate yourselves to earth, and the eyes of your heart will be opened to see the shining body of Buddha.

Similar ideas recur in the daily office still used for morning and evening worship.

II

Thus far we have been on ground which is common to the main body of the Mahayana. We now turn to the doctrine of the Pure Land sects, or Amidaism, which presents some features of its own.

The three fundamental scriptures of these sects are available to the English reader.¹ The first is the most important. Five Chinese translations have survived, of which that in current use dates from the third century and is more or less in accord with the Sanskrit text as rendered into English. But on examining two other versions, one of the third century by Chih ch'ien, one by Lokaraksha who worked from 147 to 178 A.D., we find indications of serious variations in the original text. Intentional omission or mistranslation account for some of the discrepancies, but not for the insertion of whole paragraphs for which there is no counterpart in Max Müller's text. The conclusion is that the original was in a somewhat fluid state and that the Indian artist felt himself at liberty to add to his material at discretion.

The outline of this Sutra is as follows: In a former age there was a king who was so impressed by the preaching of the Buddha of that date that he renounced his throne and became a monk. He then made the vows of the Bodhi-sattva, to save men and establish a 'Buddha country.' Finally he became Buddha, under the name of Amitabha (infinite light) or Amitayus (eternal life). Amida, the Japanese equivalent for these names, is generally used by western writers. The rest of the book contains an elaborate

¹ *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlix. pt. 2.

description of the 'country' thus gained, as the abode of the faithful after death; it is the 'world of joy, the kingdom of rest, the western heaven, the pure land.'

The fundamental part is that recording the vows of Amida, who refuses to become Buddha if his vows are unfulfilled. In the received version these number forty-eight, but the eighteenth, styled 'king of the vows,' is vital in the later development of the sects. 'When I attain to be Buddha, if all who believe with entire heart, and desire to be born in my kingdom, and who think of me even ten times, should not be born there, I will not accept enlightenment—excepting only those guilty of deadly sin.' That is, he will refrain from becoming Buddha if he cannot win entrance to his kingdom for all believers.¹

The Sanskrit has only forty-six vows, but the contents are similar, with the omission of the word 'believe.' The version of Chih ch'ien gives twenty-four vows, of which seventeen are peculiar to itself. The earliest version has also twenty-four, mostly parallel to the Sanskrit; but neither of these has anything corresponding to the 'king of vows,' and they do not teach salvation by faith but rather lay emphasis on works of merit.

The Second or Smaller Sutra teaches that whoever will hold to the name of Amida, in the hour of death Amida with all his saints will appear before him, and so he shall depart to be re-born in the world of bliss.²

The Third Sutra speaks of the worst of men, who has committed every deadly sin and deserves to suffer retribution. When he comes to die he has no strength for meditation; but if he only utter the formula 'Namo (Hail) Amida Buddha,' he will put away his sin, and immediately come to the world of bliss.³

On these slender foundations a whole system has been raised, in many respects contrary to the main tendency of Buddhism.

¹ *Sacred Books of the East*, xlix. pt. 2, pp. 15, 73.

² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Tao-cho (Dō-shaku, died 628) divided the Mahayana into two 'gates,' the gate of the Holy Path and the gate of the Pure Land. The former, like the Hinayana, requires training in morality, meditation and wisdom. Those who could accomplish this must be men who through good works in former lives had acquired merits which now come to fruition. In the first ages of Buddhism there were such men. But in these days of decadence, how can that standard be reached? Hence the gate of the Pure Land is opened, an easy way of salvation for all.¹

The link between the Amida schools of China and Japan was formed by Zendo (Chinese Shan-tao). The fact to be remembered is that he lived in Singanfu, then the capital of China, from 643 till his death, while in 635 Olopen had founded the Nestorian mission in the same city.

The first impression on reading through his works is that to him life was but a *meditatio mortis*. The whole aim is to be re-born with Amida by the power of vows, which are repeated incessantly till they have an almost hypnotic effect. Hence the word vow may be sometimes rendered prayer.

The foundation of all is the vow of Amida given above. After quoting it he adds, 'and seeing that he now lives as Buddha, we may know that his vow is not in vain.'

The following is the Parable of the Narrow Way:

A traveller going westward is suddenly aware of two rivers barring his way, one of water one of fire. Between them is a white path four or five inches broad, reaching to the western bank. The waves and the flames meet over the narrow path. Behind he is being pursued by robbers and wild beasts. He gives himself up for lost. At that moment he hears from the nearer bank a man's voice cheering him on. 'Pilgrim, only decide to take this path, and you will not die; to stay is death.' Then from the western bank a voice calls, 'Think only to come straight on; I am able to protect you. Fear not to fall into the fire or water.' On this the pilgrim goes on, and looks not back, and finally lands on the western shore. The voice that urged him on is a parable of Sakya, who is dead and invisible but whose teaching still remains. The man calling from the western bank is a parable of Amida's vow.

¹ Haas, p. 12.

To obtain the benefit of Amida's vow it is needful that we also make our vow in sincere faith. For this purpose set forms are given. The teaching of Sakyamuni on the miseries of life has borne fruit ; the hearer, 'like a thirsty man finding a clear spring, renounces this world's glory and sets his heart on the Pure Land.' The penitential litanies already quoted are combined with prayers to Amida.

Thanks be to Sakya's grace—sorrow and joy contend together—had not he enlightened us, when could we have heard Amida's name? Buddha's mercy we can ill repay: trusting in the power of his vow we pass to the western region; why grieve to part for ever from this world of pain?

First he shall confess his sins with shame and tears before Buddha's image, then call to mind Amida's ancient vow, saying, 'Buddha mercifully accept and protect me, remember and enlighten me; soon I shall quit this life, I trust in Amida; whether to see him or not, depends all on his grace.'

Among all good works why should penitence alone obtain re-birth, and if Buddha's light be universal why limit it to those who remember him? Answer—When men call on Buddha, he hears; when they bow before him, he sees; when they think of him, he knows and thinks of them; and when they vow to behold him, he fulfils their thought and appears before their eyes.

The relation of faith and works is left undefined. It will be observed that, in the Sutras quoted above, the first excludes deadly sinners from the vow of Amida, while the third expressly admits them to hope. Zendo forces the two into harmony, saying that Buddha merely warns men against sins which would condemn them to hell, but does not actually reject anyone. Unbelief is the one hopeless condition. 'He that hears as though he heard not, sees as though he saw not, of this unbeliever Buddha says, This man cannot obtain deliverance.'

The whole conception of the Pure Land is at variance with the ordinary doctrine of Nirvana. The Chinese text of the larger Sutra says 'My kingdom is like Nirvana,' but Zendo makes the two identical. He speaks of entering 'the city' or 'the gate' of 'Nirvana, the world that endures, eternal life, no birth or parting, the voice of sorrow for ever quelled.' The name Nirvana survives by the force of

tradition, but the heart is not there. All that is vital is the hope of a concrete heaven, distinguished by its permanence from the abodes of the Indian gods, 'from which they may fall like lightning.'

All this has survived in China in broken fragments. The Lesser Sutra is commonly recited at funerals by priests hired for the occasion. The expiation of sin by reciting of litanies, and the hope of paradise are the vital elements in the religion of the secret sects which command a following among the laity.

III

In Japan the case is different. The Jodo (Pure Land) sect was founded there in 1175 as a result of the study of Zendo's works.¹ This writer, in quoting the 'great vow' of Amida, had substituted the words 'repeat my name' for the words 'believe with entire heart,' and this altered form is the ground of much of the Jodo doctrine.

Zendo explains the Sanskrit Namō as meaning 'I take refuge in,' or again 'the vow of penitent return'; hence the Japanese say it is the heart's cry for help—'Thou wilt save us.'

He who desires to reach the world of bliss need do nothing more than pray his Namō, without doubting that he will be re-born. All pious exercises are comprised in this. To teach otherwise were to forfeit grace and have no part in Amida's vow. Though a man had studied all the lore of Sakya, he is on no higher level than the illiterate man who invokes the name with his whole heart.

The power of the name is thus explained :

Amida in his former state as Pusah practised all manner of penitential discipline, and after by his good works he became Buddha, he stored up in his name the fruits of his toil; hence those who utter the name acquire all its merits, and Amida's merit is transferred to the worshipper.

As the greatest sinner will not be rejected, we share in the vow just as we are, without requiring to amend anything in ourselves. But just as

¹ I am indebted for what follows to documents translated from the Japanese by Dr Haas, *Amida Buddha unsere Zuflucht*. Leipzig, 1910.

we know our own unworthiness, the right mind will arise of itself, with the wish for help, so that the cry to Buddha will force itself to our lips. Were it otherwise, and we had first to reform, then were the vow a deliverance only for the good. And if sinners were rejected, there would be no hope for us.

Much is made of the distinction between salvation by 'one's own strength' and by 'the strength of another,' i.e. of Amida's vow, 'beside which all our works are as worthless sand.'

Those who practise the exercises of the Holy Path may think themselves enlightened and identified with Buddha. But we find no escape from this world of impurity; we lack all power to deliver ourselves. We set our whole trust on the promise, and cannot fail to enter into life.—The child who falls into a ditch and calls for his father and mother cannot hope to get out merely by the force of his cry, no matter how long he calls; he cries in the hope of getting help. So we call on the mercy of Buddha, to enter into life by his help.—There are many Pure Lands, but this alone is for sinners.—Of all the Buddhas, he alone will come to those who call on him.—All the others had left us to ourselves, he alone thought of us.—When he hears our voice, he cannot remain unmoved, he with pity to all as to an only son.—He will not remove his hand from us even for a moment, but sends his beams to enlighten us, so that we may be assured of entrance into life. In the hour of death, when a man's sins stand before him, calling 'pay me that thou owest,' then Amida will appear before him and reach out his hand, so that he may never fall into despair. He can never break his own oath.

The Shinshu (True Sect) dates from the thirteenth century. It is distinguished from the Jodo by its emphasis on faith rather than on the mere invocation of Amida. A further development is that Amida alone is worshipped; even Sakya is reduced to the rank of a forerunner. The Jesuit Cabralis wrote in 1571 that this sect was in Japan what the Lutheran was in Europe, for they taught that faith alone was needful for salvation, and good works unnecessary. They themselves, however, say that good deeds follow naturally from the heart that is penetrated with Buddha's mercy. 'That vow was for me, to save me so full of sin; how can I be other than thankful?' Lloyd makes much of the similarity to the incarnation of Christ, the eternal Amida humbled to become man. This may

be the modern doctrine, but it does not appear in the medieval writers translated by Haas, to whom he is only a man who became Buddha.

IV

There are three points of contact possible between Buddhism and Christianity. These are the apostolic age, the relation of India to the Roman and Persian empires, and the Nestorian mission to China.

First, it has been thought that there is an historical element in the legend of St Thomas, and that he did actually preach in North-West India. Several Indianists think this to be highly probable, the argument being that the *Acta Thomæ*, written at Edessa in the third century, relate the visit of Thomas to the court of Gondophares. Now it has recently been discovered that there was a king of that name in the Panjab from 21 A.D. onward, and that his dynasty fell at the close of the first century. How then, it is asked, did the king's name get into the legend if there is no basis in fact ? ¹

Not to mention that the Germans set down the whole story as a myth,² I cannot get over the silence of St Paul (Gal. ii. 7). It seems clear that he knew nothing of this in 58 A.D., or he would have used it to strengthen his argument. And there is less need to base anything on so frail a foundation, as we may not assume that the Mahayana arose after the Christian era. Apart from the Chinese translations, which are carefully recorded, we have no fixed dates in its history. Until more has been settled on Indian ground the problem must remain open.

In the second period there are many possible links. There was some intercourse by sea between Egypt and South India during the first two centuries of our era ; ³ at the end of this period Pantænus visited India and brought

¹ Fleet and Kennedy, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1905, 1906.

² Garbe, *Monist*, 1912.

³ *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1904.

back to Alexandria the name of Buddha.¹ It has been shown that Basilides, the Egyptian gnostic of the time of Hadrian, borrowed ideas from India if not from Buddhism,² and Lloyd identifies many of the rites of the Japanese Shingon, or magical Buddhism, with similar practices in Egypt.

Christianity spread in Persia in the third century, and soon reached Herat and Merv. It could not fail to meet Buddhism, which had gone to China by way of Bactria and Kashgar. Hence the legend of St Josaphat (Bodhisat), who is simply the Buddha in a Christian disguise; and Sir Aurel Stein has excavated a temple by the Lob Nor with winged figures 'which suggest the angels of some early Christian church.'³ But with all this we fail to see any new Christian element in the movements of thought during this period.

In 635 Olopen arrived from Persia at the Chinese capital, and founded the first Christian mission. We have seen that Zendo was his contemporary and in the same city. There is no reason why the two should not have met. I incline to find the solution thus, that while Zendo took his material from his predecessors, he received a stimulus from Christianity which led him to emphasize the features common to both religions. We note that in 645 Hsuan Tsang returned from India, and introduced a form of magical Buddhism in every way alien to Christianity while he pointedly ignored the whole doctrine of Amida.

The year 781 saw the erection of the Nestorian monument in the capital. The language there used to state Christian doctrine is so steeped in Taoist and Buddhist phraseology as to show that the author was deeply versed in those religions. It is now known that the same writer collaborated with an Indian in the translation of a Buddhist Sutra into Chinese.⁴ The translation was condemned by the emperor, and the Christians were ordered 'to preach

¹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, v. 10. Clem. *Stromata*, i. 15.

² Kennedy, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1902.

³ *Desert Cathay*, i. p. 476.

⁴ Takakusu, *Record of the Buddhist Religion*, p. 165.

the doctrine of the Messiah.' A revised version now stands in the Buddhist canon. The first chapter describes how all varieties of sick and demoniacs were healed on coming to the light of Buddha, but the next chapter deals with magic, and the last opposes the doctrine of creation. The Persian missionary was surely far astray when he set his hand to this.

Crossing from China to Japan, I confess to feeling a new atmosphere in reading the authors translated by Haas (dated 1175 to 1330). The fervour with which they write of Amida's mercy, their absolute assurance of salvation, suggests men who have passed through a spiritual experience which the writings of Zendo alone would not account for. Many of their utterances read like a caricature of popular evangelism. The visit of a Persian Christian to Japan so early as 739 does not seem adequate to account for all this.

The more we trace resemblances to our own in another faith, the more are we led to seek for the point of departure. Why does one fail as a moral force where the other succeeds? Just in this, that if Buddhism has really borrowed our ideas, they are like cut flowers which wither when severed from the root. We are saved not by the theory of salvation but by the living Person of Jesus Christ. Hence we must stand on guard against any tendency to shift the historical basis of the Gospel, and to dissipate it in a cloudland of idealism.

A striking parallel is found in the gnosticism of the second century. It has been shown that in the pre-Christian gnosis of Hellenism there was no saviour. 'Knowledge enabled the soul to regain its heavenly home.' But in the Christian gnostic systems 'salvation by gnosis and by Christ are two alternative schemes imperfectly joined together.'¹ It is exactly so in Buddhism, where faith in Amida as a personal deliverer is an unassimilated fragment in a system of salvation by metaphysics.

¹ Bevan, *Hibbert Journal*, 1912.

Again we read in an article on 'Gnosticism' by Bossuet in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* :

The Christian gnostic systems clearly exhibit the great difficulty they had to reconcile the idea of an historical redeemer in a definite person with their conception of salvation.—Salvation is always a myth, an allegory, but not an historical event.

This might have been written for the present case. Zendo says 'The Buddhas will give their lives for me, and suffer weariness and pain.' We ask, how and where? The 'ancient vow of Amida' is absolutely unrelated to space and time; no historical proof is possible; it is but a myth. That there is mercy in the heavens is the natural hope of every man; it is but a pathetic dream until we know that the heavens have spoken and declared that mercy in the Word made flesh.

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