

## THE THEOLOGY OF MAHAYANA BUDDHISM.

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ONE of the chief distinctions between the two great divisions of Buddhism, namely Mahayana or the Buddhism of the North, and Hinayana or Southern Buddhism, is that the former is possessed of a definite theology while the latter is not. In Hinayana, or as its own adherents prefer to call it, Theravada, all questions relating to the existence or non-existence of the Supreme are relegated into the background and their discussion denounced. To be sure, the existence of a superhuman order of beings such as *devas* (corresponding, more or less closely, to the Christian angels) is admitted, as well as a form of demons or devils, but the conception of an All-in-All, so essential to mysticism as we know it in the West, is altogether lacking. The highest which the mind can conceive in Hinayana is Nirvana (Pali Nibbana) which, according to the southern interpretation at least, is a condition of mind rather than an Infinite Being who is the norm of existence.

In Mahayana, however, or Buddhism as it prevails in north-eastern Asia and the Far East, theological and metaphysical speculation has been permitted to run riot, with the result that in those countries we have before us to-day a theological system so complete, so wide-spread and so hairsplitting, that, compared with it, the systems of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages with their problems, among others, as to how many angels could stand upon a needle's point at the same time, seem childish and lacking in detail. It is, accordingly, a matter of small wonder that the doctrine of Mahayana are said to be eighty-four thousand in number. This exceedingly complexity of Mahayana, the Great Vehicle (of salvation) as it calls itself, has been of no little difficulty to the many Occidental would-be students of the subject, and a large proportion have been entirely led astray by the intricate mazes which it presents. They have mastered an enormous mass of resultant features but in their bewil-

derment at the number, they have failed to grasp the essential spirit beneath.

As a matter of fact, however, to one who goes about it properly the understanding of this spirit—the underlying fundamentals—is by no means so difficult as might, at first sight, be supposed. We have a saying in Japan that although it takes eight years of hard study to understand the teachings of the Hosso Sect, yet the main principles may be fathomed in eight minutes. The same thing is true of Mahayana as a whole. An entire comprehension of all the details of Mahayana is, for one single man, almost an impossibility, yet the principal ideas may be understood by the average schoolboy.

Consequently the great question is, what are the fundamental principles of the Mahayana faith? Speaking generally, it may be said that, although Mahayana teaches far more than does its sister faith, everything which the latter proclaims the former admits to be true, and since, owing to the indefatigable endeavors of modern Orientalists, the teachings of Hinayana lie more or less open to the students of the Western world, the question is narrowed down to one, as to the main principles of the Mahayana theology, or its ideas regarding the nature and attributes of the Divine and his relations to the human world.

#### I.

Beyond doubt, the idea which is most essential to Mahayana is its conception of the oneness of life. At first sight, the world seems made up of an infinite number of separate objects with very little connection between them. A little closer examination will show, however, that Mahayana is right in declaring that this seeming separateness is false and that all objects, however different in essence they may appear, are in reality but transformations or manifestations of an infinite spirit of life which is one and eternal. This acme of being (if I may be pardoned this expression) is called in Sanskrit *Bhutatahata*, in Chinese *Chen Ju* and in Japanese *Shinnyo Hoshō*. If it does not correspond to, it at least takes the place of, the Christian conception of God.

While, however, Christian writers devote a considerable portion of their time to a consideration of the Deity's nature and attributes, Buddhism begins by stating that by his very nature he is incomprehensible to the mind of the ordinary man. We find the foremost patriarchs of Mahayana declaring that so absolute is he that it is wrong to say that he exists or that he does not exist, or that he both exists and non-exists, or that he neither exists nor non-exists.

According to Mahayana the only way in which to gain a knowledge of his nature is to attain Buddhahood, or supreme and perfect enlightenment.

But while it is impossible to fully realize him, much less to describe him adequately to others, it is nevertheless obvious that every one may gain some little idea of the general nature of his existence—provided, of course, that his existence in general be granted. Accordingly, Mahayana teaches its followers to endeavor to increase their realization of the Divine Spirit day by day until finally by so doing, perfect enlightenment will be gained.

To the materialist the *summum bonum* is equivalent to matter, to the average religionist; to spirit, to the pantheist of Spinoza's school: it is both spirit and matter. But to the Mahayanist, God or the Shinnyo Hosho is far superior to both spirit and matter, though both of them are partial manifestations of him. It is often claimed that Mahayana is pantheistic, but this is true or untrue only according to the sense in which the word pantheism is used. If pantheism be taken as meaning that God and the universe are synonymous and nothing more, Buddhism is distinctly anti-pantheistic, but when by that expression is meant the doctrine that God is in the world as well as beyond it, then Mahayana takes pride in calling itself pantheistic. To quote the Rt. Rev. Soyen Shaku, in his *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*:

“According to the proclamation of the Enlightened mind, God or the principle of sameness is not transcendent but immanent in the universe, and we sentient beings are manifesting the divine glory just as much as the lilies of the field. A God who, keeping aloof from his creations, sends down words of command through specially favored agents is rejected by Buddhists as against the constitutions of human reason. God must be in us who are made in his likeness. We cannot presume the duality of God and the world. Religion is not to go to God by forsaking the world but to find him in it. . . .

“We must not, however, suppose that God is no more than the sum total of individual existences. God exists even when all creations have been destroyed and reduced to a state of chaotic barrenness. God exists eternally and he will create another universe out of the ruins of this one.”

This One Being is considered, in Mahayana, to have two forms or aspects, the first the absolute and transcendent phase, and the second its finite and immanent phase. The former is the Divine as he is, was and ever shall be, the Eternal out of space and time, infinite and without limitation, the latter the Divine manifested in

the world of life and death—the principle behind existence and life as it is to-day. It is the eternal in the transient. These two aspects, according to Mahayana, however antithetical they may appear at first sight, are in reality one.

This idea is not confined to Mahayana. We find it in nearly all of the most inspired religions and philosophies, and especially in primitive Taoism, where in the *Tao Teh King* of Lao-Tze we read: "That which is before heaven and earth is called the non-existent. The existent is the mother of all things. The existent and the non-existent are the same in all but name. This identity of apparent opposites I call the profound, the great deep, the open door of bewilderment."

In Taoism and the other philosophies, however, the idea remains somewhat vague and indefinite. We sense the general truth of the statement without comprehending how it is to be applied. The question as to the relation of the Absolute and the universe is indeed a very difficult one.

In Mahayana we are given two illustrations as to the identity and non-identity of the non-existent and the existent, to use Lao-Tze's phrase, or in Mahayana phraseology, the infinite and the finite. The first of these is that of pots of clay. There are, we know, pots of many shapes and sizes, some used for good purposes, some for bad, though they may all be of one substance. The other is of the ocean and the waves. The pots and the waves are the various objects of the universe while the ocean and the clay are the absolute. And while, to use the simile of the ocean, no two waves are alike, yet they are all of one essence—water; though the water assumes many shapes and transformations, yet does the nature of the water remain unchanged. In like manner, the Absolute manifests the universe without in the least affecting his own essence. And as there can be the ocean without the waves, but no waves without the ocean, so Mahayana declares that no life would be possible without having for its *raison d'être* the Bhutatathata.

## II.

It would seem that, with the exception of Islam, practically all the great religions which admit the existence of a Supreme at all, have also taught that he has revealed himself to the universe in three aspects. In ancient Egypt we had Osiris, Horus and Isis; in India, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; while in Christianity, of course, there is the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Mahayana is no exception to this rule. In fact, in that religion

we have several trinities, consisting of different sets of triple aspects of the One Supreme. The most important and the most universal, however, is the one which is termed in Sanskrit the *Trikaya*, and in Japanese the *Sanshin*, which means literally the three (Skt. *tri*, Jap. *san*) bodies (Skt. *kaya*, Jap. *shin*). These are: the *Dharmakaya* (Jap. *Hosshin*), *Nirmanakaya* (Jap. *Ojin* and *Keshin*), and finally the *Sambhogakaya* (*Hoshin*). The careful study of this Mahayana trinity is most necessary, since, owing to its general vagueness and complexity the subject has been the matter of much dispute and difference among the foremost Occidental students of and authorities on Northern Buddhism.

The study of the origin of the conception of the threefold manifestation of the Supreme is of especial interest. Originally, and we still have faint traces of it in Hinayana or Southern Buddhism, it was merely the doctrine that every Buddha or enlightened sage is in possession of the above-mentioned three bodies. The exact nature of the three bodies in the case of the mere personal Buddhas is rather vague. The *Dharmakaya* is literally the body of the Law, the more or less universal vehicle of the Tathagata or Perfect One; the *Sambhogakaya* is the body of bliss, or the vehicle which the teachers of gods and men are supposed to assume as a reward for their mental victory and which is supposed to insure perfect happiness; the *Nirmanakaya* is the body of transformation or incarnation which the Buddhas use in order that they may teach the world the path of salvation.

Perhaps the first thing which strikes the investigator of this subject is the unusualness of the idea, the distinction between that conception and all others commonly met with, and one naturally feels some little curiosity as to how the idea originated. Modern scholars are practically all agreed that the doctrine did not originate with Gautama, the historical founder of Buddhism (for the present, as I have already remarked, I am putting aside all questions as to which is the more genuine and representative of the two Buddhist branches and content myself with quoting common opinion) so that the question at once arises as to when and why the doctrine came into being.

Up to the present time the chief authorities have either acknowledged their complete ignorance of the true reason or else have put forward hypotheses which have been proved untenable by further and more complete investigation. The very absence, then, of probable explanations has emboldened me to put forward the theory which I have not hitherto met with—that is, that the three

mystic bodies of the Buddhas are in reality nothing more than the personification of the universal and completely orthodox threefold refuge which one finds both in Hinayana and Mahayana, the words which every candidate for admission into the Buddhist priesthood or even laity must repeat,<sup>1</sup> and which runs, needless to say,

"In the Buddha I take my refuge,  
In the Law I take my refuge,  
In the Church I take my refuge."

This refuge is a very natural thing and has come down to us from the very earliest times. It was not very long, however, before a tendency (somewhat unconscious) toward personification set in. Hinayana had no Supreme Being in whom its followers could take their refuge. It did not even expressly state that the Buddha Gautama continued, after his demise, to keep his divine, glorified personality in some supreme heaven, continuing to aid his followers on earth in their struggle for freedom from the wheel of life and death—in fact, Hinayana was entirely ambiguous as to whether or not his personality had been totally annihilated when he expired.

Man is weak, however, and constantly clings, whether or not with justification, to the conception of a personal *summum bonum* in which, to use Buddhist phraseology, he can take his refuge. Accordingly, since strict Hinayana theology could not give them this, many Buddhists gradually formulated one for themselves out of the best material which they had at hand. In an address which he gave to his disciples shortly before his death, Gautama, or Sakyamuni, as the Mahayanists prefer to call him, is supposed to have exhorted them not to grieve at his departure from them, since speaking figuratively he would continue to exist in the doctrine or the law (Skt. *dharma*, Jap. *ho*) which he had given them.

This law, like the Christian Gospel, is universal both as regards time and place. It was taught long before the advent of the sage of the Sakyas and would continue to be so long after his death. His law held good not only in this world but in all others. It is immutable. It is easy to see what the founder of Buddhism meant, provided that he spoke the words at all. The law (it means far more than the mere sum total of the various Buddhist teachings) was a very real and important thing to Gautama. In fact, we may consider that he believed himself to be the voice of the law, or, in a sense, that the law dwelt in him and that he was the law—the

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that in Buddhism, Buddha is not merely a certain historical person, but a spiritual condition which has been reached by many men throughout the history of the world.

Dharma—incarnate, much as we may look upon a musical genius to be music incarnate. After his decease, therefore, whether his mere personality survived or not, the law which was in him would forever endure, and accordingly, so would in one sense his own true self.

Such a conception, once started, however, could easily develop into something far more theistic and mystical. Sakyamuni was to be considered as having two bodies, for in his own words, so it seemed to his followers, the Dharma which he preached to them was a living, concrete thing which was his true body, while for the purpose of manifesting himself to the world he had assumed a physical vehicle. In such a way may we trace the development of the Dharmakaya and the Nirmanakaya. In fact, do not the very meaning of the words themselves suggest it, for as we have seen, the Dharmakaya signifies the body of the law—the law personified and taken as a thing in itself—while the Nirmanakaya is the body of transformation or incarnation—which is, of course, nothing else than the physical Buddha, such as Gautama.

Since, however, the followers had taken two of their refuges, the law and the Buddha, and had deified them—personified them and shown them to be two different aspects or bodies of the same fundamental reality—why should they not have done the same thing for their one remaining refuge, the Samgha—the church, or, more correctly, the brotherhood of monks which Sakyamuni had instituted. Although we have, as far as I know, no record of the founder of Buddhism having explicitly stated that he would continue to live after his passing away in the order which he had founded, yet he may well have done so in some unrecorded instruction, and in any case the idea is an obvious corollary of the continued-existence-in-the-law idea. Even according to materialism a man lives on in his works (an artist in his paintings, etc.). The Buddhists call it Karma and certainly the establishment of the Samgha was Sakyamuni's chief work, and since the spirit of its founder was supposed to abide in the brotherhood, the idea gradually evolved that the brotherhood must consequently be considered as forming a third body in addition to the other two which the Sage of the Sakyas was supposed to possess.

Such were probably the rudiments of the present Buddhist trinity, but for some time they must have been regarded more as a poetic fancy than anything else. It was more or less as we should speak of a great general being possessed of three bodies—the spirit of patriotism, his actual physical vehicle and the army which he

had brought into being. Slowly, however, the idea, with the process of time, developed. The origin of the conception was lost sight of, and the poetry was taken for fact. No longer was the Buddha supposed to have three bodies in a merely figurative sense but in the actual meaning which the words conveyed. Gautama had three vehicles, and the physical body was no more really he than the other two aspects. Naturally the conception of the nature of these other two aspects had to change as the symbolic conception of the Trikaya was lost sight of. The Dharmakaya could no longer be merely the gospel, the body of truths, which was called Buddhism, for it had become the one great and unchanging reality. It became the norm of existence: that thing which everything must be in accordance with or perish. As time went on the process of personification went on until finally the Dharmakaya became almost a personal being which guides the course of evolution. It became the reason of the universe from which all other things derive their intelligence and their life.

The Nirmanakaya by its very nature required little or no change; but the conception of the Sambhogakaya was so altered as to practically obscure its origin. The idea of the physical order was entirely lost sight of and one of the most convincing proofs that it was originally the order to which the Sambhogakaya referred is that this third body seems somewhat strangely out of place and unnecessary as if at some former time it did definitely refer to something which has been lost sight of. Something of its old character still remains, however, in the idea that the Sambhogakaya is the divine in touch with man and the universe, for the Dharmakaya is deemed too impersonal and too distant—mere reason—so that an aspect is needed which is more in touch with the needs of the human world, just as in old days the law was the mere abstract truth while the Samgha was the vehicle which presented it to the people and which led them to an understanding of it. Again, the Sambhogakaya is at present supposed to be the immortal body of the Buddhas, the glorified body which unlike the mere physical one is permanent and supreme, and which is constantly giving illumination all over the world, just as originally while the earthly body of Gautama decayed his spirit continued forever unchanged as the essence behind the order which shone forth as the light of the truth of the world. It must also be remembered that the Samgha was ideally supposed to be composed of *arhats*, "saints," those freed from the wheel of life and death, and those just preparing for arhatship. Joy and bliss are supposed to have been



prominent characteristics of the arhats, which accounts, in some degree, for the third member of the trinity being known as the body of bliss.<sup>2</sup>

At first, it must be noted, these three bodies were supposed to apply to Sakyamuni alone. It is one of the chief distinctions between Buddhism and the other principal religions, however, that the position which Gautama attained is not unique, but, on the contrary, is one which has been and will be gained countless times. Consequently, being possessed of all of Sakyamuni's attributes, all the other Buddhas must be considered to have three bodies of their own—each, in a word, must have a Dharmakaya, a Nimanakaya and a Sambhogakaya. As before noted, this doctrine continues down to the present day.

The step from a conception of the Trikaya as belonging merely to each individual Buddha to that in which it is regarded as a threefold method of manifestation of the one ultimate reality may seem a sudden and an impossible one. As a matter of fact, however, it was one which was soon made and was logically rendered necessary; it was merely the result of two different tendencies which had, sooner or later, to make themselves felt. The first of these was the beginning of the attitude to regard the Bhutatathata or the Shinnyo Hosho as a sort of Buddha, though infinitely broadened and amplified; in other words, as the one universal and all-comprehensive Buddha. In addition to his impersonal and unmanifested aspect, the Bhutatathata was supposed to have his manifested and more or less personal side (using the word personal in its wider and better sense). This was, of course, also omnipresent and universal, but it seemed to them to be the Ideal Being, which was nothing more than their conception of a Buddha raised to the *n*th power. Being regarded as a Buddha, however, it was necessary that he should be regarded as having an equivalent to the ordinary Buddha's three bodies, though naturally correspondingly universalized.

<sup>2</sup> So obvious has been the development of the Trikaya from the three refuges that I have not found it necessary to give detailed proof, such as stating the different conceptions of the Trikaya at various epochs or citing the many other points of similarity between the two *summa bona*.

Those who think it impossible for the triratna to have undergone such a transformation should remember the indisputable evolution which it has undergone in Nepal. There Buddha is supposed to represent mind, Dharma, matter, and Samgha the concretion of the two in the phenomenal world. According to the Aisvarika sect of Nepaulese Buddhism, Buddha is the symbol of generative power, Dharma the productive power, while Samgha, their son, is the *actual* creative power, or *active* creator and ruler. The other principal school, the Svabhavika, only differs in giving the Dharma (sometimes called the Prajna) the female element priority. Samgha is sometimes associated with Padmapani (Avalokitesvara). (See Hodgson's *Nepaulese Buddhism*).

As a matter of fact, however, the Mahayanists would have been forced to reach the same conclusion to avoid a hopeless complication in regard to the three bodies of the various human Buddhas. The body of the law (Dharmakaya) of Gautama was necessarily universal; it was forced by its origin to be omnipresent, to be the sole standard of existence. Every Buddha, however, was supposed to have a similar body so that Buddhism was in danger of having innumerable omnipresents and innumerable sole standards of being—obviously a self-contradiction. Countless Nirmanakayas there might be, but not Sambhogakayas, which were likewise considered to be unlimited both in regard to place and time.

There was only one way in which Mahayana could get out of the difficulty into which it had gotten itself, and that was by stating that all the Dharmakayas were united in, or rather were reflexes of, one Supreme Dharmakaya; all the various Nirmanakayas but the results of the transformation of one universal Nirmanakaya; and, finally, that there was but one original Sambhogakaya of which all others were but emanations. The doctrine that each Buddha has three separate bodies of his own was retained but the idea was added that, as drops of water are inseparable from the whole ocean, so are the individual Trikayas inseparable from the one universal Trikaya. Obviously, once the idea of a universal Trikaya was admitted, it was necessary to add that it was but the Bhutatathata manifesting himself, so closely did the nature of the two conceptions agree with each other.

### III.

Such, then, was the probable origin of the modern Mahayana conception of the Trikaya or trinity—a fundamental doctrine of Northern Buddhism—and such is its general nature. The only remaining question is as to the exact nature and attributes of each of the three bodies of the universal Buddha. The task of answering this is by no means as easy as might be supposed. In Christianity, and, indeed, in all the other religions teaching a triune God, the doctrines as to the nature of each member of the trinity are clearly set forth and easily understood, even if one be out of sympathy with the conception. In Mahayana, however, the subject is a most difficult one in spite of, and in fact owing to, the overwhelming mass of detail with which the doctrine is encumbered.

The nature of each member of the Trikaya has been minutely dissected and analyzed; yet in reviewing the idea as a whole no two Western authorities on the subject seem to agree. To a large

section the Dharmakaya seems to correspond to the Christian conception of God the Father, while to another section, including, it would appear, Dr. Paul Carus (see his *Buddhism and Its Christian Critics*, it is the Sambhogakaya which is God the Father, the Dharmakaya being the Holy Ghost. To still another school the Sambhogakaya is the equivalent of the resurrected Christ, while many refuse to make any comparison at all.

This confusion, however, while great, is by no means overwhelming and may easily be cleared away if one takes up separately the different attitudes of the various sects regarding the Trikaya. Speaking generally, there may be said to be two main ideas regarding it, and though, as we shall see, the two fundamentally identical, yet much of the confusion has arisen from the distinction not having been grasped. I shall call these two doctrines those of the Shodomon (Gate of Purity) and Jodomon (Gate of Pure Land) since these are, respectively, the ideas which are held by those two schools into which Mahayat is divided.

The former, to which belong five of the seven great Mahayana sects of Japan<sup>3</sup> (the various schools of China having practically all more or less coalesced) namely, the Kegon, the Tendai (this sect is considered the mother of the later schools), the Shingon, the Zen and the Nichiren—is chiefly noted for having the Dharmakaya as its principal object of worship.

The teachings of this school may perhaps be more easily understood by the aid of the accompanying chart:

- |                                       |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Dharmakaya . . . . .               | Reason             |
| 2. Sambhogakaya                       |                    |
| 1. Self-enjoying body                 | } . . . . . Wisdom |
| 2. Others-enjoying body               |                    |
| 2. Nirmanakaya                        |                    |
| 1. The Ojiri                          |                    |
| a. Superior Body for Pratyeka Buddhas | } Love             |
| b. Inferior Body for Sravakas         |                    |
| 2. The Keshin.                        |                    |

In this arrangement the Dharmakaya might also be called the heart of the universe. In its general nature and attributes it is

<sup>3</sup> There are altogether twelve great sects: three of them, however, belong to Hinayana and the other two to Madhyimayana, or Apparent Mahayana. The doctrines of these sects and their relations with one another have been brought out in another article (cf. *The Open Court*, February, 1919).

exactly like the Bhutatathata with one important exception—the Bhutatathata, being the Great Unmanifested, is largely a philosophic conception; we reason, we discuss, we realize the Bhutatathata: but we adore the Dharmakaya. The doctrine of the Dharmakaya is what gives Mahayana its truly religious aspect, something which is apt to be lacking in Hinayana. The Dharmakaya corresponds, as we have seen, in the Shodomon to the Christian God the Father, but though it is like the Christian conception of the Deity inasmuch as it is supposed to be the chief object of our worship, yet the Mahayana idea is apt to be more amplified, more universal, less restricted. In Christianity, in spite of the clause “Without body, parts, or passions,” we still in some remote portion of our theology seem to have the picture of “a man fourteen feet high with a beard six feet long.”

The Northern Buddhistic view of this law-body is not of a man made God-like, but rather of a principle self-manifested for the sake of aiding evolution. It is personal, I have said: yes, but care must be taken in understanding just what is meant by the word “personal.” If by personal we mean anthropopathic—man-like in feeling, if not in actual shape, with a man’s likes and dislikes, hates and partialities—the Dharmakaya is certainly not personal. Nevertheless, it is not purely abstract and colorless—it is not merely love, reason and justice. It is endowed with those attributes and is therefore in that sense a person, but it far transcends the limits of a personality in the narrow sense in which that word is so often used. The Dharmakaya is not impersonal, but rather than personal, we might call it super-personal.

The Bhutatathata, as we have seen, is both spirit and matter; the Dharmakaya we might perhaps call the spirit side distinguishing itself from matter and causing the evolution of the universe. It is the reason side of the divine—one may also with justice term it the will aspect, all sentient beings being supposed to derive their sentiency, their reason, and their will from it. It is the hidden force which constantly urges evolution upward without which this would quickly run along some side-track. In fact, if I were called upon to give the Dharmakaya another name, I should call it the Great Spiritual Urge.

The Dharmakaya is far removed from the idea of a purely transcendent despot far off in some distant heaven who hands down decrees to this world, for it is supposed to be not only in the world, but the very life and essence of it (“in whom we live and move and have our being”); and yet even so Mahayana has provided an even

closer medium of divinity in the Sambhohakaya. The Dharmakaya stands midway between the Sambhogakaya and the Bhutatathata as regards the abstract or the philosophical, and the concrete or the religious. The Bhutatathata is purely a philosophical conception, the Dharmakaya is indeed, a religious ideal but is looked upon as a thing unto itself, something independent of both man and worlds, though each might be obliged to exist in accordance with and derive their *raison d'être* from it (there again like the Christian doctrine of God the Father), while the Sambhogakaya is considered as the divine especially in touch with human life and its needs. Accordingly, it closely resembles in this respect the God, the Holy Ghost of the West, which proceeds from the Father (and from the Son also, says the Western Church) for the express purpose of keeping humanity in touch with the Father. While the Dharmakaya is reason devoid of limitation or feeling, the Sambhogakaya is wisdom, reason tinged with experience, the result of reason adapted to the material world; or, in other words, practical reason in contradistinction to pure reason.

With that hair-splitting for which Mahayana and all Oriental philosophy are so noted, the intricate doctrine of the Sambhogakaya has been made still more difficult of complete comprehension by the division of this sacred vehicle into two parts, the passive and the active Sambhogakaya. In order to understand the nature of these two divisions, something of the nature of the Buddhist doctrine of the power of thought must be taken into consideration. The passive Sambhogakaya is the recipient of the ceaseless devotion which is constantly being poured out by worshipers. It might be called the immediate object of worship, a sort of spiritual image, for when one desires to adore the divine in any aspect, the devotion is received by this aspect of the Body of Bliss. The active Sambhogakaya, on the other hand, is supposed to be that aspect of Deity which is constantly shedding its spiritual illumination over all the ten quarters, the Buddhist synonym for the universe. It is as if the spiritual energy which is poured forth by devotees were stored up, transmuted and sent back to the world at large "Cast your bread upon the waters, for it shall return an hundredfold," etc.)

These spiritual rays sent forth by the Sambhogakaya are supposed to be for the benefit of all classes of men impartially—the sinner as well as the saint, the ignorant as well as the wise man. Each man is supposed to absorb and to benefit according to his own capacity and willingness to do so. It is evident, however, that it is the spiritual minded who benefit most greatly by it, since it is they

who are the most conscious of these rays and are the most willing to profit by them. The Samghogakaya is entirely a thing of the spirit and can only be realized by spiritual perception.

What, then, however, becomes of the countless millions who are "of the earth earthy"? Are they to be left in the night of spiritual darkness until they finally become disgusted with it, and of their own volition turn their faces toward the light? To such a conception Mahayana gives a decided negative. The Divine, according to its teachings, is not merely something which can be approached (the approaching of which gives one perfect enlightenment), but it is ever actively working for the spiritual awakening of the masses. Accordingly, there is a third and still more material body of the universal Buddha which all may see and hear. This is the Nirmanakaya, the body of transformation or incarnation, corresponding of course to the Christian God the Son, or the "Word made flesh." It is the vehicle which the Supreme assumes when, for the purpose of enlightening the world and of "beating the drum of the Law," he manifests himself to the material world. He then takes a particular form, and becomes a devil, god, man, deva, or even an animal, adapting himself to the condition and the intellectual development of the people.

This Nirmanakaya is divided into two classes, called in Japanese the Ojin and the Keshin. These may be interpreted as the complete and the incomplete incarnation. The latter is frequent and universal. It is little more than to say that the spirit of God moves in an avatar or the person in whom the divine is supposed to be incarnated. The Divine inspires him and lives in him so that not only may we say that the message which he preaches is divine, but also the very person himself is divine. I am almost tempted to say that the Mahayana view of the nature of the divinity of the Keshin, or incomplete incarnation, corresponds to that of Nestorianism of old, which was that in the Incarnate being there were two persons, the divine and the human, which were in some mysterious way united or welded together. It must be remembered, however, that in Mahayana there can be but one person or being in itself, namely the Divine (this is the significance which the doctrine of non-atman has assumed in Mahayana) and that accordingly we are all latently divine, or, in other words, that we are all undeveloped avatars. The condition of the avatar may therefore be said to be brought about by the developing of the inner light. The avatar, then, is one who manifests the divinity which is everywhere present.

The principal avatars are considered to be men who have at-

tained to supreme enlightenment or Buddhahood. It is they who are supposed to be the most perfect incarnations of the Supreme. Even in Buddhahood, however, there are degrees, until finally the rank of complete incarnation or Ojin is reached. The difference between the Ojin and the Keshin is more one of degree than of kind, it is only that in the latter the union of the two natures is considered to be the more complete. In the Keshin it is more the human nature influenced by the divine nature which speaks, while in the Ojin it is rather the divine nature itself speaking, merely using the human nature as a mouthpiece.

While partial incarnations are of frequent occurrence (the great patriarchs of all the sects and all the religions being regarded as Keshins), the appearance of an Ojin is extremely rare, coming only at times of great need and for certain specific purposes. During the present age or dispensation there are supposed to be only two: Sakyamuni, the historical founder of Buddhism, and Maitreya—the Buddha-to-be who was prophesied by Gautama as his successor. There are two versions of the prophecy. One is that Maitreya (Jap. Miroku) would appear five hundred years after Gautama; the other, five thousand years afterward. The former figure has led many persons interested in the cooperation of Christianity and Buddhism (myself among them) to identify Christ and the promised Buddhist Messiah.

Each superior incarnation is understood to have two bodies—the superior and the inferior. In this case, however, “body” is not perhaps as accurate a term as “nature” or “aspect.” In Mahayana there is a threefold division of Buddhist believers. The first of these are the Bodhisattvas, those persons who aim at the attainment of Buddhahood in order to attain and save the whole world. The second are those whose goal is Pratyeka (private) Buddhahood, or supreme enlightenment for oneself alone, while the lowest are the ignorant Sravakas (literally “hearers”) who endeavor to reach Arhatship or mere salvation from the wheel of birth and death.

The Bodhisattvas are looked upon as the spiritually-minded who can obtain their illumination direct from the Sambhogakaya, while the superior body of the Ojin (Jap. Sho-Ojin) is for the aspirants for Pratyeka Buddhahood. Even this nature, however, reveals certain truths which the lowest, the Sravakas, are unable to understand or appreciate, so great is their profundity, so that the Buddha, desirous of the salvation of all sorts and conditions of men, assumes a still lower nature, the incomplete body, the Rettojin, for the sake of aiding the simple, the skeptical and the

unintelligent. Are we not reminded in this connection of the Christ's words, "Unto the multitudes I speak in parables, but unto you, face to face."

Such, then, is the conception of the Trikaya as held by practically all the schools of Mahayana, for even the Jodomon conception differs only in one important detail. Among the followers of the Shodomon, there is only one important division of opinion on this point, namely, the doctrine taught by the Kegon sect and that held by the Tendai and the remaining sects. The difference reminds one strangely of the difference between the Arian and the Athanasian views of the Trinity. In the Kegon sect, the Dharmakaya is looked upon as somewhat superior to the other two aspects of the Universal Buddha. It alone is the pure reason, the Cause, while the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya are merely the "things" (*ji*) or the result. In the Tendai theology, however, (and all the subsequent sects derive their systems from Tendai) the three bodies are absolutely equal and undivided (literally "not two"). It is interesting to note that not only did similar controversies occur in both the East and the West, but that also, in both cases, was the same theory triumphant, namely, the equal and undivided, or Athanasian, idea, for in Japan the Kegon sect is now practically extinct.

Only one other point remains to be spoken of in this connection. In the process of time, each one of the three aspects came to be more and more personified, until finally the names of ideal Buddhas were attached. Thus in the Shingon or Mantra sect (and to a certain extent in the others) the Dharmakaya came to be known as Vairochana Buddha (Jap. Dai Nichi Butsu) or the Blessed One coming from the sun, the Sambhogakaya as Amitabha or Amitayus Buddha (Jap. Amida Butsu) or the Divine Being of infinite light and infinite time while the Nirmanakaya was typified by Sakyamuni.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]