

Buddhist. What, then, is the fault of this religion ; ye who believe that right living is the one thing that counts, that conduct has all to do with life ?

But belief does count something ; it may be very little, but it is something, and nowhere can we realize it more fully than in Buddhism.

Let us look at the Buddhist idea of heaven—Nirvana. What the nature of this place is, no one knows any more than we know the nature of the heaven that we look forward to. But the Buddhist believes that all existence is evil, and so the highest bliss to him is non-existence, and the only way for him to reach this condition is by attaining a state of perfection, then Nirvana is attained. He may have to live countless lives, animal or human, before this comes about. But to him this highest bliss, Nirvana, seems to mean annihilation—extinction of life. There is a difference of opinion, however, in regard to the meaning of Nirvana, some claiming that it means absorption into the great life of Buddha—into all life. That is the Japanese idea, I think. But the Siamese believe that Nirvana is only attainable when the body dissolves both physically and spiritually, and the thing to be desired in absolute repose, extinction of being, nothingness. Edwin Arnold says of it :

"If any teach Nirvana is to cease,
Say unto such they lie ;
If any teach Nirvana is to live,
Say unto such they err."

What the condition is in which the soul neither lives nor dies, I leave my hearers to conceive.

But the great fault of the religion of Buddha is its lack of happiness. The man who believes that all life is evil, crushes out from his nature that joyousness, that fullness of life that should belong to right conduct. One's belief may have a minor place compared to that of his conduct, and undoubtedly has ; but he who believes that life is grand and noble, who, as the sun shines around him in its brightness and glory,

can feel it shine into his heart also, and know that it is good ; who radiates gladness wherever he is because of the joyousness of mere living ; the man who follows the high moral code of the Buddhist, and at the same time believes that life is good, does live a better life than the man with the same high standard of morality and belief in the evil of existence. The man who can throw up his hat and shout because he is glad he is alive, is pretty sure to be a good man.

Unless the infinite love, back of the laws of nature, be felt, the infinite good of existence, then the religious life fails of its fullness, misses its blessing. As long as the Buddhist selfishly does good to escape the evil of existence, in other words, to save his own soul instead of making the most of his life and helping others to make the most of theirs, because of the eternal principles of love, of unselfishness, his religion cannot be a saving one. Its adherents must still be bound, must miss that fullness and richness of life that attends unselfish living. The question arises whether the morality of Christianity is as high as that of Buddhism. Christianity makes no command in regard to strong drink—one of the greatest evils of Christian nations—while in Buddhist countries it is used very little indeed.

"Shun drugs and drinks which work the wit abuse—
Clear minds, clean bodies, need no Soma juice."

Is Edwin Arnold's version of the Buddhist's 4th commandment. Christianity might adopt it with profit.

Then, too, there are certain doctrines embraced by various sects of Christendom that are essentially immoral. For example : The doctrine of the atonement ; that the blood of one man can atone for the sin of thousands ; that belief in the blood of Jesus Christ can in any way excuse a man for wrong actions, is anything but moral.

"Our acts our angels are, or good ill,
Our fatal shadows, that walk by us still,"