

NINE CENTURIES OF BUDDHISM.—II.

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The second and most important part of the Buddhist Catechism is that relating to the *Doctrine (Dhamma)*.

II. 69. What is the doctrine?

Answer. It is the true way of salvation intuitively perceived and announced by the Buddha.

If this be true, Buddhism claims the authority of a world-religion. But when approached on religious matters, Tibetans declare all religions to be equally good. Christianity is good for the European, Hinduism for the Indian, and Buddhism for the Tibetan. The only explanation they can offer for the existence of Christian missions is that the missionaries are bent on accumulating extraordinary quantities of moral merit. They have no conception of religion as so taking hold of a man that he is glad to go thousands of miles and learn a strange language solely to tell others what he has found. The Tibetan view is evidently incompatible both with Subhadra's definition and with any idea of a religion that goes beyond mere words.

In answer to question II. 75 Subhadra says: "There are no divine revelations." Subhadra should take a course of Tibetan reading, with a view to discovering any lives of Tibetan saints in which revelations by dreams, signs, etc., are *not* received.

II. 78. What is the cause of sorrow, of death, and of birth renewal?

Answer. . . . The craving for individual existence either in this world or in another (Heaven, Paradise).

Undoubtedly a few Tibetans may exist who delude themselves into the belief that they prefer Nirvana to any Paradise, altho I certainly have not yet met any such. The ideal of the ordinary Tibetan is the paradise of "Devachan." Both clerics and laymen have agreed in describing this heaven as a place of perpetual spring, the inhabitants of which have no work to do, but enjoy an abundance of good things to eat and drink, besides the companionship of beautiful girls—in short, a "Mohammedan paradise" of the most sensual kind, without even the pretence of spiritual enjoyments of any sort. Such is the practical Buddhist ideal. Theosophists give a different description of "Devachan," for which they are probably indebted to "Mahatmas." *

* As every one knows, foreigners are not allowed to travel, much less reside in Tibet proper; yet we are told that Madame Blavatsky, the well-known Theosophist, spent a considerable time in there. Where did she reside? Some information which would enable us to fix the geographical spot where she met with "mahatmas" is desirable. Until we have this, I must incline to the belief that her visit to Tibet was somewhat mythical. This is, however, a point of secondary importance