

General Introduction

I

Primitive religions are unlike the great religions of the civilized peoples of the world except in the one feature that is common to all religion – the emotional concern present when men find themselves dependent on powers that are mysterious and unpredictable. The bidden powers by which primitive peoples feel themselves to be surrounded and with which they deal, by magic rite or prayerful appeal, are for the most part local agencies residing in sun, earth, rain, sea, or some species of animal or plant. Such powers are the strange potencies in these natural objects in virtue of which they sometimes act in ways that satisfy man's needs and further his well-being, and sometimes in ways that bring him frustration or even disaster. There is obviously, to primitive man's experience, such a potency in the sun; at times his fructifying warmth pours genially upon the crops through a long growing season so that they yield a rich harvest, at times he bums them up with his fierce heat or hides so often behind the chilly clouds that they grow slowly and poorly. The aim of primitive rites and petitions is to induce these uncertain powers to behave in ways that support man's struggle for life and prosperity instead of in ways that are uncooperative or hostile. Typical of primitive addresses are such expressions as these:

"Sun! I do this so that you may be burning hot, and eat up all the clouds in the sky."

"O millet, thou hast grown well for us; we thank thee, we eat thee."

"Help us, Mother Earth! We depend on your goodness. Let there be rain to water the prairies, that the grass may grow long and the berries be abundant."

There is only the most meager sense in primitive man's mind of any divine powers in the universe that are greater than these potencies, or more awesome from a moral or spiritual point of view.

Why *is* this so? The answer is fairly simple when one puts himself in the position of a primitive society. Such a group lacks established scientific knowledge of the laws according to which natural processes go on; its members are desperately seeking to maintain existence, health, and security in the absence of such knowledge; their dominant emotions are determined by the threatening or kindly forces on which this struggle depends for its success and which primitive man can only locate in or behind these natural processes. Such potencies constitute the divinities of primitive cultures; there is no awareness of any others, except in the dimmest and vaguest fashion.

At an early period of their history civilized societies lived under the conditions and with the dominant concerns of primitive groups. Most of what is known about their religion at that early stage indicates that it revealed the main characteristics of primitive religion, although there are a few differences that anticipate in some measure the form of civilized religion that later emerged. But why do civilized cultures have any religion at all? The rise of civilization in any part of the world means that, among other things, the society achieving that status has gained at least a rudimentary scientific understanding about the laws governing the processes of nature. It knows how, through a confidently applied technology, to provide a regular food supply and the other resources on which continued existence and health depend. So far as this happens, the mysterious divinities of primitive thought and feeling disappear; they are replaced by the orderly sequences which the scientific mind sees operating everywhere in nature. The capricious rain god gives way to the laws of formation and interaction of high and low pressure areas as they move across the earth's surface; the diabolical monster swallowing the sun or moon disappears in

man's awareness of the astronomical motions and relationships which permits an accurate prediction of eclipses. One might think that with the coming of civilization religion would lose its pertinence and fade away – at least as soon as the emotional transformation brought about by the rise of scientific knowledge became complete.

But it did not happen that way. And the historical reason is that the victories gained by man in the emergence of civilization, through providing a solution of the dominant problem faced by primitive man, created another problem – equally challenging but different in kind. The societies that mastered the arts of civilization three thousand or more years ago – in China, India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and a little later in southern Europe – became by that fact capable of rapid expansion not possible before. They absorbed less advanced peoples on the periphery of their territory, who were usually enslaved or at least reduced to the status of an inferior caste. In course of time they came in conflict with other civilized societies who were reaching out in the same way; and the evils of war in its civilized form began to haunt man – first, war for supremacy over a continental region, e.g., Western Asia, then over the Mediterranean world, then over an entire continent or hemisphere, and now in our own day for world wide supremacy. Within each civilized culture there gradually appeared a vast diversification of economic functions and vocational groups; men were thrown into complex forms of dependence on each other and interaction with each other. In this situation the dominant problem they had to face was very different from that which absorbed the attention and mastered the emotions of primitive man. Primitive groups were struggling to win a greater measure of security against the threatening forces of subhuman nature; on that struggle their physical survival and well-being depended. Civilized societies, by becoming civilized, have solved that problem, sufficiently at least so that the emotions of their leaders are no longer preoccupied and controlled by it. The challenging concern that more and more dominates their minds is how man can find a way to live in peace and harmony with his fellows; it becomes increasingly clear that the capacity of civilized life to survive (let alone rise to new heights of enduring achievement) depends on the successful meeting of this challenge.

Now, just as the essential characteristics of primitive religion reflect the limited understanding and the emotional tension present when men are dominated by that first problem, with the area of mystery which it involved, so the essential characteristics of the great civilized religions reflect the distinctive nature of the second major concern, and the somewhat different area of mystery which a serious and persistent effort to meet it proved to involve. Let us make this difference more explicit; there are four obvious and striking ways in which the orientation toward life and the universe of the civilized faiths diverges sharply from that of a typical primitive religion.

The first and foremost concerns the basic moral attitude of men. Primitives, with the rarest of exceptions, feel no sense of moral obligation toward anyone outside of their small cultural group, and this feeling is freely expressed in their religion. Just as a primitive religionist prays to a divine power: "Let this family prosper, let us be kept in health, let our food grow": so he can also pray, without any sense of inconsistency, "Great Quahootze! Let me live, find the enemy, not be afraid of him, find him asleep, and kill many of him." Civilized religions, on the contrary, accept the principle of universal moral responsibility, to be expressed toward all men simply because they are men. This alteration of attitude is most clearly revealed in their acceptance, without any qualification, of the Golden Rule as the norm of right conduct in one's relations with his human fellows.

The second concerns man's basic conviction about the universe. Primitive thought takes for granted a cosmological pluralism. There are many and diverse powers, familiar or more elusive, that control the way things happen in the processes of nature; there is no unity of force or law pervading them all. Civilized theology, philosophy, and science assume, however, an ultimate monism in the structure of things. There is a single source and determiner of all reality, or a single principle of order which gives systematic coherence to the modes of action of everything that exists. In the theistic religions this unitary source is conceived as a personal God, who is the creator of the world and who embodies in perfect form the moral virtues of justice and love implied in sincere commitment to the Golden Rule. In other religions it may take the form of a cosmic extension of the moral law, or a superpersonal One transcending the experienced world and all that it contains.

The third concerns the conception of the human soul. Primitive ideas assume that the soul is a physical or quasi-physical entity, identified with the breath that animates a living body or the shadow that it casts as it moves along the ground. The leaders of civilized religion abandon this notion, finding it hopelessly unsuited to their experience and their need. In accepting as valid a universal moral law, and in responding to the divine as interpreted in monistic terms, they have discovered in themselves, and they ascribe to all men, a spiritual capacity of which primitive man knows almost nothing. It is this capacity that constitutes the human soul for them- the power to respond in feeling and conduct to a supreme moral ideal and to realize harmony with a Divine Being embodying that ideal. This potency in man gives meaning to the civilized concept of "self" or "spirit"; it is something invisible and nonmaterial but none the less – as making up the core of one's personality – it is that in him which is most real and of greatest value.

The fourth concerns the belief that is held with respect to the nature of human happiness – the kind of experience in which man's true well-being and essential integrity lie. The typical primitive belief on this matter is quite simple. Happiness consists in satisfying our natural desires, as fully and successfully as we can. There is no awareness that the part of our personality which readily identifies itself with these instinctive drives may not be our true self but only an immature, and in the long run unacceptable, substitute for it. But the pioneers of civilized religion have discovered that these spontaneous cravings are quite undependable guides to happiness; they are the causes of much misery and suffering, in ourselves and in others. True happiness consists in identifying ourselves with something that transcends these instinctive, urges. In liberating oneness with that transcendent reality, they are sure, we become capable of a joy quite incomparable with the unstable gratifications of those primitive drives that apart from such pioneering discoveries constitute the only happiness man knows. In the language of one of the civilized religions Christianity, our "old man" – the part of our nature which aggressively seeks these childish gratifications – must be crucified with Christ, so that the new man, which is Christ living in us may come to birth and show its presence by the fruits of the spirit, such as truthfulness, peace, fearlessness, and love, which then are the spontaneous expression of our transformed nature.

Happily for the full realization of the varied spiritual potentialities of mankind, each of the great civilized religions of the world exemplifies these common characteristics in a somewhat distinctive way. And now that the violent hostility of adherents of one religion toward others is passing away, and is being replaced by an increasing eagerness to appreciate what is significant and valuable in each of them, a magnificent opportunity is open for all men to participate in that realization and to add to their own limited experience and understanding something of the insight achieved by spiritual explorers in other areas of the world.

II

The form in which these characteristics appear in Buddhism as one of the great civilized religions of the East is naturally influenced by its background in the earlier religious thought of India and by the historical situation which Buddha found himself challenged to meet. It was also, of course, largely determined by the unique genius of his own personality.

The earliest religion in India about which we have as definite information is that displayed in the ancient scripture known as the Vedas, and especially the *Rig Veda*. This is, generally speaking, a form of primitive religion; the divinities addressed and celebrated are the personified forces of nature displayed in the sun, the earth, the rain, the sacrificial fire, the intoxicating libation, the sky, the wind. But beginning about 800 B.C. a novel kind of document appears, the *Upanishads*. The sages presented in these writings are struggling to work out a mystical philosophy of the universe and of human nature, with profound implications touching the way that man must follow to find salvation.

What is meant by a "mystical philosophy," when this term is used not to express vague condemnation but to describe a definite type of orientation in religion and metaphysics? Such an orientation constitutes a minor historical strand in several great religions, e.g., Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism. In Taoism and the Indian religions it is the primary and basic strand, determining the role and meaning of everything in the experience of their adherents and in their theological interpretations. Well, for the mystical way of thinking, one's salvation consists in leaving behind the separate, fearful, self-centered individual that in his finitude he now finds himself to be, and becoming one with the universal and absolute reality – leaving behind the realm of the unstable, transitory, and illusory, and becoming identified with the ultimate and eternal ground of all that exists. The passion of the Indian saint is the passion of the fragment for the whole – the longing to throw off the hampering limitations of finite existence and to achieve union with the infinite.

One of the most popular prayers of the *Upanishads* reads:

From the unreal lead me to the real;
From darkness lead me to light;
From death lead me to deathlessness.

Here speaks the spirit of Indian religion. The problem of life, for this way of thinking, is rooted in the here and now of our daily existence, but the envisioned solution reveals an unquenchable audacity. There is a sense of the limitless possibilities of man, in comparison with which everything that he has already experienced before he becomes poignantly aware of them must be pronounced illusory rather than real, darkness rather than light, death rather than life. The task of man is to leave behind the cramping world of his present acquaintance, leave behind his limited self and all that belongs with it, and become one with transcendent reality – with the divine source of all that is great and good and true. Religion reveals the way of this arduous ascent; anything that does less than this will not, for the Indian mind, deserve to be called religion. Its task is to discover, and make available to men, a new dimension of human potentiality which apart from the insight of religious pioneers would never have been glimpsed.

Plato's famous allegory of the cave¹ presents in poetic and philosophic form the Indian concept of the way to salvation – as a tortuous passage from the darkness of unreality to the

¹ In his *Republic*, Book VII

brilliant light of the truly real. But a reader of Plato might be left with the impression that this process of emancipation is a purely intellectual one, and that it can be accomplished only by those endowed with high philosophic gifts. To the Indian theologians an intellectual insight is indeed necessary, but the realization as a whole is by no means merely intellectual. It is a remolding of the whole personality – a genuinely new birth, except that it cannot be achieved suddenly but only as a result of long and patient discipline. Its essence is liberation from attachment to the demands and longings that now hold us captive, and to the shrinking self that erects a protective wall of separation between itself and all other forms of life; for it is these that pose the formidable obstructions that stand in the way of our realizing the Infinite and Eternal Being that we truly are. What the world thinks of as life is really death; our task is to escape from it to that which is truly life – the kind of life of which man is intrinsically capable and for which he is divinely destined.

Now the distinctive genius of Buddhism as a civilized religion can best be approached by a brief explanation of the fundamental concepts in which this mystical philosophy which first gains expression in the *Upanishads* is formulated. A mastery of their meaning is essential to a comprehension of Buddha's teaching and of the course of its development in the thought of his followers.

First and quite central is the concept of Brahman, the metaphysical absolute. Out of Brahman come all things; to Brahman all things return. In himself, Brahman is unknown and unknowable, but as taking form and meaning for us men he is *Sat-chit-ananda* – the source and embodiment of reality, knowledge, and bliss. Second, there is the concept of *atman*, the soul or self. And the very meaning of this concept is determined by the central Hindu conviction that the true self of each human being is identical with Brahman, and that when that identity is realized the quest for salvation is fulfilled. When the individual soul that has not realized its oneness with Brahman is discussed, it is referred to as "*jivatman*" or by the entirely different term "*purusha*." The crucial stage in the process of gaining this realization is *moksha*, which means "release" or "liberation." The key idea here is that what makes possible the realization of identity with Brahman is the freeing of the self from control by longings which bind it to the needs of the body and to other transitory concerns. Now only in rare cases will an individual be sufficiently purged of these cravings in his present existence so that he can hope for *moksha* before the death of the body which his soul now tenants. But his soul will survive this event and continue to exist, taking new forms one after another until the purgation is complete; in fact, it has existed in innumerable forms in the past. This continued transmigration in the "ocean of births and deaths," which inevitably goes on as long as any taint of self-demandingness is left, is *samsara*. And what determines the form that will be taken in each new existence is the law of *karma*. By this concept Indian thought expresses the idea that the principle of causality operates in man's moral and spiritual experience, and; does so in a particular way. The state of one's achievement at the end of his previous existence is the cause whose effect is the form taken by his present existence; similarly, the state: achieved at the end of the present existence will decide the form to be taken in the next. Or, stated more generally (so that it will apply within the sequence of events experienced by each form of existence as well as between one form and its' successor), *the law of karma is the principle that good choices, earnest efforts, good deeds, build good character, while bad choices, inertia, and evil deeds build bad character*. In the latter case one is lengthening and making less hopeful the round of successive existences, for there is no magical way by which an evil character can be suddenly transformed into a good one, whereas in the former case one is shortening it and making it more hopeful. He is systematically doing what each person can do to

eliminate the moral obstructions that bind him to the wheel of birth, suffering, and death, and thus to make the law of *karma* work toward his ultimate release and his blissful union with Brahman.

To these five concepts should be added a sixth, namely, *dharma*. This word has a wide range of meanings in Indian thought; perhaps the most general meaning, which underlies all of the more specific ones, is "the way that man should follow' in order to fulfill his true nature and carry out his moral and social responsibilities." As taken over by Buddhism, this concept undergoes a most extraordinary development, the main features of which will be indicated in the sequel.

Buddha accepted, as essentially sound, the ideas expressed in the concepts of *moksha*, *samsara*, and *karma*, although some reinterpretation of them proved to be demanded by the principles involved in other aspects of his teaching. The concept of Brahman, as referring to a transcendent source of all reality, he rejected because of the metaphysical position which seemed to him required by a loving commitment to the practical well-being of all men. As marking the goal of the religious quest, Brahman is transformed rather than rejected; that goal is entrance into Nirvana instead of union with Brahman. The term *atman*, being interpreted by the theologians of his day as meaning a changeless and substantial self, he also rejected in favor of a more dynamic conception of human personality. We shall have to clarify later the famous *anatta* ("no soul") doctrine of Buddhism and the problems involved in the concept of Nirvana. What is basic in this area of his thought is that all forms of phenomenal existence, including living creatures, are in constant change and must in time perish. The fact that Buddha accepted so much but not more of the religious, philosophical and psychological framework of thought that was being developed in the *Upanishads* at the time he lived indicates both the degree to which his thinking was embedded in the Indian heritage and the degree to which he was ready to criticize that heritage and strike out along radically novel lines.

What were the main features of the broader human situation that he confronted? In general, that situation was one of radical social readjustment and deepening religious need. Wars were frequent between the petty princes and rival clans in northern India, and the organization of society was moving more and more in the direction of a rigid caste system. The struggle to rise above one's present social status and win a larger sphere of opportunity in life was becoming increasingly difficult. Religious insight was being obstructed by the dead hand of the past; the Vedas were frequently taught as a collection of authoritative texts rather than as living truths to be tested and reinterpreted (if need be) in the present. Heavy and probably increasing emphasis was placed on the correct performance of rite and ceremony. Religious thinkers, in the attempt to satisfy their metaphysical curiosity, were championing varied cosmological systems, each visionary claiming truth for his pet theory and heaping argumentative scorn on the theories of his opponents. Worst of all, perhaps, from Buddha's standpoint, religion was straying through these and other vices away from the insistent, poignant, practical needs of men and women. It was not leading them toward true fulfillment and more dependable happiness; it was becoming mired in obstructive tradition, repetitious rite, and dead or cantankerous dogma. He conceived it as his task to break through or sweep away these obstructive tangles, to find an enduring solution to the real problems of men, and to bring to India and the world a saving message of light and love.

Buddha was born a prince of the Sakya clan, which at that time (the first half of the sixth century B.C.) inhabited a part of the territory now embraced by Nepal and the adjoining area of North India; its capital city was Kapilavastu. His family name was Gautama (or Gotama), and his given name Siddhartha. Few people, however, now know about these names, or make any use of

them. Just as Jesus of Nazareth became to his devoted followers and to later generations in the Western world the Christ – the "Anointed One" of God, destined to be the Savior of the world – so this great religious and philosophical pioneer of India became to later centuries the Buddha – the "Illumined One," destined to bring truth and joy and peace to a large fraction of civilized humanity since. And we shall need to be familiar with two other titles that are likewise derived from his religious significance in history. One is easily understood; he is Sakyamuni, the prophetic sage of the Sakyas. The other is haunted by much mystery; he is Tathagata. What this title means is more fully determined than any of the others by devout Buddhist feeling, as it lovingly centers upon him and becomes enriched through time. We may render it. "He who has fully come through," or, more simply and briefly. "the Perfect One" – the one who has attained spiritual perfection.

How glad the student of religion would be if it were possible to penetrate the mixture of legend and history that partially discloses, partially shrouds, the life of this great man! In Buddhist tradition an idealizing and moving story confronts us, filled with all the detail suggested by grateful projection and pious imagination. If the reader wishes to follow such a story, let him turn to the pages of Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, based on the life of Buddha as recounted by Buddhist biographers who lived five to six hundred years after the time of Buddha himself.

What do we know that can be set down with confidence as sober fact? Very little; but that little is deeply significant. Siddhartha grew to young manhood amid scenes of luxury and surrounded by all the paraphernalia of sensuous enjoyment; he was protected by his father from learning about the sorrows and frustrations and perplexities to which ordinary flesh is heir. Somehow, when in his early twenties, he became acquainted with the sad facts of old age, of disease, and of death; for the first time he knew the major miseries to which human nature is inevitably subject in a world of decay and dissolution. This experience moved him to anxious and puzzled reflection, and then – having also met a monk full of wisdom, insight, and serenity – to determined, undiscouraged action. He must learn the meaning of life in such a strange world. He left "his fathers palace with its constant stimulations to self-centered indulgence, left his beautiful wife and newborn son, and wandered into the forest – the accepted haunt in India for those who have found the ways of ordinary life spiritually cramping. His purpose was to discover the truth – the essential and saving truth – about life and death, about sorrow and happiness. For seven years he sought and struggled in relentless, torturing self-experiment. He inquired of renowned hermit sages. As would be the case in India, with its traditional insistence on renunciation, he tried ascetic denial of the body's demands in extreme form, finally succumbing to the dull blankness of a starving swoon. When he returned to consciousness again he was convinced that this was not the right way – such radical punishment of the body brings, he saw not spiritual illumination and peace, but exhaustion, torpor and impotence of mind. Gradually he found more successful clues to the understanding and liberation he sought. After being persistently tempted by the clever demon Mara, his quest reached its culmination in a long period of meditation under a spreading tree, which became for that reason to Buddhists the sacred Bodhi tree, not far from the preset city of Gaya in northeastern India.

According to one historical tradition this, the greatest ever in all human history, occurred in May, 544 B.C. According to another, influential in Southern Buddhism, it was Buddha death that took place at that time. This little volume then marks the anniversary of a momentous occasion in Buddhist chronology.² In the joy of assured enlightenment he rose, and, after a brief

² The actual date of his enlightenment was more likely about fifteen years later, according to the consensus of

delay, wandered slowly toward the sacred city of Benares, two hundred-odd miles to the west. How could he make his discovery intelligible and persuasive to others, so that it might guide them also toward true happiness and peace? Apparently there was a strong temptation to keep his illumination to himself, but it became clear that he must make the attempt. It meant formulating the basic truth about life in the halting, inadequate medium of human speech; and then it meant speaking that truth in love, so that others capable of responding to it would sense the answer to their living need too, and would not rest until they had mastered its promise and its power. At Sarnath, a few miles from the river near Benares, he preached his first sermon and won his first converts. Then for forty-odd years he continued to proclaim his message, expanding it in its bearing on the problems that sincere inquirers raised, and adapting it to the special needs of all who found hope and cheer in his presence. At the age of eighty he passed away in the arms of Ananda, his beloved disciple, with the words: "Decay is inherent in all compound things. Work out your own salvation with diligence."

What sort of person did the man whose biography has thus been briefly sketched impress others as being? Gautama the Buddha seems to have combined in high degree two qualities that are rarely found together and each of which is rarely exemplified in high degree. On the one hand he was a man of rich and responsive human sympathy, of unfailing patience, strength, gentleness, and good will. His friendliness, to all who came to him in sincere search, was genuine and unreserved. He therefore aroused in his followers a wondering, eager, affectionate devotion such as only the greatest leaders of men have awakened. On the other hand, he was a thinker, of unexcelled philosophic power. His was one of the giant intellects of human history, exhibiting a keenness of analytic understanding that has rarely been equaled. He probed through the virtues and the deceptions of the thought of his day, adopting it where it seemed to him clearly sound and abandoning or radically revising it when he saw that it was missing the true and the good. It is in virtue of this characteristic of the Master that Buddhism is the only one of the great religions of the world that is consciously and frankly based on a systematic rational analysis of the problem of life, and of the way to its solution. Buddha was a pioneering lover of men, and a philosophic genius, rolled into a single vigorous and radiant personality.

In the brief introductions to the parts into which this book is divided, and to specific selections, I shall add what further comments are needed to enable the reader to understand and appreciate the scriptures here included. In bringing this general introduction to a close I shall summarize briefly the history of Buddhism after the death of its founder.

Given its initial push by Gautama's dynamic personality, Buddhism spread rapidly. In a little more than two centuries after Buddha's death, Asoka, the first Buddhist emperor of India, came to power. Through his influence the new religion not only swept large areas of India but spread to Ceylon and other neighboring regions, especially to the east and the north-west. For a millennium it was a powerful force in molding the religious, moral, artistic, educational, and social life of India. But by the end of that thousand-year period its decline in the subcontinent had begun, and in another five hundred years it had practically disappeared from the land of its birth. But Buddhism lived and continued to grow because of its missionary fervor. The eagerness of its followers to carry the saving way to others had by this time spread it far and wide through northern and eastern Asia. In the west and northwest it was in time met and checked by the surging tide of Islam, but it remained the dominant religion of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and some other areas in southeast Asia; it became one of the living religions of China and Korea; it won Tibet and contended successfully with Shinto for the soul of Japan.

In this process of missionary expansion it was itself profoundly transformed, and the most significant steps in this transformation we shall later need to follow. During the early centuries of that period – from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 – a cleavage into the two great schools of subsequent Buddhist history, Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism, was taking place. Since these two terms themselves reflect the Mahayana viewpoint (Mahayana meaning "the greater vehicle" of salvation, and Hinayana "the lesser vehicle") I shall refer to the Hinayana school by a different term that is nonprejudicial and is acceptable in the Hinayana countries, namely "Theravada" Buddhism ("the way of the elders"). In general, the farther Buddhism spread, in space and in time, from the locus and date of its origin, the deeper the remodeling it underwent. By keeping this fact in mind we shall be prepared for the novel ideas and emphases which will be revealed, especially in the sections expressing the devotional spirit of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism.

At the present time Buddhism is adjusting itself to the challenging impact of Western culture upon the East, and to all the varied forces that have broken loose in the modern world. So far as concerns the general situation in the Buddhist countries, two encouraging signs for the future are at hand. One is the formation of a World Buddhist Fellowship, drawing upon Buddhists in all countries, Theravada and Mahayana, for its membership; it has already held two conferences at which a united Buddhist orientation toward the world has been expressed. The other is the convening of the Sixth Buddhist Council at Rangoon, in a series of meetings extending for two years from May 1954 and focusing upon the commemoration of the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's illumination, during which it is expected that the first complete edition of the canonical Buddhist scriptures (the *Tripitaka* or "Three Baskets") will be published.

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