

WINDISCH'S WORK AND THE WORK OF TO-DAY

THAT for which we are working here in Leipzig to-day is in a way different from what it was in Windisch's time. For him the thing was to get to understand Buddhism as we have it in the Pali Canon; it was research into a Buddhism which, even when Sanskrit sources were drawn in, was essentially that of the Pali Canon. It is true—and herein we have remained the pupils of our teacher Windisch—that the Pali Canon still forms the centre of our field, but circumstances have undergone thus much of relative adjustment, that the attempt is now being made, by comparative research into, and criticism of, texts, to test how far that Canon will carry us (*Tragfähigkeit*). With this object we are bringing to bear translations of the so-called northern tradition on the most extensive scale.

On the one hand we seek, by such a textual investigation of the history of the compilation of the Pali Canon, to bring out its essential structure. On the other, we hope to achieve, by means of textual criticism, an approximate chronology of the texts. We want, thereupon, with the results of such an inquiry, to test the reliability of the data given in the Pali Canon about its origin and schisms.

We are convinced that it is possible, by way of textual criticism, so far to open up the literary stores of the Canon, that, in the shape to be given it by textual criticism, it may yield a sufficient basis of historical inquiry into ideas, to enable us to determine whether the structural conception in the Canon is one and the same, or whether there is a development due to readjustment of outlook (*Umfang*). To attain such results it seems to us that the working out of a relative chronology of the Pali texts is a necessary preliminary, if we would gain insight into their structure by means of philological criticism. We must get to know our

texts before we can worth them for purposes of the history of religious ideas.

In other, more definite terms, we might define the aim of our work as the attempt, by another road, from another side, to do what Stcherbatsky, de la Vallée Poussin and McGovern, are wrestling with in the later Buddhist philosophers, their effort being to get at conceptual structure and development by throwing light on the logical postulates.

Closely connected with these inquiries is the question as to the position belonging to the Pali Canon in the collective tradition of Buddhism. To get at the question how old that Canon is, whether it has only a sectarian value, whether it is more than the literature of a sect, seems to involve us in a number of further inquiries. To investigate the collective tradition, from the history of the Councils, the best way to get light on its origin would seem to be to begin with the *Kathāvattu*, since this work¹ is the peg on which hangs all dating of the Canon, and further, since it must awaken considerations as to the reliability of the tradition preserved in Ceylon as to this work and the Abhidhamma as a whole—considerations how, in the discussions between Sarvāstivādin and Sautrantika of the Abhidhamma, there is no word about the Theravāda. The writer is contemplating an inquiry into this work.

In conclusion, when we survey the development of Pali studies, and sum up two generations of work in them carried on at Leipzig, we see how in that period the radius of the field of work has widened. Still, as I have shown, are we the men of Windisch. But whereas he sought sidelights in Sanskrit literature only, the younger generation has set foot, not only in the Burmese tradition of Buddhist archæology, but also in that of Tibet and China, whereby we may help to clear up those problems which Buddhism holds out to scientific inquiry. But at the basis of all our labours lies the confession that the data of the Pali Canon do not suffice to solve those of the Canon itself or of early Buddhism.

Herein too are we yet the scholars of Windisch—in the

¹ *With its Commentary, be it understood.*—E D.

method we follow, of first attacking our material with philological criteria, and then of following this up with inquiry into the spirit of that material.

But alas! war, and its sequel, has cruelly hit all our labours; much has it interrupted, much has it snapped off, and social circumstances, wide impoverization heavily hinder studies of this kind, and we have as yet little of scientific growth to show. For that matter it is truly, more or less of all studies, the most pressing problem, so to shield the young plant that it come not into life's sorest straits.

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