

HEAVEN OR HELL

Milton Moon

Choice is not whether you have one -
almost everyone is destined to spend time in
either Heaven or Hell. You have already
made your choice; already it is a part of history,
irredeemable and irreconcilable,
part of the Karmic flow.

You are what you are - and you may spend a
thousand lifetimes of barren living before
the irreversible moment of living happens.

The Christian Bible tells of a story of
Saul of Tarsus becoming the Apostle Paul.
Saul was highly educated in the Jewish tradition,
at a time when those troublesome early
Christians were giving an alternative
to the established authority and beliefs.
Saul was destined for high things and had authority
of life and death. Saul had a moment
of deep doubt when Stephen, a follower of Jesus,
who was being stoned to death. Stephen
was appealing to the crucified, but risen Jesus
not to blame but to forgive the throwers of the stone
whose death they were causing.

The story of the, the epiphany, the Road to Damascus
completed the crisis of mind that saw
The transformation of Saul of Tarsus
becoming Paul of follower of Jesus Christ.

There have been many Buddha's and one
five hundred years earlier Gautama Buddha
told the story of an earlier Buddha who as
a Bodhisattva named Dharmakara spent
many lifetimes of unfulfilled living before
his vows bore fruit and the Western Paradise
was formed and He became the Buddha Amitabha.
Amida, as he is known in Japan. made many vows,
forty-eight in all, the eighteenth being the most direct
and the simplest of them all to fulfil yet all of them

contain subtle demands on the consecrated effort.

The Eighteenth Vow is central to followers of Pure Land practice. It seems very simple even to people who occasion doubtful and evil acts but worth saving.

The vow is called the nembutsu which means, mindful (nen) of the Buddha (butsu). The suggestion is saying the 'nembutsu' up to ten times a day, but some say it once, but others a thousand even more.

The aim is the nembutsu if said, at the last moment of life, even an evil person, can gain entry to the Western Paradise, to begin the journey, even if hidden temporarily, the possibility of attainment of a Buddha nature enlightenment.

Enlightenment is not an easy state either to gain or maintain. The main hurdle is fitting it in with ordinary everyday life - hard enough
If living in a temple - otherwise the tendency
Is to carelessness or sloppiness or worse, smugness.
An exercise of personality is another hindrance; almost a danger to yourself, even as an exchange of a greeting or a casual 'hello.' Reliance on so-called 'niceness' will not guarantee a place in Heaven or the Pure Land.

Every human foible is a hazard that can trip you over. A word or thought that can awaken a sexual image; enticing food, or drink or so-called harmless drug or human spectacle like sporting events can be a hazard if overdone. Even art exhibitions or music concerts can be all-encompassing and out-of-all proportion if they become competitive and ugly in human terms. If it goes beyond an exercise of human talent it is straying into dangerous territory where the political skill is astutely played with politically adept. Money and commerce can prevent a genuine wish for a place in Heaven or the Pure Land.

There are many paths you can you can choose from and there are paths covered by brambles tiring to traverse. There are open highways you can see ahead for miles or in contrast interesting country roads linking villages. You have choices the ways you travel, and both good and bad health - you have choices the way react to both

and to your to destination. If you are a Christian, by birth or inclination you have many leaders and examples to follow like Saul the crucifier who changed to Paul and became a Saint of the Christian faith. Or you can follow centuries upon centuries the Chinese and a little later the people of Japan and others of Asia who trusted and faith in the Pure Land said the nembutsu Namu Amida Butsu with faith in the Buddha of the Western Paradise, the Buddha Amida.