

**The Narrow Door and The Great Vehicle: from the Early Christians to the Bodhisattvas,
Revelations on the Origins of Mahâyâna)*
by François-Marie Périer, author**

An independent searcher's study opens a totally new perspective in the history of religions and sheds new light on the still unexplained occurrence of the buddhist Great Vehicle in the 1st century CE, demonstrating the influence of the early Christians on the birth of Mahâyâna, in the strongly hellenized area of the Kushan Empire (China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Northern India), heir of Alexander's conquests, where Greek and Aramaic were the two main languages currently spoken and written.

The ideal of the bodhisattva renouncing Nirvana and sacrificing himself for compassion for Human kind became the ultimate value of the new Dharma intended to save Humanity as a whole.

The double and simultaneous revolution of Christianity in the Middle East and Mahâyâna in the East totally changed the map and the history of religions in Europe and Asia, but was this simultaneity only coincidence? Or could the same being and his disciples be at the origins of both? Are almost two billions and a half people around the world (Christians and Mahayanists) worshipping today, unknowingly, the same man and are they following very close teachings while they believe that they have opposite conceptions of life and death, deceived by the cultural colours and adaptations of the historical facts and dogmas?

Why did new sūtras emphasizing compassion, devotion, sacrifice and universal salvation emerge in this period and not before?

Why did at the same time as greeko-buddhist art, a bodhisattvas' and buddhas' "triad from the West" appear in Gandhâra, in the 1st century CE, composed by a buddha of infinite light (Amitâbha) a white bodhisattva of compassion (Avalokiteshvara, later Chenrezig) that had crossed hell, emanated from the previous buddha, and a third one, bringer of power and inspiration (Mahâsthâmaprâpta)? And why did, still in this 1st century CE, this triad appear alongside to a messianic buddha, Maitreya, a feminine, mother and salvific figure, embodiment of wisdom (the Prajñâparamita, that would become Târâ), a Western Paradise of Pure Land ?

Why are some gnostic texts of Nag-Hammadi and mahayanist teachings sometimes using exactly the same cosmogonies, notions and words?

Did Zoroastrism and Mithraism also play a role in the birth of Mahâyâna?

Here are some of the questions, among many others, raised by this research and answered in a way never done before,

Through a historical, iconographic and theological trip in Christianity and Buddhism at the dawn of their appearance, as well as an accurate exploration of their founding texts and their evolutions, the author asserts the direct link between Christianity and buddhist Great Vehicle and sends a message of reciprocal knowledge and reconciliation to the religious and university authorities, as well as to simple Buddhists and Christians.

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