

# BUDDHA'S DISCOURSE ON THE END OF THE WORLD;<sup>1</sup>

OR, THE SERMON ON THE SEVEN SUNS.

Now first translated from the Pâli by ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

A late expansion of this discourse is given by Warren, in his *Buddhism in Translations*, from Buddhagosa's *Way of Purity*, a Pâli compendium of the fifth Christian century.<sup>2</sup> When Warren wrote, the Pâli original had not as yet appeared in the edition of the Pâli Text Society, which is printed in Roman letters.

It is well known to New Testament scholars that the great Eschatological Discourse in the Synoptical Gospels (i. e., the Sermon on the Last Things, delivered upon the Mount of Olives) is a blending of historical and spiritual vaticination. As I pointed out in 1893,<sup>3</sup> the Evangelist Luke attempted to separate the spiritual prophecy from the historical prediction, putting the former into his seventeenth chapter, and the latter into his twenty-first. But Luke evidently understood even the physical cataclysm to refer to the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Hebrew State. Even Mark and the editor of Matthew probably understood the same thing, though our English translations of Matthew make his "consummation of the æon" the "end of the world." After the siege, the early Christians evidently made this Eschatological Discourse refer to a cosmical convulsion. But the only words which can justly apply to such a thing are those in all three of the Synoptists: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."<sup>4</sup> We have therefore used this verse among our parallels to Buddha's present discourse, but have reserved the text of the Gospel prophecy for a forthcoming translation from the famous *Anâgata-bhayâni*, selected by Asoko among his favorite texts. Its subject is the decline of religion.

<sup>1</sup> Sixth Series of Gospel Parallels from Pâli Texts.

<sup>2</sup> On p. 323 of Warren's book our present Sutta is quoted by name.

<sup>3</sup> Haverford College Studies for 1893: *Our Lord's Quotation from the First Book of Macca-bees*.

<sup>4</sup> The second clause indicates the application of this verse: the passing of heaven and earth does not belong to the subject of the discourse, but is used as a standard whereby to gauge the perpetuity of the oracles of Christ.

## THE END OF THE WORLD.

Mark xiii. 31. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

2 Peter iii. 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the heavenly bodies (or elements) shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (or, discovered).

Rev. xxi. 1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more.

## NUMERICAL COLLECTION VII. 62.

Thus have I heard. At one season the Blessed One was staying at Vesâli, in Ambapâli's grove. And the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying: "Monks!" "Lord!" answered those monks, in reply to him. The Blessed One spake thus:

"Impermanent, O monks, are the constituents of existence, unstable, non-eternal: so much so, that this alone is enough to weary and disgust one with all constituent things, and emancipate therefrom. Sineru, monks, the monarch of mountains, is eighty-four thousand leagues<sup>1</sup> in length and breadth; eighty-four thousand leagues deep in the great ocean, and eighty-four thousand above it.

Now there comes, O monks, a season when, after many years, many hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of years, it does not rain; and while it rains not, all seedlings and vegetation, all plants, grasses, and trees dry up, wither away and cease to be. Thus, monks, constituent things are impermanent, unstable, non-eternal: so much so, that this alone is enough to weary and disgust one therewith and emancipate therefrom.

And, monks, there comes a season, at vast intervals in the lapse of time, when a second sun appears.

After the appearance of the second sun, monks, the brooks and ponds dry up, vanish away and cease to be. So impermanent are constituent things! And then, monks, there comes a season, at vast intervals in the lapse of time, when a third sun appears; and thereupon the great rivers: to wit, the Ganges, the Jamna, the Rapti, the Gogra, the Mahî,—dry up, vanish away and cease to be.

At length, after another vast period, a fourth sun appears, and thereupon the great lakes, whence those rivers had their rise: namely, Anotatto,<sup>2</sup> Lion-leap, Chariot-maker, Keel-bare, Cuckoo, Six-bayed, and Slow-flow, dry up, vanish away, and cease to be.

11. e., yojanas, a yojana being about eight miles.

<sup>2</sup>I am not sure of the meaning of this word and its Sanskrit equivalent *Anavatafta*, but it seems to mean "without warmth at the bottom."

Again, monks, when, after another long lapse, a fifth sun appears, the waters in the great ocean go down for an hundred leagues; then for two hundred, three hundred, and even unto seven hundred leagues, until the water stands only seven fan-palms' deep, and so on unto one fan-palm; then seven fathoms' deep, and so on unto one fathom, half a fathom; waist-deep, knee-deep, ankle-deep. Even, O monks, as in the fall season, when it rains in large drops, the waters in some places are standing around the feet of the kine; even so, monks, the waters in the great ocean in some places are standing to the depth of kine-feet. After the appearance of the fifth sun, monks, the water in the great ocean is not the measure of a finger-joint. Then at last, after another lapse of time, a sixth sun appears; whereupon this great earth and Sineru, the monarch of mountains, reek and fume and send forth clouds of smoke. Even as a potter's baking, when first besmeared, doth reek and fume and smoke, such is the smoke of earth and mountains when the sixth sun appears.

After a last vast interval, a seventh sun appears, and then, monks, this great earth, and Sineru, the monarch of mountains, flare and blaze, and become one mass of flame. And now, from earth and mountains burning and consuming, a spark is carried by the wind and goes as far as the worlds of God; and the peaks of Mount Sineru, burning, consuming, perishing, go down in one vast mass of fire and crumble for an hundred, yea, five hundred leagues. And of this great earth, monks, and Sineru, the monarch of mountains, when consumed and burnt, neither ashes nor soot remains. Just as when ghee or oil is consumed and burnt, monks, neither ashes nor soot remains, so it is with the great earth and Mount Sineru.

Thus, monks, impermanent are the constituents of existence, unstable, non-eternal: so much so, that this alone is enough to weary and disgust one with all constituent things and emancipate therefrom. Therefore, monks, do those who deliberate and believe<sup>1</sup> say this: 'This earth and Sineru, the monarch of mountains, will be burnt and perish and exist no more,' excepting those who have seen the path.

#### FORMER RELIGIONS ECLIPSED BY THE RELIGION OF LOVE.<sup>2</sup>

Matthew v. 17, 18, 43, 44. Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto

<sup>1</sup> Translation uncertain. The word *saddhātā* is not in Childers, and I can find no equivalent in Sanskrit; but the various reading, *saddhāvratā*, indicates the sense.

<sup>2</sup> There is no break in the Pāli, but the present division is made for the sake of another Gospel parallel.

you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.

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Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.

“In olden times, O monks, there was a religious teacher (or Master) named Sunetto, founder of an order, and free from indulgence in lusts ; and he had several hundred disciples. The Master Sunetto preached to his disciples the doctrine of fellowship with the world of God ; and those who understood all his religion in every way, when he preached this doctrine, were born again, upon the dissolution of the body after death, to weal in the world of God. Those who did not understand all his religion in every way, were born again, upon the dissolution of the body after death,—some into fellowship with those angels who transmute subjective delights into objective and share them with others ;<sup>1</sup> some into fellowship with the angels who delight in subjective creations ; some into that of the angels of Content (*Tusitâ*) ; others with the *Yâmâ* ; others again with the angels of the Thirty-three ; others into fellowship with those of the Four Great Kings ; and yet others into fellowship with Warrior magnates, Brahmin magnates, householder magnates.

“Now Sunetto the Master, O monks, thought to himself : ‘It is not fit that I should allow my disciples to have such destinies as these repeatedly : what now if I practise the Highest Love?’ Whereupon, monks, the Master Sunetto practised Benevolence (or, love-meditation) for seven years, and for seven æons of consummation and restoration he did not return to this world.<sup>2</sup> Yea, monks, at the consummation of the world<sup>3</sup> he became an Angel of Splendor, and at the world’s restoration he rose again in the empty palace of the Brahmâs. Yea, then, O monks, he was a Brahmâ, the Great Brahmâ (or, God), conquering, unconquered, all-seeing, controlling. And thirty-six times, O monks, was he Sakko, the lord of the angels ; many hundreds of times was he a king, a righteous world-ruler and emperor, victorious to the four seas, arrived at the security of his country, and possessed of the seven treasures. Moreover, he had more than a thousand sons, heroes, of mighty frame, crushers of alien armies ; he dwelt in this ocean-girt earth,

<sup>1</sup> I have been guided here by Warren, p. 289, and Lafcadio Hearn, *Gleanings in Buddha-fields*, p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> See Itivuttaka 22, translated in April, 1500, where Gotamo relates the same of himself.

<sup>3</sup> Itivuttaka has *æon*.

overcoming it, staffless and swordless, by righteousness. But even the Master Sunetto, though thus long-lived and long-enduring, was not emancipated from birth, old age, death, grief, lamentations, pains, sorrows, and despairs; I say he was not emancipated from pain. And why? Because of not being awake to four things (*dhammâ*) and not seeing into them. What four? The Noble Ethics, the Noble Trance (*Samâdhi*), the Noble Wisdom, and the Noble Release (or Emancipation). When these, O monks, are known in their sequence and penetrated into,<sup>1</sup> the craving for existence is annihilated, its renewal is destroyed: one is then reborn no more."

Thus spake the Blessed One, and when the Auspicious One had said this, the Master further said:

"Morality, Trance, Pure Reason, and Supreme Release;

"These things are understood by the celebrated Gotamo.

"Thus enlightened (*buddho*) by supernal knowledge, he told the doctrine to the monks.

"The Master, who made an end of pain, the Seeing One, hath passed into Nirvâna."

<sup>1</sup>"Known in their sequence and penetrated into," represent the same words before translated: "being awake to," and "seeing into." So, again, "Pure Reason" (*Pannâ*), in the verse below, appears above as "Wisdom."