

GOSPEL PARALLELS FROM PALI TEXTS.

Translated from the Originals by ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

(Eighth Series.)

DECLINE OF THE FAITH.¹

WITH REMARKS ON MAITREYA.

Matthew xxiv. 11, 12. Many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold.

Luke xviii. 8. When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

NUMERICAL COLLECTION V. 79.

MONKS, the following five future dangers (or, fears for the future), though not arisen now, will hereafter arise. Ye must be awake thereto, and being awake, must struggle to avert them. What are the five?

Monks, there will be monks in the far future, wanting in physical, moral, emotional and intellectual control; and being so, they will confer Initiation upon others, and will not be able to train them in superior morals, emotions and intelligence. These, being also without the aforesaid control, will initiate others in their turn, who will keep up the same state of things. And so, monks, from corruption of doctrine [will come] corruption of discipline, and from corruption of discipline corruption of doctrine.

This, monks, is the first future danger which, though not arisen now, will hereafter arise. Ye must be awake thereto, and being awake, must struggle to avert it.

¹Translated from the *Anāgata-bhayāni* (Future Dangers), one of the texts among the selections of the Emperor Asoko, in his Edict at Bhaba, and found in the Numerical Collection, V. 77-80. Chapters 77 and 78 deal with the personal dangers for monks in any age, including Buddha's own. In Chapter 77 they practice religion for security against the dangers of the forest: snakes, scorpions, centipedes, etc. In Chapter 78 they practice it for security in old age or times of trial. We now translate Chapter 79 entire.

Again, monks, there will be monks in the far future, wanting in control as before, who being so will give asylum to others, and they will not be able to train them in superior morals, emotions and intelligence. These will give asylum to yet others, and so [there will be] more corruption of discipline from doctrine, and of doctrine from discipline.

This, monks, is the second future danger, which will come and must be guarded against.

Again, monks, there will be monks in the far future without physical, moral, emotional and intellectual control, and being so, when they discourse upon the Higher Doctrine (*Abhidhammo*) and the Exegesis (*Vedalla*) they will not be awake, descending into doctrine dark.¹ And so, monks, [there will be] corruption of discipline from corruption of doctrine, and corruption of doctrine from corruption of discipline.

This, monks, is the third future danger which, though not arisen now, will hereafter arise. Ye must be awake thereto, and being awake must struggle to avert it.

²[Again], monks, there will be monks in the far future, [wanting in physical, moral, emotional and intellectual control; and they being thus wanting in physical, moral, emotional and intellectual control], there are Dialogues (*Suttantā*) spoken by the Tathāgato,—deep, of deep meaning, transcendental, connected with the³ Void (or, classified under Void); and when these are recited they will not listen nor give ear nor present a heart of knowledge; and they will not study those doctrines, learn them, nor reflect thereon.

But there are Dialogues poet-made, poetical, thrilling the heart, suggestive to the heart, the utterances of disciples who are outsiders. When these are recited they will listen, give ear, and present a heart of knowledge; these doctrines they will study, learn by heart and reflect upon.

And so, monks, [there will be] corruption of discipline from corruption of doctrine, and corruption of doctrine from corruption of discipline.

¹*Awake* is the same root as *Buddha* and *Buddhist*, while *dark* is the same word as the Sanskrit *Krishna*. One might almost suspect a punning allusion to the later admixture of Buddhism with the Krishna cult; but our text is too ancient.

²This paragraph, except the words in square brackets, is found in the Classified Collection, xx. 7. The grammatical connection of the clause beginning, "there are Dialogues," etc., is awkward in the Pāli as it is in the English, and seems to indicate a separateness for this passage.

³See, e. g., Majjhima 121 and 122, which were very popular dialogues. The Chinese, in the seventh century, considered them such thorough compendiums of Buddhism, that many cared for no other Scriptures. (*I-tsing*, p. 51. I take "nothingness" = *sunnatā*.)

This, monks, is the fourth future danger which, though not arisen now, will hereafter arise. Ye must be awake thereto, and being awake, must struggle to avert it.

Again, monks, there will be monks in the far future without physical, moral, emotional and intellectual control; and being so, the Presbyter monks will be luxurious, loose-lived, taking precedence by their descent, in seclusion neglecting their charge. They will not strive with their will for attainment of the unattained, approach to the unapproached, realisation of the unrealised. The last generation of them will fall into heresy, and will be luxurious, loose-lived, taking precedence by descent, in seclusion neglecting their charge. And so, monks, [there will be] corruption of discipline from corruption of doctrine, and corruption of doctrine from corruption of discipline.

This, monks, is the fifth future danger which, though not arisen now, will hereafter arise, and which ye must be awake to, and so struggle to avert.

These, monks, are the Five Future Dangers which, though not arisen now, will hereafter arise, and which ye must be awake to, and so struggle to avert.

[Chapter 80 gives a detailed account of future luxuries, such as building monasteries in towns, villages, and capitals; wearing fine robes; associating with young nuns, etc.]

The *Buddhist Apocalypse* translated by Warren is a mediæval treatise, expanded from just such texts as our present one.]

MINOR SECTION ON DISCIPLINE (CULLAVAGGO)¹ X. I.

Ânando, if women had not received permission to go forth from domestic life and enter the homeless one, under the Doctrine and Discipline made public by the Tathâgato, then, Ânando, would the religious life have lasted long: the Gospel (*Saddhammo*) would have lasted for a thousand years. But, Ânando, now that women have received that permission, the religious life will not last long: the Gospel, Ânando, will now last only five hundred years.

[This passage is important as a time-mark in the history of the Canon, a fact which was pointed out in our provisional preface to this series of Parallels. (*Open Court*, February, 1900, p. 115.)

¹ Translated in *S. B. E.*, XX., p. 325.

In patristic works written after the Christian era, such as Buddhaghosha's commentaries and the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, the figures 500 have been altered to 5000. This was because the 500 years had expired, and still the faith flourished. Therefore the sacred text has not been materially altered, and goes back behind the time of Christ. The period of a thousand years in our text may perhaps be compared with those of the Mazdean Saviours or the millennium of the Apocalyptical Christ.

It is to be regretted that the period of decline has been confounded with that of the second Coming or advent of Metteyyo (Sanskrit, Maitreyas;¹ contracted into Maitreya). Thus, Eitel, in his *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism*, places this advent five thousand years after Gotamo, which, as we have seen, is a later exaggeration of the five hundred predicted in the Book of Discipline. Rhys Davids, in his *Manual*, probably following Eitel, says the same; for that learned scholar has never had the leisure to re-write his book and give full references in the light of his present knowledge. Pâli learning is still in its infancy. Even Kern, whose *Manual* is deemed the best by so exacting a critic as Barth, does not give the original Pâli authority on the Metteyyo prophecy, but a passage in the late patristic Milindo. This is because the Pâli text in question has not yet been edited in Roman letters, but must be painfully read in the character of Siam. The text, however, was briefly referred to by Oldenberg in 1881, in the first edition of his *Buddha*; but was never, I believe, given fully, at least in English, until its appearance in *The Open Court* in 1900.

Unfortunately Dr. Carus, in his *Gospel of Buddha*, p. 217, has made the mistake pointed out, of associating the coming of Metteyyo with the end of the period of purity.

Owing to the curious coincidence that 500 years is the period between Gotamo and Jesus, some writers who have accepted the confusion of Metteyyo with this period, have regarded him as a Buddhist prophecy of Christ. Were it so, it would be a more remarkable one than any oracle of Daniel or Isaiah; for nowhere do the prophets clearly state that, at the end of a definite, non-mystical, mundane term of years, a Saviour would arise named Love, for such is the meaning of Metteyyo. We have purposely kept separate, in our Pâli Parallels, these two doctrines of the Second Coming and the Declension of the Faith.

¹ The first Europeans to transcribe Sanskrit words were the Greeks, and they rightly transcribed them in the nominative case, thus bringing out the sameness of the s-ending in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin.

In June, 1900 (*Open Court*, Vol. XIV., pp. 362, 363), we translated the leading Pâli oracle upon the coming of Metteyyo, under the caption of *Second Coming*. I may be allowed to say that the Christian idea of the Holy Ghost was not adduced by me among the New Testament passages for this Parallel, but was added in the editor's office. However, as we know that the doctrine of the Comforter was the Johannine and spiritual form of the grosser Pauline Second Coming, I have no objection to its standing, though of course the cogent parallel is the Pauline and Apocalyptic one, i. e., of a physical re-appearance of Christ.]