

THE HOLY SAINT JOSAPHAT OF INDIA.

FROM THE ACCOUNT OF THE HON. ANDREW D. WHITE.

WE owe the picture constituting the frontispiece to the present number of *The Open Court* to the courtesy of our distinguished fellow-countryman, the Hon. Andrew D. White, American Ambassador to the court of Berlin, and a scholar and publicist of merited eminence, who has had the original photograph especially reproduced for our purpose. The story of St. Josaphat, who is none other than Buddha himself canonised and enrolled as a Christian saint, forms so interesting an episode in the history of religion and sheds so much light on the evolution of our religious and intellectual beliefs, that we have decided to reproduce Mr. White's excellent account of the affair in full, rather than limit ourselves to a mere note on the picture. This account is taken with the author's consent from his large two-volume work, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*.¹ In the chapter on "The Victory of the Scientific and Literary Methods," Mr. White traces briefly the history of Assyrian and Egyptian research and its effect on our interpretation of the Bible and on traditional theological science. He then says:

"Even more extensive were the revelations made by scientific criticism applied to the sacred literature of southern and eastern Asia. The resemblances of sundry fundamental narratives and ideas in our own sacred books with those of Buddhism were especially suggestive.

"Here, too, had been a long preparatory history. The discoveries in Sanscrit philology made in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, by Sir William Jones, Carey, Wilkins, Foster, Colebrooke, and others, had met at first with some opposition from theologians. The declaration by

¹This very interesting work, which is now the standard history of civilisation, is published by D. Appleton & Co. of New York.

Dugald Stewart that the discovery of Sanscrit was fraudulent, and its vocabulary and grammar patched together out of Greek and Latin, showed the feeling of the older race of biblical students. But researches went on. Bopp, Burnouf, Lassen, Weber, Whitney, Max Müller, and others continued the work during the nineteenth century. More and more evident became the sources from which many ideas and narratives in our own sacred books had been developed. Studies in the sacred books of Brahmanism, and in the institutions of Buddhism, the most widespread of all religions, its devotees outnumbering those of all branches of the Christian Church together, proved especially fruitful in facts relating to general sacred literature and early European religious ideas.

“Noteworthy in the progress of this knowledge was the work of Fathers Huc and Gabet. In 1839 the former of these, a French Lazarist priest, set out on a mission to China. Having prepared himself at Macao by eighteen months of hard study, and having arrayed himself like a native, even to the wearing of the queue and the staining of his skin, he visited Peking and penetrated Mongolia. Five years later, taking Gabet with him, both disguised as Lamas, he began his long and toilsome journey to the chief seats of Buddhism in Thibet, and, after two years of fearful dangers and sufferings, accomplished it. Driven out finally by the Chinese, Huc returned to Europe in 1852, having made one of the most heroic, self-denying, and, as it turned out, one of the most valuable efforts in all the noble annals of Christian missions. His accounts of these journeys, written in a style simple, clear, and interesting, at once attracted attention throughout the world. But far more important than any services he had rendered to the Church he served was the influence of his book upon the general opinions of thinking men; for he completed a series of revelations made by earlier, less gifted, and less devoted travellers, and brought to the notice of the world the amazing similarity of the ideas, institutions, observances, ceremonies, and ritual, and even the ecclesiastical costumes of the Buddhists to those of his own Church.¹

“Buddhism was thus shown with its hierarchy, in which the Grand Lama, an infallible representative of the Most High, is surrounded by its minor Lamas, much like cardinals; with its bishops wearing mitres, its celibate priests with shaven crown, cope, dalmatic, and censer; its cathedrals with clergy gathered in the choir;

¹[Huc's delightful book of *Travels* has been recently reprinted by the Open Court Publishing Co. with the original wood-cuts.—*Ed.*]

its vast monasteries filled with monks and nuns vowed to poverty, chastity, and obedience; its church arrangements, with shrines of saints and angels; its use of images, pictures, and illuminated missals; its service, with a striking general resemblance to the Mass; antiphonal choirs; intoning of prayers; recital of creeds; repetition of litanies; processions; mystic rites and incense; the offering and adoration of bread upon an altar lighted by candles; the drinking from a chalice by the priest; prayers and offerings for the dead; benediction with outstretched hands; fasts, confessions, and doctrine of purgatory—all this and more was now clearly revealed. The good father was evidently staggered by these amazing facts; but his robust faith soon gave him an explanation: he suggested that Satan, in anticipation of Christianity, had revealed to Buddhism this divinely constituted order of things. The naïve explanation did not commend itself to his superiors in the Roman Church. In the days of St. Augustine or of St. Thomas Aquinas it would doubtless have been received much more kindly; but in the days of Cardinal Antonelli this was hardly to be expected: the Roman authorities, seeing the danger of such plain revelations in the nineteenth century, even when coupled with such devout explanations, put the book under the ban, though not before it had been spread throughout the world in various translations. Father Huc was sent on no more missions.

“Yet there came even more significant discoveries, especially bearing upon the claims of that great branch of the Church which supposes itself to possess a divine safeguard against error in belief. For now was brought to light by literary research the irrefragable evidence that the great Buddha—Sakya Muni himself—had been canonised and enrolled among the Christian saints whose intercession may be invoked, and in whose honor images, altars, and chapels may be erected; and this, not only by the usage of the mediæval Church, Greek and Roman, but by the special and infallible sanction of a long series of popes, from the end of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth—a sanction granted under one of the most curious errors in human history. The story enables us to understand the way in which many of the beliefs of Christendom have been developed, especially how they have been influenced from the seats of older religions: and it throws much light into the character and exercise of papal infallibility.

“Early in the seventh century there was composed, as is now believed, at the Convent of St. Saba near Jerusalem, a pious romance entitled *Barlaam and Josaphat*—the latter personage, the

hero of the story, being represented as a Hindu prince converted to Christianity by the former.

“This story, having been attributed to St. John of Damascus in the following century, became amazingly popular, and was soon accepted as true: it was translated from the Greek original not only into Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, and Ethiopic, but into every important European language, including even Polish, Bohemian, and Icelandic. Thence it came into the pious historical encyclopædia of Vincent of Beauvais, and, most important of all, into the *Lives of the Saints*.

“Hence the name of its pious hero found its way into the list of saints whose intercession is to be prayed for, and it passed without challenge until about 1590, when, the general subject of canonisation having been brought up at Rome, Pope Sixtus V., by virtue of his infallibility and immunity against error in everything relating to faith and morals, sanctioned a revised list of saints, authorising and directing it to be accepted by the Church; and among those on whom he thus forever infallibly set the seal of Heaven was included ‘*The Holy Saint Josaphat of India, whose wonderful acts St. John of Damascus has related.*’ The 27th of November was appointed as the day set apart in honor of this saint, and the decree, having been enforced by successive popes for over two hundred and fifty years, was again officially approved by Pius IX. in 1873. This decree was duly accepted as infallible, and in one of the largest cities of Italy may to-day be seen a Christian church dedicated to this saint. On its front are the initials of his Italianised name; over its main entrance is the inscription ‘*Divo Josafat*’; and within it is an altar dedicated to the saint—above this being a pedestal bearing his name and supporting a large statue which represents him as a youthful prince wearing a crown and contemplating a crucifix.

“Moreover, relics of this saint were found; bones alleged to be parts of his skeleton, having been presented by a Doge of Venice to a King of Portugal, are now treasured at Antwerp.

“But even as early as the sixteenth century a pregnant fact regarding this whole legend was noted: for the Portuguese historian Diego Conto showed that it was identical with the legend of Buddha. Fortunately for the historian his faith was so robust that he saw in this resemblance only a trick of Satan; the life of Buddha being, in his opinion, merely a diabolic counterfeit of the life of Josaphat centuries before the latter was lived or written—just as

good Abbé Huc saw in the ceremonies of Buddhism a similar anticipatory counterfeit of Christian ritual.

“There the whole matter virtually rested for about three hundred years—various scholars calling attention to the legend as a curiosity, but none really showing its true bearings—until, in 1859, Laboulaye in France, Liebrecht in Germany, and others following them, demonstrated that this Christian work was drawn almost literally from an early biography of Buddha, being conformed to it in the most minute details, not only of events but of phraseology; the only important changes being that, at the end of the various experiences showing the wretchedness of the world, identical with those ascribed in the original to the young Prince Buddha, the hero, instead of becoming a hermit, becomes a Christian, and that for the appellation of Buddha—‘Bodisat’—is substituted the more scriptural Josaphat.

“Thus it was that, by virtue of the infallibility vouchsafed to the papacy in matters of faith and morals, Buddha became a Christian saint.

“Yet these were by no means the most pregnant revelations. As the Buddhist scriptures were more fully examined, there were disclosed interesting anticipations of statements in later sacred books. The miraculous conception of Buddha and his virgin birth, like that of Horus in Egypt and of Krishna in India; the previous annunciation to his mother Maja; his birth during a journey by her; the star appearing in the east, and the angels chanting in the heavens at his birth; his temptation—all these and a multitude of other statements were full of suggestions to larger thought regarding the development of sacred literature in general. Even the eminent Roman Catholic missionary Bishop Bigandet was obliged to confess, in his scholarly life of Buddha, these striking similarities between the Buddhist scriptures and those which it was his mission to expound, though by this honest statement his own further promotion was rendered impossible. Fausbøll also found the story of the judgment of Solomon imbedded in Buddhist folklore; and Sir Edwin Arnold, by his poem, *The Light of Asia*, spread far and wide a knowledge of the anticipation in Buddhism of some ideas which down to a recent period were considered distinctively Christian.

“Imperfect as the revelations thus made of an evolution of religious beliefs, institutions, and literature still are, they have not been without an important bearing upon the newer conception of our own sacred books: more and more manifest has become the

interdependence of all human development; more and more clear the truth that Christianity, as a great fact in man's history, is not dependent for its life upon any parasitic growths of myth and legend, no matter how beautiful they may be.¹ The present writer gladly avails himself of the opportunity to thank the learned Director of the National Library at Palermo, Monsignor Marzo, for his kindness in showing him the very interesting church of San Giosafat in that city; and to the custodians of the church for their readiness to allow photographs of the saint to be taken. The writer's visit was made in April, 1895, and the original photograph of our illustration may be seen in the library of Cornell University. As to the more rare editions of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, a copy of the Icelandic translation is to be seen in the remarkable collection of Prof. Willard Fiske, at Florence. As to the influence of these translations, it may be noted that when young John Kuncewicz, afterward a Polish archbishop, became a monk, he took the name of the sainted Prince Josafat; and, having fallen a victim to one of the innumerable murderous affrays of the seventeenth century between different sorts of fanatics—Greek, Catholic, and Protestant—in Poland, he also was finally canonised under that name, evidently as a means of annoying the Russian Government."²

¹ "For full details of the canonisation of Buddha under the name of St. Josaphat, see Fausböll, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, translated by Rhys Davids, London, 1880, pp. xxxvi and following also Prof. Max Müller in the *Contemporary Review* for July, 1890; also the article 'Barlaam and Josaphat,' in ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. For the more recent and full accounts, correcting some minor details in the foregoing authorities, see Kuhn, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, Munich, 1893, especially pp. 82, 83. For a very thorough discussion of the whole subject, see Zotenberg, *Notice sur le livre de Barlaam et Josaphat*, Paris, 1886; especially for arguments fixing date of the work, see parts i to iii; also Gaston Paris in the *Revue de Paris* for June, 1895. For the transliteration between the appellation of Buddha Bodhisat and the name of the saint Josaphat, see Fausböll and Sayce as above, p. xxxvii, note; and for the multitude of translations of the work ascribed to St. John of Damascus, see Table III., on p. xcv. The reader who is curious to trace up a multitude of the myths and legends of early Hebrew and Christian mythology to their more eastern and southern sources can do so in *Bible Myths*, New York, 1883."

² See Contieri, *Vita di S. Giosafat, Arcivescovo e Martira Ruteno*, Roma, 1867.