MISCELLANEOUS.

NAZARENES AND SHRAMANAS.

BY DR. S. N. DEINARD.

The relation between Buddhism and the origin of Christianity, the influence of the former upon the latter religion, their similarities and dissimilarities, are subjects that are receiving ever greater attention on the part of all earnest students interested in the two religions. The greater the advance made in these studies and investigations, the more clearly does it appear to unbiased minds how considerable a share Buddhism had in the origination of the new religion cradled in Palestine. Nay, some competent scholars and thinkers, among them Ernest de Bunsen, Arthur Lillie, and Rudolf Seydel, have in the last thirty years with great erudition and acumen elaborated learned theses to prove the *Buddhist origin* of Christianity.

I believe that a vast number of facts can be marshalled in support of the theory that Christianity in its origin was nothing else than Buddhism passed through the alembic of the Judeo-Essenic mind, and adapted to the Jewish Messianic expectations of that day. Jesus would then be no other than Buddha himself clothed in Jewish Messianic apparel.

The real personality and historical existence of Jesus are becoming more and more shadowy and matters of skeptical questionings when approached in a spirit of historical inquiry and with all theological preconceptions left behind. Contemporary history does not know him, and the Gospels are full of legend and myth. In his essay on "The Personality of Jesus and His Historical Relation to Christianity" (*Monist,* Vol. X, No. 4) Dr. Paul Carus says: "Jesus may in one respect rightly be regarded as a figure that is unknown to history." In the same essay he quotes Professor Cornill, who cannot be charged with destructive anti-Christian tendencies, as follows: "....The conclusion is unavoidable that the date commonly assigned for the birth of Christ is wrong. The place of Jesus's birth is just as much a matter of uncertainty as the time; and so is the year of his death...." Dr. Chas F. Dole says in his recent book, *What We Know About Jesus*: "Moreover, thanks to an army of scholars and critics, dissecting every verse in the New Testament, we have arrived at such a point of uncertainty as to the relative value of different elements in the Synoptic Gospels, that every one practically may take what he likes, both of the narrative and teaching, and reject as unauthentic or improbable whatever seems to him incongruous or unworthy." And again: "How many clearly authentic utterances have we from Jesus? What can we rest upon? What exactly did he do? What did he say of himself and his mission? What commandments did he lay down, or what ordinances did he establish? What new ideas, if any, did he contribute? The answers to all these questions must be found, if at all, in the study of a few pages of the Synoptic Gospels. No one is sure or can possibly be sure, of these answers." (Pp. 9, 10.)

The problem that vexes the historian who must postulate a personality back of the mythical or legendary hero, viz.: If Jesus is altogether a myth, a fiction, who, then, is the hero who occupies the central place in the Christian traditions? is thus easily settled when Buddha is assigned the position.

The Essenic fraternities of Judea, the real founders of Christianity in its most primitive, ante-Pauline form were patterned after the Buddhist order of the Shramanas (ascetics) and Bhikshus (mendicant friars). The very names of these Esseno-Christian circles indicate that. For the earliest Christian societies or brotherhoods were the Nazarenes and Ebionites, known in Church history as the heretical sects of Judaizing tendencies. The very fact that they were all Jews and clung so tenaciously to Mosaic law and Jewish customs and traditions shows their priority.

What do the names Nazarenes and Ebionites signify? All recognize the connection of Ebionite with the Hebrew word אביון. "Those who derive the name from the Hebrew word explain it in two ways: as applicable either to the poverty of the doctrines of the Ebionites, or to the poverty of their circumstances. Undoubtedly the name was applied to them with the former significance by their enemies, but it is more probable that they employed in a bad sense a name already existing, than that they coined it to suit their purpose. That the term was originally applied to the circumstances of the Ebionites seems the only probable supposition." (*Enc. Brit.*, VII, 618.) Now, when we bear in mind that the Hebrew word אביון means not only "poor" but also "mendicant," "beggar," (comp. Deut. xv. 4, 7, 11), how can we fail to recognize in the Ebionites the Buddhist Bhikshus?

While the name Ebionite has thus from the beginning been quite correctly interpreted, the name of the Nazarenes has been wofully misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is supposed to mean the "followers of the man of Nazareth," i. e., Jesus. But there is absolutely no etymological connection between the name of that little town in Galilee, נצרת, and Nazarene. Not only is the final ת of the name of the town not accounted for, but the צ is in Greek versions of Hebrew words never represented by Z, but by Σ. Compare the names Ισαὰκ, Φαρὲς, Εσρώμ, Σαλμών, Σαδώκ, all occurring in the genealogical list of Matthew, with their Hebrew originals. The Z in Grecianized Hebrew words always represents the ז, as may be seen in the following names, Ζαρὰ, Βοὸς, Ὀζίαν, Ἄχας, Ἐζεκίαν, Ζοροβάβελ, Αζώρ, Ελεάζαρ, taken from the same list. Nazarenes, therefore, can be nothing else than the Hebrew נזירים, or, with its Aramaic plural ending, נזירין, Nazarites, Ascetics, or the Shramanas of the Buddhists.

That Paul, and after him other important factors and forces, gave the movement a new turn, and imprinted a new character upon it, so that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were degraded into mere heretical sects, and still later were entirely wiped out, does not in any way, I believe, militate against the theory of the Buddhist origin of Christianity.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

What Did the Lord Buddha Teach? By the *Anagarika H. Dharmapala.* Calcutta, Maha-Bodhi Office, 1909 (2453). Pp. 50. Price, 4 annas.

This address was delivered at a convention of religions held in Calcutta last April. The author is a Buddhist missionary, and is prominent among Buddhists as the secretary of the Maha-Bodhi Society, and is known to all