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The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER.




A GRECIAN JONAH.
(See page 279.)

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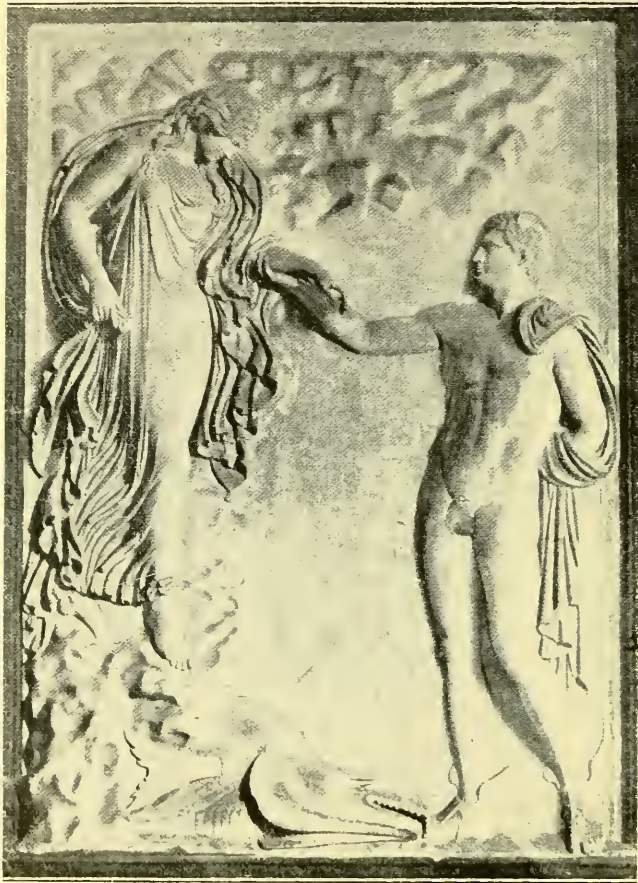
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PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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BUDDHIST TEXTS QUOTED IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

BY ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

OUR somewhat provincial education has not yet made us realize that, at the time of Christ, India was one of the four great powers of the earth. The other three were China, Rome and Parthia. But India was the greatest intellectually, and her then most popular religion, Buddhism, was the dominant spiritual force upon the continent of Asia.

It is to be regretted that so few theologians and even Orientalists are acquainted with Pali literature. Our culture has too long been bounded by the River Euphrates, and the central fact of the world's religious history has not yet taken its place in the historical imagination of Europe and America. That central fact is this: The two greatest missionary religions, each emanating from a wonderful personality, started from the Holy Land of antiquity¹ and proceeded in opposite directions around the world. Each went as far as it could go until it reached the Pacific Ocean; and now, in Japan and the United States, these two great world-faiths are facing each other. Henceforth the Pacific Ocean, instead of the Mediterranean Sea, must be the center of our culture; and the two religions, instead of being enemies, must be friends.

It is well known that there are, in the New Testament, quotations from other literatures than the Hebrew and the books of its canon, as when Paul quotes the Greek poet Aratus² and Jude the apocryphal book of Enoch.³

¹ The region between the Ganges and the Nile. See *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, "Historical Introduction."

² Acts xvii. 28.

³ Jude, verses 14 and 15.

In the Gospel of Mark there is a quotation, as if from Scripture, which does not occur in the Old Testament, but which Rendel Harris discovered in a midrash on Genesis ascribed to Philo.⁴ It evidently emanates from some early commentary or apocryphal work known to the Evangelist.

"I say unto you that Elijah is come, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they listed, *even as it is written of him.*"—Mark ix. 13.

Nowhere does the Old Testament foretell that the second Elijah will be persecuted. The quotation is therefore apocryphal or extra-Judaic.

Scholars have long been accustomed to such quotations, and are not astonished thereat when they spring from the literature that surrounded the Judæans. But modern research has made it clear that a wider range of influence affected the composition of the New Testament than the books of the Hebrews, the Greeks and the Romans. Heretofore, these have been our three classic nations, and their common lake, the Mediterranean, has been our central sea; but since the acquisition of India by the English in 1757, and especially since that of the Philippines by ourselves, the sacred books of Asia have widened our horizon. The Pacific Ocean is now our central sea, and to our classical peoples we have added several more, with India first and foremost. We have found that India was the home of the ancient fable, the mother of Æsop and of the Arabian Nights. A folk-lorist has traced Indian fables in the Jewish Talmud, one of which can be dated at A. D. 118.⁵

Three stories in the Christian Apocryphal Gospels are also found in that great Buddhist apocryphal gospel, the *Lalita Vistara*,⁶ which contains a poetical account of Buddha's early life, and was translated into Chinese in the seventh century, while a legendary life of Buddha, closely akin, was translated in the sixties of the first century.

It has also been discovered that the life of Buddha was translated into the language of Persia quite early in our era, and worked up into a Christian romance called *Barlaam and Joasaph*. This ancient church novel was popular all over Europe throughout the

⁴ Philonis Judæi Alexandrini libri Antiquitatum, Quæstionum et Solutionum in Genesisin. Basileæ, 1527, folio.

⁵ See *Æsop's Fables*; edited by Joseph Jacobs. London, 1889.

⁶ These stories are: the obeisance of idols to the divine child in a temple; his supernatural knowledge of the alphabet; and his being lost by his parents and found engaged in religious activity. These parallels are fully treated in my new edition of *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*. My attention was directed to them by the works of Pfeleiderer and Van Eysinga.

Middle Ages, from Greece to Iceland, while so late as the eighteenth century a Jesuit bearing the historic name of Borgia translated it into the Tagalog of the Philippine Islands! The name Joasaph or Josaphat (for it is written both ways) has been proven to be a corruption of the Sanskrit Bodhisattva, a title of the youthful Buddha; and the Indian saint, under this disguise, was canonized by both Greek and Roman churches. On the twenty-sixth of August in the Eastern communion and on the twenty-seventh of November in the Western, we have the singular spectacle of Catholic priests commemorating the Hindu thinker as a Christian saint.

Now it has been cogently argued by a European scholar⁷ that if Christendom could thus borrow from Buddhism in the sixth century, it could do the same in the first, for the same channels of intercourse were open. Indeed at the time of Christ this intercourse was at its height, for the geographer Strabo, who was writing in the twenties of the first century, when the youthful Jesus was a carpenter in Galilee, saw one hundred and twenty ships prepared to sail from a Red Sea port to India.

If this be the case, we need not be astonished at the following Buddhist text embedded in the Gospel of John, that most mystic and recondite of the four, charged, as it is, with the philosophy of Ephesus and Alexandria, where the thought of all nations found a home.

MIRACULOUS WATER PROCEEDS FROM THE SAINT.

"He that believeth on me, *as the Scripture hath said*, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."—John vii. 38.

"What is the Tathagato's knowledge of the twin miracle? In this case, the Tathagato works a twin miracle unrivalled by disciples: from his upper body proceeds a flame of fire *and from his lower body proceeds a torrent of water*. Again, from his lower body proceeds a flame of fire, and from his upper body a torrent of water."—*The Way to Supernal Knowledge*, I, 53.

The agreement is almost verbal between the Greek and the Pali, but the Evangelist has added the adjective "living." Still the passage cannot be found in the Old Testament.

Dean Alford, in his commentary, voices the despair of all the exegetes from the beginning, when he says: "We look in vain for such a text in the Old Testament, and an apocryphal or lost canonical book is out of the question." The learned dean interprets by making the body refer to the under part of the temple in an oracle of Ezekiel, wherein that mystic beholds rivers of living water pro-

⁷ Van Eysinga, in his work on Hindu Influence upon the Gospels. 1901 and 1904. New edition, 1909.

ceeding from beneath the holy place. But no such far-fetched theory is needful any longer, now that we have found a Buddhist oracle almost verbally coincident.

The Fourth Evangelist transfigures the passage, and converts the miraculous torrent of the magus into a spiritual river. The single adjective "living," with its prophetic associations, is enough to exalt the whole conception into a loftier sphere. At the same time we must remember that the Buddhists also found mystical meanings in their scriptures, and produced their Philos and their Origenes, as we shall some day realize more fully, when the vast literature preserved in Chinese is made known to Europe and America. "Living water" or "immortal drink" is also a Buddhist phrase, and in the Realist Book of Discipline (Tibetan) it is applied to Nirvana. The conception that lies behind the legend of the Twin Miracle is that of the microcosm: the saint is conceived as uniting in himself all nature, and hence in the water-meditation he is assimilated to water, and in the flame-meditation he passes away in fire.

Be it observed, that, in the Pali text, this miracle is "unrivalled by disciples," and indeed the summing up expressly says that Buddhas alone can perform it. But in the Book of Avadanas, which has Realist affinities, the Buddhist Daniel performs the Twin Miracle:

"From half of his body the water did rain;
From half did the fire of a sacrifice blaze."

Moreover, in the Pali texts themselves, Dabho the Mallian emits fire from his fingers to light the monks to bed, and finally passes away in the flame-meditation, a veritable Buddhist Elijah.

Similarly in the Gospel, the believer can accomplish the water-miracle, though of course in a mystical sense, in accordance with the higher plane of the Fourth Evangelist. Moreover, the latter is perhaps quoting some Buddhist book belonging to the Realist school, which predominated in Northwestern India, where the Greek empire adjoined. It is almost certain that such literature had found its way westward in that empire, perhaps in Greek, perhaps in Syriac. The recent discovery of Manichaean scriptures in Chinese Turkestan has prepared us for anything in the way of ancient distribution of sacred literature.

Now, while one case of the mysterious Fourth Evangelist quoting a Buddhist text as Scripture would be remarkable, two such cases are significant, and almost certainly imply historical connection, especially when taken together with the fact that other parts of the Gospels present verbal agreements with Pali texts.

And there is one other case where the Gospel of John quotes a Buddhist oracle as Scripture. It was first pointed out in *The Open Court* for February, 1900. Indeed it was placed at the very outset of my first series of *Gospel Parallels from Pali Texts*. It has been reprinted in subsequent editions of that collection, and last appeared in the fourth edition of *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, Philadelphia, 1908-1909, Vol. II, p. 97. It is here reprinted once more.

THE CHRIST REMAINS [ON EARTH] FOR THE ÆON.

"The multitude therefore answered him. *We have heard out of the law*, that the Christ abideth forever [*εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, 'for the æon.']"—John xii. 34.

Enunciations VI, I, and Long Collection, Dialogue 16 (Book of the Great Decease. Translated in Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XI, p. 40.)

"Anando, any one who has practiced the four principles of psychical power,—developed them, made them active and practical, pursued them, accumulated and striven to the height thereof,—can, if he so should wish, remain [on earth] for the æon or the rest of the æon.

"Now, Anando, the Tathagato has practiced and perfected these; and if he so should wish, *the Tathagato could remain* [on earth] *for the æon* or the rest of the æon."

The words in italics agree with those in the Greek of John, except the mood and tense of the verb. Rendel Harris has pointed out to me that the tense of *μεινει* is ambiguous, being either present or future. This is because the oldest manuscripts are without accents. Tathagato is a religious title equivalent to Christ. Its exact meaning is still debated, but its analogy to Sugato is obvious, and Rhys Davids's translation of it as "truth-winner" is probably as near the mark as we shall ever get.

As our text occurs also in the Sanskrit of the Book of Avadanas (which has an independent transmission) its antiquity is certain. Moreover, the Book of the Great Decease and that of Enunciations are two of the oldest in the Pali, Enunciations being also one of the nine divisions of a lost arrangement of the canon.

The ascription of the saying in John to "the multitude" shows it to have been a current belief at the time of Christ. It is not a New Testament doctrine, though the physical second coming has been assimilated to it. Commentators have been at a loss to identify the Old Testament passage ("out of the Law") which is supposed to be quoted. The Twentieth Century New Testament proposes the Aramaic version of Isaiah ix. 7 as the source. The learned August Wünsche, in his work on the Gospels and the Talmud, says

that the source is unknown. Be that as it may, we have here a verbal Pali parallel:

ὁ Χριστός μενεῖ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα = *Tathâgato kappam tittheyya.*

A kindred sentiment appears at the conclusion of Matthew:

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the æon."

If we could be sure that the Evangelist was copying this from the lost Mark-ending or from the Logia, we could pronounce it a first-century document and an utterance of the Lord; but we cannot, and most Matthæan additions to the Synoptical record are suspect. It is quite likely that these words were added to the First Gospel after the appearance of the Fourth, with its doctrine of the Paraclete. On the other hand, we can date the first translation of the corresponding Buddhist doctrine into Chinese at about A. D. 68, and this in a popular manual which presupposes the vast body of the Sutras.

Another verbal agreement between John and the Pali texts (though not expressly quoted) is given in *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, Vol. II, p. 79,

"I have overcome the world."

Other Johannine passages in the Buddhist canon may be seen in *Buddhist and Christian Gospels* and in *Buddhist Texts in John*, p. 16.⁸

Those curious about the proofs of the antiquity of the Buddhist phrase in question will find them in these works. The present article is merely the main substance of the shorter treatise, with the more technical matter omitted.

I do not hold that the Fourth Evangelist necessarily quoted from the Pali canon nor from any other of the numerous recensions of the Buddhist scriptures which were extant in his time. He may have quoted such, but, as one of my friendly critics suggests, he is more likely to have quoted from some Greek or Jewish book drawn from Oriental sources. It is well known that the earliest Christians quoted as sacred works any pious literature that forwarded their aims, and such a well-read man as our Platonizing Evangelist might easily quote some such from memory, without being very nice as to whence it came.

My general attitude toward the Buddhist-Christian problem is this: Each religion is independent in the main, but the younger one arose in such a hotbed of eclecticism that it probably borrowed a few legends and ideas from the older, which was quite accessible to it, as the intercourse between the Roman Empire and India was

⁸ Philadelphia, 1906: Innes and Sons, 1311 Sansom Street; London: Luzac and Co. (8vo, pp. 41.)

active. But there was no wholesale borrowing; the few things that may have passed over are of minor importance only, like the texts in John before us. My book, *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*, is not an exploitation of loan-theories, but a tableau of the two great world-religions. At the same time, the historical question could not be ignored, though it is treated as a side issue, not as the main thesis.

My essay on John was printed in 1906, and since then it has often been criticised. The late Otto Pfeleiderer considered that I had proved my case, as does also Paul Carus. Van Eysinga admits the Buddhist origin of the first quotation, but not of the second. James Hastings, while neutral, gave the essay respectful consideration in his *Expository Times*, while Rhys Davids wrote a congratulatory postal card, and gave me the permission to quote him as saying, "The evidences in favor of intercommunication are growing every day."

Though the Twin Miracle does not appear in the older books of the Pali canon, it appears in the Book of Discipline of the Realist sect, and is a favorite scene in Buddhist sculptures.⁹

The Buddhist gospel scene wherein occurs our second Johannine quotation was also a favorite subject in sculpture of pre-Christian antiquity, as may be seen in my own essay.

CONCLUSION.

Already in the eighteenth century Michaelis discerned a Zoroastrian and a Sabian influence in John; so that our present thesis is no radically new departure.

Had the Evangelist used without ascription the phrases and doctrines herein set forth, we might consider them due to a community of Oriental ideas; but his express quotation of two of them as Law and Scripture compel the inference that they existed in some sacred literature of the Apostolic age.¹⁰ The only known source of the two quoted texts is the Buddhist canon, which in the first Christian century was the most widespread of all sacred codes—covering even a vaster field than its great rivals, the Septuagint and the Zend Avesta, and being the dominant religious force upon the continent of Asia.

⁹ See Foucher, *Le grand miracle du Buddha*. Paris, 1909, p. 77.

¹⁰ Hostile critics overlook this necessary condition.