

BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN GOSPELS.

WORK DONE IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION BY ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

MR. Albert J. Edmunds of Philadelphia, who has contributed frequently to the columns of *The Open Court* on the parallelism between the Buddhist and Christian Gospels, published in 1904 the second edition of a pamphlet in which he brings out a general synopsis of his labors. In the Preface he expresses his impatience with the publishers on account of their reluctance in bringing out his lucubrations, and he adds thereto the hearty endorsement of his work by Prof. T. W. Rhys-Davids of London. We wish to state here that we deem the results of Mr. Edmunds's investigations important in a high degree and think that he is especially fitted for his task; because, on the one hand, he is a Christian and an accomplished New Testament scholar, and, on the other hand, he sympathizes strongly with Buddhist doctrines. There is perhaps no one in the world so well acquainted with the sources of both religions as he. If any one can with approximate certainty point out the date of a Pali text, it is Mr. Edmunds, and few indeed are the scholars that are posted on the subject as well as he is. He is perfectly familiar with the maturest results of New Testament criticism, and in the province of Pali scriptures he is himself one of the leading higher critics.

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From this pamphlet we select for publication some of the salient points which may serve as samples of Mr. Edmunds's work.¹

¹ *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*. Now first compared from the originals. Being Gospel parallels from Pali texts, reprinted with additions by Albert J. Edmunds, Honorary Member and American Representative of the International Buddhist Society of Rangūn, Translator of the *Dhammapada*, "The Buddhist Genesis," etc., Member of the Oriental Society of Philadelphia. Second edition with a notice by T. W. Rhys-Davids. Philadelphia: Sold by the Author, 3231 Sansom St., and by Maurice Brix, 129 South Fifteenth St. Postal Orders payable at Middle City Station, Philadelphia. 1904. Price, 25 cents; Cloth, 50 cents.

Some parallels between the Buddhist and Christian Gospels are very remarkable but perhaps natural. So for instance: Christ is called "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah," (Rev. v. 5) and Buddha is called "the lion of the tribe of Shakya" or briefly "Shakya-simha." We read in the *Numerical Collection*, v. 99:

"Lion, O monks: this is the appellation of the Tathâgato, the Holy One, the fully Enlightened One. Because, monks, when the Tathâgato proclaims the Doctrine to a company he does so with a lion-voice. If he proclaim it unto monks or nuns, he proclaims it comprehensively, with nothing omitted; and likewise unto lay-disciples, whether men or women. And if, monks, the Tathâgato proclaim the Doctrine to the common people even, who merely care for food and maintenance and wealth, he proclaims it comprehensively, with naught omitted. What is the reason? The Tathâgato, monks, is weighty in religion, an authority in religion."

The literal agreement of a very unique phrase is extraordinary and will go far to prove that there must have been a connection of some kind. We read in John xii. 34: "The multitude therefore answered him, We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth forever." If we consider that the Greek New Testament texts are written without accents, the verb "abideth"¹ might as well be the future and could in that case be translated "will abide" or "shall abide." The term "forever"² is an incorrect rendering. It means in Greek "for the æon," and the word "æon" corresponds exactly to the Buddhist term *kappa* or in Sanskrit *kalpa*.

Mr. Edmunds quotes passages from *Enunciations* vi. 1, and *Long Collection*, Dialogue 16 (*Book of the Great Decease*. Translated in *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, p. 40.) and translates as follows:

"Anando, any one who has practised the four principles of psychological 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 Tathâgato has practised and perfected these; and if he so should wish, the Tathâgato could remain [on earth] for the æon or the rest of the æon."

Mr. Edmunds makes the following comments on the passage:

"As our text occurs also in the Sanskrit of the Divyâvadâna (which has an independent transmission) its antiquity is certain.

¹ μένει means "abideth," and μενεῖ, "will abide."

² εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

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 Wünsch, 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 Χριστὸς μενεῖ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα: Tathâgato kappam tittheyya.”

The beautiful passage in John xiv, which promises that Christ will manifest himself unto him who keeps his commands, can be matched by passages in the Buddhist text which bear a close resemblance to it. We read in St. John xiv:

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him [i. e., appear before him.]”

Mr. Edmunds quotes the following text from the *Logia* Book, 92 (Partly translated into French by the translator of Minayeff: *Recherches sur le Bouddhisme*: Paris, 1894, p. 218):

“O monks, even if a monk should gather up the folds of his robe and follow behind me, treading in my footsteps, yet if he be covetous, on lusts intent, bad-hearted, corrupt in his mind’s aspiration, heedless, mindless, ill-conducted, with heart confused and unripe faculties, then is he far from me, and I from him.

“And why? Because, O monks, that monk sees not the Doctrine; and he who sees not the Doctrine sees not me.

“But if that monk should dwell an hundred leagues away, O monks, and be not covetous, nor intent on lusts, not bad-hearted nor corrupt in his mind’s aspiration, but heedful, mindful, well-conducted, with concentrated heart and faculties restrained, then is he near to me, and I to him.

“And why? Because, O monks, that monk sees the Doctrine; and he who sees the Doctrine sees me.

[The word “Doctrine” is the ubiquitous *Dhammo*, Sanskrit *Dharma*; and can be equally translated “truth” or “religion.”]

"COLLECTION OF SUTTAS, STANZAS 1139-1144.

(Translated by Fausböll: *S. B. E.*, X, part 2, p. 212.)

"From Him I am never absent,
O Brahmin, for a moment—
[Never absent] from Gotamo, the great of intellect,
From Gotamo, in wisdom great.

"Twas he who taught me the Doctrine
Of instantaneous, immediate peace,
And destruction of Thirst,—
Whose likeness is nowhere.

"Him do I see in my mind, as with an eye,
Vigilant, O Brahmin, night and day:
Worshiping I pass the night;
Therefore, I ween, am I never absent.

"Faith and joy, mind and memory,
Bend me unto Gotamo's religion.
What way soever goeth the Great Intellect,
That way, and that only, am I bent.

"Of me who am aged and tottering
The body therefore fareth not thither,
But in imagination I go ever;
For, O Brahmin! my mind is yoked with him.

"Shivering in the mire,
From island unto island did I leap,
Until I saw the fully Enlightened,
The Flood-crossed, the Unsullied."

Fausböll adds: "The commentary here states that Gotamo, knowing from afar the mental state of this monk and his companion, sent forth a golden light, and stood before them in apparition. A similar Christophany is related in the Introductory Story to *Jâtaka* No. 4. But in *Jâtaka* No. 2, personal devotion to the Master is placed on a lower level than solitary thought."

The idea that Christ is the king of truth finds a literal parallel in Buddhist scriptures. We read in *St. John* xviii, 37:

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

In the *Scla-Sutta*, Buddha makes the same claim. He says:

"I am a King, O Selo!
 An incomparable King of religion;¹
 By religion I set rolling a wheel,
 An irresistible wheel.

* * *

"What ought to be supremely known I know,
 What ought to be perfected I perfect,
 What ought to be renounced I renounce:
 Therefore, O Brahmin! am I Buddha.

"Discipline thy doubt of me,
 Surrender thyself, O Brahmin!
 Hard to obtain is the appearing
 Of fully Enlightened Ones repeatedly.

"He who indeed is hard in the world to obtain,
 In manifestation repeatedly,
 That fully Enlightened One, O Brahmin, am I—
 Physician incomparable.

"Godlike, beyond measure,
 A crusher of the Devil's army,
 Having subjugated all enemies,
 I rejoice as one who hath nowhere a fear.

* * *

"Thou art Buddha, thou art the Master,
 Thou art the Sage who overcomest the Devil,
 Thou hast cast off all inclinations:
 And having crossed over thyself, hast ferried this
 [human] race across."

As the disciples of Christ are not of the world, even as he is not of the world (John xvii. 16), so Buddha desires his followers to live in the world without being soiled by it. He says (*Classified Collection* XXII, 94):

"Monks, even as the blue lotus, a water-rose or a white lotus is born in the water, grows up in the water, and stands lifted above it, by the water undefiled: even so, monks, does the Tathâgato grow up in the world, and abide in the mastery of the world, by the world undefiled."

We read in Mark ii. 21:

"No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment, else the new piece that filled it up, taketh away from the old and the rent is made worse."

The passage appears without any connection with the preceding statements and is followed by a similar passage concerning the new

¹Or *Truth* (as in John:) *Dhammo*, which we generally translate "Doctrine."

wine in old bottles. Both the sentiments, concerning the old cloth and the old bottles, are contradictory to the sentiment of Jesus uttered in the Sermon on the Mount where he declares that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." The clause "till all be fulfilled" is not contained in the best codices, and is moreover contradictory to the other determination of time "till heaven and earth pass away." But whatever Jesus may have said, it is remarkable that we find a passage in the Buddhist scriptures which also speaks of the old cloth that has to be cut away. We read [*Middling Collection*, Dialogue 22. Partly translated by Copleston: *Buddhism*, 1892, p. 30]:

"Thus, O monks, is the Doctrine well taught by me—plain, patent, clear, and with the old cloth cut away. Seeing, O monks, that the Doctrine is thus well taught by me—plain, patent, clear, and with the old cloth cut away,—all those who have merely faith and love toward me are sure of Paradise hereafter."

The following note on the grotesque in Buddhism deserves special attention:

"The comparison of Buddha to an elephant excites in some a smile. But the elephant is just as gentle as the lamb and far more majestic, yet we are not shocked by the Apocalyptic Lamb upon the throne of the Godhead. I am told that certain items in the Buddhist scriptures are trivial or grotesque. Are the Gospels free from the like? Joseph's perplexity at the pregnancy of Mary, till a dream assures him it is supernatural; the food and raiment of the Baptist; the fantastic scenes of the Temptation; the baptismal Dove; the transmuted water; the extemporized creation of fishes; the Devils who know the Son of God; the clay and the spittle; the Gadarene swine (so humorously depicted by Carlyle); the coin in the fish's mouth; the Matthæan parallel between Jonah's three nights and Christ's; the rivers that flow from a believer's belly; the blasted fig tree; the Matthæan mistake about the two asses; the anointed feet wiped with a woman's hair; the whipping of the hucksters; the Matthæan apparitions of the corpses; the hand in the resurrected side; the risen Lord eating broiled fish; the vision of the sheet-full of animals; the Elect collected by a trumpet; the adulterers cast into a bed: are not all these New Testament incidents and saws grotesque except to us who are powerfully psychologized by the Christian ideals? No philosopher will make objection for a moment to the Buddhist books on the score of the grotesque."

Mr. Edmunds now proposes to bring out a more comprehensive work under the title *Buddhist and Christian Gospels Now First Compared from the Originals*. The book will compare the texts of the two religions. It is to be edited by Mr. M. Anesaki, Professor of Religious Science at the Imperial University of Japan, and he will add many other parallels between Buddhist and Christian writings derived from Chinese sources, printed in the original Chinese characters.

The book is to appear in Japan and The Open Court Publishing Company will act as its agent in the United States and Canada.

Mr. Edmunds trusts that the parallels between Buddhist and Christian texts will, in many instances, throw new light on the text of the Gospels, and after having completed the manuscript, which is now being set in Japan, he has discovered one more very important parallel which he publishes in a little pamphlet entitled, *Can the Pali Pitakas Aid Us in Fixing the Text of the Gospels?* Mr. Edmunds answers this question in the affirmative, and he has proposed in his book three important parallels which will be a help in determining the text of the Gospel. These are: First, The phrase, "An æon-lasting sin" (Mark iii. 29; Cullavaggo vii. 3). Second, The declaration that Christ remains on earth for an æon (John xii. 34; Enunciations vi. i, and Decease Book iii. 3). Third, Christ's word "I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33; Numerical Collection i. 15). Mr. Edmunds has discovered a fourth one which has not been incorporated into his forthcoming book, but which was so important to him that he was anxious not to have it overlooked.

We will here recapitulate the contents of his pamphlet mostly in his own words.

When the Buddha was born, we are told Asito, the hermit, saw the god

"Sakko the leader and angels white-stoled,
Seizing their robes, and praising exceedingly."

He asks the angels why they rejoice, and they answer:

"The Buddha-to-be,¹ the best and matchless Jewel,
Is born for weal and welfare in the world of men,

¹ This term, in Pali Bodhisatto, is the word whose Sanskrit form Bodhisattva, through the Arabic Yudasatf, has been transformed into the Christian Josaphat. He (i. e. Buddha) is a saint of the Catholic Church (both Greek and Roman) and has a church at Palermo. See the Autobiography of Andrew D. White, who visited it in 1895 (Vol. II, p. 455. For a photograph of the saint's statue on the altar and further explanations see *The Open Court*, Vol. XV, p. 284). The Buddhist-Christian romance of Barlaam and Joasaph, after being rendered into most of the languages of Christendom from Armenia to Iceland, was finally translated into Tagalog (Manila, 1712 and 1837).

In the town of the Sakyas, in the region of Lumbini:
Therefore are we joyful and exceeding glad."

This passage agrees in some of its phraseology literally with the message of the angels to the shepherds as we read in Luke:

"And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, divine favor among men."

The parallel is further carried out in the narrative. The hermit, like the shepherds, goes to pay his reverence to the newborn Saviour. Considering that, between the Greek of Luke and the Pali of the Sutta Nipato, there lies a lost Aramaic version, many of the words in the two accounts are practically identical. The Pali words *hitasukhataya* ("for blessing and happiness") are a conventional phrase, often recurring in the texts. They are here translated "weal and welfare," for the sake of poetic effect, but they mean much the same as the English phrase, "peace and prosperity." Now if Luke, or rather his Aramaic intermediary, did actually use the Pali poem, it is evident that (omitting *jato*, "born") we find a very good equivalent of the line

Manussaloke hitasukhataya jato,

literally:

"In the world of men for weal and welfare born,"

in the line

ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία.

literally:

"Upon earth peace, among men good will."

It is thrown into the form of a Hebrew parallelism, in which peace on earth and divine favor among men are interchangeable terms. But it is well known that the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament are at variance here over the word "good will."² Some read the genitive,³ and then we must render:

"among men of good will" (i. e., men of the
divine favor, i. e., the elect, as Alford says).

This is the reading of the Vulgate and of the English and American Revised Versions. It is because "good will" in the Septuagint

² εὐδοκία.

³ εὐδοκίας.

means so often the Divine good pleasure that the Revised Version has "men in whom he is well pleased." But the old King James reading (following the *textus receptus* afterwards fixed by the Dutch printers Elzevir) is borne out by the analogy of all Hebrew parallelisms. This is therefore a passage wherein the Pali Pitakas can probably aid us in fixing the text of the New Testament.

The same can be said of the Marcan phrase, "æon-lasting sin,"⁴ which, as Dean Alford long since pointed out, was so unusual that the copyists altered it to "eternal judgment" (or damnation). But the idea was a Hindu one, and as Buddhism in the time of the apostles was the most powerful religion on the planet, and actually sending missionaries into China, it is now coming to be admitted by scholars that it was not unknown in Palestine. As Van Eysinga,⁵ in his recent work on the subject, has said, we know that Christians borrowed stories of Buddhists from the third century onward, and the same channels of intercourse were open in the first.

Luke, the most learned of the Evangelists, was a physician of Antioch (according to a second-century tradition⁶), and it was precisely in the metropolitan centers Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, that interchanges of religious ideas and the study of comparative theology then flourished. The lost work of the Egyptian Asclepiades, *Theologoumena*⁷ (i. e., what we should call Comparative Theology) must have been one out of many such. For further information about intercourse between Palestine and India we refer the reader to Van Eysinga and to Mr. Edmunds's forthcoming book.

⁴ αἰώνιον ἁμάρτημα.

⁵ *Indische Einflüsse auf evangelische Erzählungen*. Göttingen, 1904.

⁶ The Muratorian Fragment. Rendel Harris says that the information about Luke probably rests upon the lost work of Papias.

⁷ Referred to by Suetonius, Aug., 94.