Buddhism and Europe

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THE contacts between India and the West are very ancient. However, the historical period when our knowledge is more secure and reliable begins with the Persian ruler, Darius I, in 510 B.C. when his empire included part of the northern Punjab. In early Buddhist stories we read of long voyages made by Indian merchants and Indian troops took part in the invasion of Greece in 480 B.C. A Jataka story from about the 5th Century B.C. tells of some Indians who took a performing peacock to Babylon. Rapson has said "At no times were means of communication by land more open, or the conditions more favorable for the interchange of ideas between India and the West."[1] The first book of Maccabees which comes from about 163 B.C. also refers to the Indians on their elephants in the war with the Syrians (637). Eusebius (ca 315 A.D.) has a story about some Indian philosophers who went to Athens and met Socrates. They laughed when he told them that the object of his philosophy was to inquire into human affairs. For, they wanted to know, how could anyone know about human affairs before he first understood divine ones."[2] It is well known that the ideas of karma and transmigration are important in the philosophy of Plato. He states them in the last book of the Republic, and in Book VII of the same work in the famous myth of the Cave, some see the doctrine of Maya. His Guardians, Auxiliaries and Workers are obvious parallels to the three Hindu castes of Brahmins, Kshatryas and Vaisyas.[3]

[1] Rapson, *Ancient India,* pp. 87-88.
[2] Eusebius, *Preparation Evangelica XI-c.*
[3] Urwick, *The Message of Plato.*

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We are on even more certain ground when we come to the 4th century B.C. and the contacts which followed the invasion of India by Alexander (326-323 B.C.). Following the establishment of Greek rulers after his death, we have the record of Megasthenes from the time (ca 302 B.C.) when he was at the Maurya court of Pataliputra. He tells us that the bazaars in this great capital were crowded with merchants and goods from all over the Asiatic world, and from Greece. There were various routes that were available then or later, overland from Taxila to Balkh, then down the Oxus to the Caspian and Black Seas and hence to Europe. Another route was from Broach on the west coast of India, to the Persian gulf; up the Euphrates to Antioch to Palmyra and to Berenice on the Red Sea. We are told that 120 vessels left for India, following this route, every year. When the Monsoon winds were understood and utilized about 45 A.D., a ship could make the voyage directly across the Arabian Sea from Aden in about 40 days. By A.D. 80, India was closer to Europe than at any time before the 18th Century of our era.

In addition to the trade in silks, spices (especially pepper) and other goods which were exchanged for Roman gold, and also "choice girls for the royal harems", there went inevitably an exchange of ideas. One of the Greek rulers of north India was called Menander, who became a convert to Buddhism and the person referred to in the famous "Questions of Milinda."[4] This is a dialogue between the King and a monk who teaches the ruler the doctrines of Buddhism.

There is also in the Apocryphal "Acts of Thomas," an account of the experiences of the Apostle Thomas, who was sold as a slave and thereby became a

[4] *Sacred Books of the East,* Vol. XXV.

Missionary to India. He apparently went from Alexandria to the mouth of the Indus and thence to Taxila. When the Kushan invasion drove him south, he went to Malabar and finally was martyred near Madras in 52 A.D. This is the time when we read of a Saka (Scythian) prince named Gondopharnes by the Greeks, but called Vindapharna in Persian. His name becomes Gothaspar in Armenian and finally Gaspar, the second Magi who come from the East to pay homage to the infant Jesus. The first century of our era is the time when the ties between Imperial Rome and the Kushan rulers in north India became very close. We know that Trajan (99 A.D.) received a Kushan embassy which had come to congratulate him on his accession, and they were given the honor of Senators' seats at the theatre. Seneca says of this time—"You see the peoples and tribes have changed places. What are the Greek arts doing in the middle of the barbarian regions? What is the meaning of the Greek tongue among the Indians and the Persians." [5] Alexandria, however, was the great meeting place for Europeans and Indians. Dio Chrysostom (ca 100 A.D.) speaks of Bactrian, Scythian and Indian residents there, and the latter were no doubt Buddhists. Orthodox Hindus would never have crossed the sea. At an earlier time than this, we know that an Indian was cremated in Athens and some have seen an allusion to this in St. Paul's words about "giving one's body to be burned." (1 Cor. XIII)

Clement of Alexandria (ca 200 A.D.) says that the Greeks stole their philosophy from the barbarians. He furthermore says—"There are some Indians who follow the precepts of Boutta (Buddha) whom by an exaggerated reverence they have exalted into god. They believe in transmigration and worship a kind of pyramid (Stupa) beneath which they believe the bones of some divinity lie buried." [6]

It is the opinion of some scholars that Gnosticism was influenced in its ideas of Matter and Intelligence by Buddhist thought. Gnosticism has been called "Orientalism in an Hellenic mask," and Basilides (a contemporary of Hadrian 117-138 A.D.) is believed definitely to have borrowed his philosophy from the East. He was a pessimist as was Buddha. "The theory of Basilides" says Clement, "is that the soul has previously sinned in another life and endures its punishment here; the elect with the honor of martyrdom, and the rest purified with appropriate punishment." John 9:2 and Romans 7:9 were cited by Basilides in support of his theory of transmigration. "The soul is without qualities but the passions, like Buddhist "skandas" (or strands), attach themselves to it as "parasites." God is unpredicable, almost non-existent, and the divine entity of Jesus at death, alone entered "Nirvana" or "the upper world." [7]

It is when we come to Plotinus and to Mani that the influence of Buddhism is more certain. In 242 A.D., Plotinus had joined the army of Gordien to fight against the Persians, with the hope that it would enable him to reach India. Mani likewise, came back from India in 241 (A.D.) where he may have reached Gandhara, and where he developed a system which was so syncretistic that a place was reserved in it for Buddha. Apparently he had learned about Buddha from Monks who were then flourishing in Babylon and Persia. He places Buddha along with Noah, Adam, Abraham, Zoroaster and Jesus as men who have been sent by God. "Wisdom and good works" says Mani, "came at one time by the prophet named Buddha in the region of India,

[5] Seneca, *De Consolatione ad Helvetiam*, Ch. VI.

[6] Clement of Alexander, *Stromata* (1-15).

[7] J. Kennedy, *Buddhist Gnosticism*, J.R.A.S. 1902.

before they were spread in Persia by Zoroaster and in the west by Jesus, and in Babylon by Mian himself." [8]

The strangest of all early Buddhist contacts, however, is in the famous "Life of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat" written in the 9th or 10th Century A.D.[9] The text was originally found in the works of St. John of Damascus and is an expansion of a work of a monk of Mt. Athos taken from a Georgian account in Greek by Saint Euthymus the Hagirite. In the 16th Century, perhaps by the effort of Cardinal Baronius, the story of Barlaam and Josaphat was included in the Roman martyrology, where they remain to this day for November 27th. A relic of Josaphat is said to be preserved for faithful Catholics at the Church of St. Andrew in Antwerp. The remarkable fact, which is now acknowledged by all scholars, is that this is the story of Buddha, which was composed in Sanskrit in India shortly before or after the beginning of the Christian era. From Sanskrit it had passed into Persian, to Arabic, to Georgian and then to Greek. In the process (as in the case of Godopharnes), the names were changed, until Boddhisaltva had become Budasef, Yuwasef and then Joasaph or Josaphat. So Buddha had at last come to a place in the calendar of Christian saints.

The story of the rich young man who went through the incidents described in the Lalita Vistara (or story of Buddha's life) became immensely popular all over Europe from Spain to Scandinavia, from England to Poland. It has even been translated into Chinese and a church in Palermo was dedicated to "Joaseph." It was even used against Luther in the 16th Century because it defended and glorified the monastic life. At last in 1612 the true source of the story was recognized by a Portuguese historian, Diego do Conto, and when the Lalita Vistara became known (which was written about the 2nd Century A.D.) all doubt as to the true nature of the story was dispelled.

The story of Barlaam and Josaphat thus brings up the questions of the influence which Buddhism may have had on Christianity, and vice versa. By the nature of the case, this is a problem which can hardly be solved in the present state of our knowledge. There will always be those who believe that (a) it was Buddhism which had the major influence and (b) that it was Christianity which influenced Buddhism (c) that it is rather a case of parallelism which accounts for the resemblances to be found in the two religions.

Let us examine this question more closely. We know that the Bible mentions relations with foreign lands as early as the reign of Solomon (I Kings 10). The consensus of opinion seems to place "Ophir" in southeastern Arabia, but others place it on the west coast of India; and since Phoenician sailors helped to sail the ships, they would know about India from previous voyages. We are all familiar with the story of Solomon's wisdom as exemplified in the case of the two women and the child. This story appears also in Ceylon, and in Persia, where we are told the women began to pull the child and when it cried the true mother released her hold. It is also known in China and may well have come via Ceylon where Chinese pilgrims stopped on their return from India.

Max Muller also makes a point of the Sanskrit or Tamil words which appear in Hebrew as a result of the trade with India. We are told that the ships brought back "apes, ivory, peacocks and sandalwood." The Hebrew word for ape is "koph" and it is "kopi" in Sanskrit.

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[8] Henri due Lubac, S. J., *La rencontre du Buddhism et de l'Occident,* Paris: Ambier, 1952, u. 25.

[9] E. A. Wallis Budge, *Baralam ond Yewasef being the Ethiopian version of a Christian recension of the Buddish Legend of the Buddha and the Budhisaltva,* Cambridge (2 Vol. 1923).

Peacocks in Hebrew are "Tukki-im" and in Tamil it is "Tokei." While apes and peacocks may be found elsewhere than in India, the sandalwood tree is not. If "Algum" or "Almug" is correct for sandalwood, it can only be India which is intended for its origin." [10] The Interpreter's Bible, commenting on the passage in I Kings, says "The words used in 10:22 for apes, sandalwood, and perhaps peacocks, are of Sanskrit origin and still in use to this day on the Malabar Coast."

We turn now to the resemblances in the New Testament accounts and here we find some of the most striking evidences of the relation which undoubtedly exists. In 1904 a Dutch scholar, G. A. van den Bergh von Eysinga pointed to at least 16 cases where the accounts in Buddhism and in Christianity were strikingly similar.[11] Of this number, 4 may be taken as of particular interest.

1. Luke 2:25 ff. The visit of Asita in the Buddhist story is compared to that of Simeon in the Gospel. Asita was in the Himalayas when he learned of the birth of Buddha. He went to see him, and sees the certain marks of a great man. He predicts that Buddha will be the greatest of men, and weeps because he will not live to see the work which he will accomplish.[12] This story is similar in some respects, but Asita was not expecting the birth of Buddha and he departs in sorrow and not in joy.

2. The Temptation. Buddha was tempted by Mara under the Bo tree. Christ was tempted by Satan "for a season" (Lk 4:13). "Perhaps" as Thomas says, "it is still possible to maintain that some form of the Buddhist legend was known to the Evangelists, but not to assert that the scattered events as we know them, fit into the legend." [13]

3. Peter walking on the water. In Jataka 190 where we have a collection of Buddha birth stories, there is an introduction which tells of a lay disciple walking across a river while meditating on Buddha. When he reached the middle of the stream he began to sink, but "making firm his faith" he safely crossed to the other shore. The idea in this account is very old, and is certainly pre-Christian. It has, as we can see, a remarkable resemblance to the Gospel story.

4. The miracle of the loaves and fishes. The introduction to Jataka 78, tells of a gildmaster whose wife put 1 cake in the begging bowl of Buddha. With this he feeds himself and 500 monks. Milk, honey, butter and sugar are also given and there is ample for all —Buddha, the monks, the monastery members and also the gildmaster and his wife as well!

The question remains however— which one influenced the other? Or are these parallel instances which had no influence directly or indirectly? In reply, it may be said:

1. Many of these stories existed prior to the Christian era. Some of the Jatakas for instance are very old.

2. Buddhism preceded Christianity by at least 5 centuries and abundant evidence has shown contacts with Europe for many years.

3. The migration of fables and stories has been from East to West. The fables of La Fontaine have been traced to India. Later stories in Chaucer, i.e. the Pardoners' tale and the Ebony horse, as well as Shakespeare's use of the Pound of Flesh in the Merchant of Venice are also from Indian sources.[14]

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[10] Max Muller, *Science of language,* Vol I (p. 190-191), Scribners, 1891.

[11] Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History,* Ch. N.Y.: Knopt, 1927, Ch. 7.

[12] *Ibid.,* Ch. IV.

[13] *Ibid.,* p. 240.

[14] Max Muller, *Chips From A German Workshop,* Vol IV, "On the migration of fables."

Suffice it to say that each will have to come to his own conclusion with regard to this intriguing problem. We come now to the subsequent meeting of Buddhism and Europe, and especially in the time from the Midles Ages to the present. The fall of Rome, the rise of Islam and changes in both Europe and Asia which followed, leave a gap until 1245 when Pope Innocent IV sent an Italian Franciscan Jean de Plano—Carpini, to the Golden Horde. This was ruled at the time by a grandson of Genghiz Khan. On his return to Rome he wrote a book called "The History of the Mongols, whom we call Tartars", and in it he mentioned the religious tolerance which prevailed at the court. M o s l e m s, Buddhists and Nestorian Christians he tells us, all lived amicably together.

The publication of this book has been compared to the discovery of America in its effects. Mens minds were turned anew to the East, and contacts were resumed again after the lapse of centuries.

In 1253, therefore, William of Rubrouck was sent, but this time by the King of France. He, too, was astonished to find the mixture of religions at the Mongol Court. He was told by the Great Khan that Mohammed taught the principle which he followed viz. "As God has given 5 fingers for the hand, so he has given men different ways to approach Him. One of these was Buddhism." He furthermore says of the Buddhists: "All have their heads shaved. They carry mitres on their heads, and wear yellow garments. They keep chastity, after they have been shaved, and are together one to two hundred in the same monastery. They sit on benches, keep their heads uncovered and read in a low voice or keep silent." [15] His discussions were all with the Buddhists but he said they lived in the most friendly manner. Moslems and Nestorians, however, joined him in defending a theistic position against them.

The most famous of all these early travelers was Marco Polo. His father and uncle had met Kubla Khan on a previous journey and the Khan had asked them to have the Pope send 7 men "skilled in the arts" to teach the Christian religion at his court. Marco Polo went with them when they returned to the East and his journey lasted for 24 years. They carried a letter from Gregory X and met their first Buddhists in Kashmir. In China they saw the caves of the thousand Buddhas and were the last Europeans to do so until the 20th Century!

The Great Khan showed special favor to Marco Polo and took him to Peking. Once again he found there representatives of Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, and Marco Polo says all 4 religions censed the Khan on his anniversary. Buddhism, however, was his personal choice. Because of his favored position, Marco Polo travelled all over the country, even as far as Ceylon, where the Khan had sent him to secure the relic of Buddha's tooth.

He learned of Buddha's birth and rebirth (84 times in all) first as a man, then as an ox, and the last time as a god "so they say." Here also be paid his famous tribute to Buddha viz. that "If he had been a Christian, he would have been next to Christ Himself in sanctity."

Meanwhile Pope Nicholas III decided to send a new mission to Kubla Khan, and for this purpose John of Monte Corvino was chosen. He left for China in 1289 and in spite of Nestorian opposition, he too, received a welcome and protection from the Great Khan. He sent back 2 letters which were received in 1305 and in 1306, in which he told of the religious austerity of the monks and added that he had baptized them by the thousands. On receipt of this news,

[15] Lubac, *La rencontre du Buddhism et l'Occident*, p. 36.

Clement V sent seven Franciscans who were made Bishops in anticipation of new dioceses. Authorization was also sent to make John an Arch-Bishop because of the seeming success of his efforts. So great was John's prestige that when he died at the age of 82, great numbers of the "Pagans" sought to secure pieces from his clothes for relics. He was the true founder of China Missions in the Roman Catholic Church.

Others followed John and the seven Franciscans. One of them, Jourdain Catalim de Severac has left the following account of what he saw—"In this empire, there are some idol temples, and some monasteries of men and women as with us; and they have choirs and say prayers exactly as we do, and the great priests of the idol wear red robes and red hats as our Cardinals. So much luxury, so much pomp, so much dancing and such solemnity is incredible in sacrifice to idols." [16] The last of the great travelers was Jean Marignolli who left Rome in 1338 as the Legate of the Pope to the Emperor of China. He reached Peking in 1342 and returned home by way of Ceylon. His account is particularly interesting because he mentions trees which the monks worship and which they told him went back to a tradition from Adam that salvation would come from a tree. He interpreted this as a reference to the Cross, but they were really paying homage to the Bo tree under which Buddha had been enlightened. These trees had grown in Ceylon from shoots brought there by the missionaries of Asoka. He pays tribute to the monks by saying "These men are very holy although without Faith." Fifteen years after Jean Marignolli's visit the Ming dynasty overthrew the Mongols, and a long silence descended on all relations between East and West.

We learn from the reports of these men that the Buddhist world was unified to a degree which quite amazed them. They also spoke highly of the monks, and said that they treated the Christian as brothers. It was the Nestorians who caused the Roman Catholics the most trouble. It was they, said John of Monte Corvino, who prevented him from converting the heathen!

By the 15th Century, when Columbus and Vasco da Gama began their epoch making voyages, the knowledge of Buddha and of Buddhism had almost disappeared from Europe. John of Monte Corvino was not rediscovered until 1731, nor was it known that China and Cathay were the same. Francis Xavier was the first of the new religious representatives to meet Buddhism again, first in Ceylon and then in Japan. From a Japanese convert, he learned about Buddhist beliefs and practices which he describes as follows: "They belive in hell, in purgatory and in heaven. They venerate the angels and the saints, they have in their temples numerous statues of saints, often gigantic in size. They pay them the same reverence as we do ours, they adore one God and pray to the saints to intercede for them; they practice penitence, fasts, pilgrimages and confession; they meditate as do European religions; render an account to their superiors; preach to the people every 15 days and threaten the wicked with the devil and hell." [17] Perhaps this was an example of being told what his convert thought he wanted to hear, but the effect of his account was great. In 1549 Xavier sent a long description of his experiences in Japan to his brother Jesuits in India. He said that he was shocked by the unnatural vice he found among the monks in Japan, but his reproof was treated as a joke. He said the head of the cult was an old man of 80 who doubted the immortality of the soul!

Although he was treated courteously, he had trouble with the language and

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

with the religious ideas which each side held. At last he became convinced that his earlier optimism about the closeness of Buddhism and Christianity was unjustified, and that their religion was an invention of the devil with no conception of the true God. Before his death in 1552 he told of the two principal sects in Japan, "the grey and the black," and of the way in which the latter repeated the name of Amida Buddha. He says that Buddhism came to Japan from China, and that monks teach the people that in return for their suport they will do for them what those "in the world" cannot do in religious observances.

The result of Xavier's conflict with the monks led to an edict that death would result from conversion to Christianity, but he had won converts who remained true to the Faith long after he had gone. The Roman Catholics had trouble in Japan also because: 1. They were mistaken for another sect of Buddhists; 2. They came from India where Buddhism had begun; 3. They wore clothes like the monks and so were confused with them; 4. Each sect of Buddhists claimed them as their own adherents.

In China, later, they had further trouble: 1. They were housed in Buddhist temples and were given permission to found new ones in which to teach Buddhism! 2. Kwan-yin, the goddess of mercy, was confused with the Virgin Mary; 3. They had to wear Chinese clothes, have their faces shaved, and wear square hats 21 centimetres tall!

Xavier had appealed to Ignatius for more missionaries to help him answer the intellectual arguments against Christianity, and though missionaries were sent, they reported that even a Duns Scotus or a Thomas Aquinas would find it hard to answer the questions. In time more and more countries opened to the Fathers—Burma in 1604, Ceylon, Malacca, Siam and Cambodia followed, and at last China after a 30 year wait was open in 1583. Father Ruggieri was permitted to enter, and at first he and others were well received because they were experts in mathematics and astronomy. Many converts were made and great hopes held for the conversion of the Emperor and members of the elite, but quarrels developed between Jesuits and Dominicans, and this led to the downfall of Christian Missions until the 19th century.[18]

The importance for us is that the closing of China made it impossible to study Buddhism in the great collections of manuscripts which devout Chinese pilgrims had brought home from India. Fa Hien in the 5th Century, Hiuen Tsang in the 7th Century had brought priceless manuscripts home with them, so that Buddhism could have been studied in China better than anywhere else. However, the Jesuits in Louvain were able to publish much on Japan, India, China and Siam with materials available, and Europe began to awaken to the importance of Oriental religions. In Paris, 17 Jesuits published a work entitled, "Confucius Sinarum Philosophus" but it contained so many biased and unreliable statements that it had little value. In China also the Jesuits found many new problems, as I have already pointed out. The Imperial Encycopedia of the 18th Century said "The doctrine of those newly come differs but little from that of Buddhism. If the Christians reject transmigration and kill living things, it is only by their desire to approach the doctrine of Confucius."[19]

In addition, the missionaries were greatly hanicapped by the reputation of the monks, with whom they were confused. Father Ricci says that the Buddhist and Taoist monks came from the lowest sections of the population and were often sold as children. They

[18] Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin*, University of California, 1942.

[19] Lubac, *cit sup.*, p. 71.

had no real interest in religion and since they had to remain celibate, their morals were often debased.

The result was increasing hostility between Buddhists and Christians, and attempts were even made on the Fathers' lives. Father Ricci was a great scholar but he considered Buddhism the offspring of a demon, and he compared Amida Buddhism to the heresy of Luther. In time, however, he came to regard it more favorably because of its Christian parallels. His mind was satisfied at last by the assumption that Buddhism had borrowed them from Christianity "though we don't know how." Then the priests and monks had corrupted Christian doctrines!

In a History of Japan published in 1745 there were eleven practices mentioned to which the Fathers evidently referred:

1. The use of a Crozier, 2. The Rosary, 3. The bell, similar to the Angelus, 4. Pilgrimages, 5. Processions, 6. Vows and public prayers, 7. The right of temple asylum, 8. Canonization, 9. Hierachical orders, 10. The use of lamps and candles, 11. Confession. In the meantime the first Europeans had entered Thasa on October 8, 1661. They were an Austrian named Jean Gruber and a Belgian named Albert d'Orville. Others followed them, and in 1702 the Capucins had a center there. An Italian, Father Desideri lived there 18 years, and Clement XII wrote to the Dalai Lama in 1741: "We have hoped that by the mercy of the Infinite God you will see clearly that only the practice of the Gospel, to which your religion approaches very closely can lead to the happiness of eternal life." [20] This statement shows clearly how mistaken Christians were in their knowledge of Buddhism. Almost a century passed by before a more correct understanding was made possible by the study of Sanskrit. Men at last began to realize that the religion which they had met in China and Japan had indeed come from India, but they still did not know who its true founder was, nor how it had been disseminated from its origin. The eminent Sir William Jones knew Sanskrit, but he thought buddha was none other than Wodin, the Norse god. Diderot, in his famous Encyclopedia, expressed the idea that since Buddha was dark in color, he must have been an African from Ethiopia. There, he no doubt learned the secrets of the Egyptians—or failing this he must have been a Jew! In any case, he certainly knew the Hebrew scriptures and had his school in the south of India.

All these wild speculations were to disappear in the short space of 15 years after the light began to break in France in the 1830's. In 1833, Eugene Burnouf assumed the chair of Sanskrit at the College of France; and with his work a new era in Buddhist studies began. At his inaugural lecture he said, "It is India with its philosophy and its myths, its literature and its laws which we shall study in its language. It is more than India, it is a page from the origins of the world, of the primitive origins of the human spirit, that we shall try to decipher together." [21]

One of his students was Renan, and he spoke with enthusiasm of the influence which Burnouf had upon him. He found through him the realization of his dream that philosophy would be transformed by science. Another famous student was the historian, Mitchelet, who said of Burnouf, "We were warming our pale western science by his Indian sun."

Burnouf's work was made possible by the manuscripts that were now coming to Europe from India and surrounding countries. In 1824, the British Nesident at the Court of Nepal—Brian Hodgson—showed that a great Buddhist collection there was in Sanskrit. He sent

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

some 60 volumes to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and later two complete collections were sent to the Asiatic Societies in London and Paris. He also proved that some of the Sanskrit documents had existed in Nepal ever since the 2nd Century A D. and the whole collection had been translated into Tibetan five or six hundred years later.

About this time also, a Hungarian named Alexander Cosmos de Koros had gone to Tibet, searching for the origin of the Hungarian people. He stayed in Tibet in a small room with no heat or light at night until he had learned the language. He studied and transcribed the books which the Lamas would only give him one at a time until he gave to scholars the first knowledge of these Scriptures. They consisted of 1083 complete works of the Kanjur and 225 volumes of the Tanjur, which together were in 250 volumes. Some of the individual books weighed as much as 4 or 5 pounds and they had been published in Peking and Lhasa. These works contain the three "Baskets" of Buddhist scripture, and when Koros arrived in Calcutta, Oriental scholars greeted him with enthusiasm. He died in 1842 in an attempt to travel in eastern Tibet, but a version of a study of Buddhism made for him by a friendly Lama is said to be now in Budapest. It is pleasant to record that he has not been forgotten by Buddhists and in 1933 he was canonized in the great hall of the University of Taisho in Tokyo. Mention might also be made of a French priest who was also in Tibet about this time and whose book "Travels in Tibet" compared the similarities between Buddhist and Roman Catholic ceremonials with such naivete that to his surprise it was placed on the Index. This was the Abbe Huc who wrote, "One cannot help being impressed by their connection with Catholicism. The Crozier, the mitre, the dalmatic, the Cope or pluvial, that the great Lamas wear on a journey or when they perform certain ceremonies out of the temple, the office with two choirs, the Psalmody, the exorcisms, the censer supported by five chains and being able to open and close at will, the benedictions given by the Lamas by extending the right hand over the heads of the faithful, the Rosary, the celibate ecclesiastics, the spiritual retreats, the cult of Saints, the fasts, the processions, the litanies, the holy water; there are the connections that Buddhism has with us." [22]

Thus toward the middle of the 19th Century the stage was set for European scholars to begin a serious study of Buddhism. Time will not permit to do more than mention Prinsep, who discovered the key to the Sanchi inscriptions, of Faucaux who translated the Lalita Vistara, of Fausboll in Denmark, who made a translation of the Dhammapada, of Bopp, the German philologist who inspired Max Muller, and who wrote the first volume (in 1833) of his "Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Slavonic, Nordic and German." Such learned scholars reached only a select few, and the mass of the people was not touched by these studies. Europe was in the flood-tide of its feeling of superiority to the rest of the world. What had Buddhism, or any other religion, to offer in comparison with Christianity? What could Buddhist and other non-Christian countries have to show in comparison with the railroads, the factories, the military power and the learning of Europe?

This was the time when the Count de Gobineau wrote his book "On the inequality of the human races" and Europeans were assured thereby of their supremacy over alien peoples. Victor Cousin, another Frenchman, said "If there is a thing in the world contrary to Christian doctrine, it is the deplor-

[22] Max Muller, *Chips From A German Workshop*, Vol. 1, p. 187 (nate).

able idea of annihilation, which is the foundation of Buddhism." His thoughts were echoed by another scholar of Buddhism, Bartholemy Saint-Hilaire. He reproached Buddha for his negative outlook and his emphasis on the sorrows of life. There are joys as well as sorrows, said Saint-Hilaire, and Buddhism had nothing in common with Christianity, "which is as much superior to it as European societies are to Asiatic ones." His was the voice of 19th Century optimism and imperialism! In Germany David Strauss and Schopenhauer believed that there were many things in common between Christianity and Buddhism. Such would be the emphasis on the blessing of poverty, on religious mendicancy and on the devaluation of work. Schopenhauer was especially interested in the Buddhist teaching on the misery and sorrow in life, and some think that in this respect he was more of a Buddhist than Buddha himself. He wanted to put a stop to what he called "the absurd and revolting theism" of the Bible, so that though he had no use for asceticism and mysticism, it was the atheism of Buddha which attracted him. He is said to have had a gilded image of Buddha, imported from the Orient, in his work room, but apparently "deliverance" did not come with it!

It was through Schopenhauer that Wagner developed his interest in India, along with his fierce anti-Semitism. Another European, Leo Tolstoy, was only 19 when he met a Lama in a hospital, and through him was led to his strange mixture of Peace and non-violence which eventually returned to influence Gandhi.

In France, Auguste Comte considered that Buddhism was a "mental jungle", a reform which ended only in degeneration because it gave birth to what he called "Protestant polytheism." Nevertheless he chose Buddha to preside at the 2nd week of the 1st month of his "Positive Calendar," placing him between Numa and Confucius in his hierarchy. Many others studied and discussed Buddhism during these years and all of them seemed to be fascinated by the meaning of "the void" and of "Nirvana." Father Ricci had been repelled especially by "the void" for it seemed to him to mean mere "emptiness," a "nothing" which could not even be described in the terms of language. Dr. Zimmer, a modern scholar, has defined it in Buddhist terms as follows: "Sunyata, the void, is the synonym of that which is beyond thought or conception, that which is not produced, that which is not born, that which is without measure." [23]

Dr. Radhakrishnan likewise says it is to be conceived as a positive term, but to earlier scholars there was only confusion. Similarly with the term "Nirvana." On the one hand some thought it meant "Extinction", a "blowing out" such as one does with a candle, so that no more light or "soul" remains. Colebrooke, who was the greatest Sanskrit scholar of his time, said that it meant "liberation" rather than "extinction" This was "liberation' of the whole world and of its creatures until all attained the goal of profound calm, perfect indifferences to the allurements of life, and thus supreme happiness.

Burnouf thought it meant extinction, final and complete.

Bartholemy Saint-Hilani agreed with the idea that it meant annihilation.

Schopenhauer saw in "Nirvana" not the denial of Being, but of the world and the principle of becoming.

Max Muller also tended to accept this view. The main point for us is that there is no trace of the doctrine in the early Sutras according to Zimmer, nor do they contain an opposite one. Therefore, Buddha seems to have died without giving his disciples his teaching of the true law of liberation. Whatever the correct interpretation, the view now

[23] Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, p. 522.

widely held is that "Nirvana" means the extinction of desire, of attachment, and thereby the attainment of that bliss where no rebirth occurs.

It was the work of missionaries during the 19th Century which stirred the mass of the people to greater interest in Buddhism. The speculations and theories of the scholars were now increased by the concern for the conversion of non-Christians. It was believed at first that Buddhism was to Brahminism what Christianity was to Judaism. It was more a reformation of the old than a new religion which Buddha preached according to this idea. Tribute was paid to the character of Buddha and to the ethical teaching of his religion.

It will be noticed that the French had played a leading role in the study and elucidation of Buddhism. There were two reasons why they, rather than the English, were the leading scholars in this field:

1. The French had lost their place in India as the result of the wars of the 18th Century. They turned to the Far East and to South east Asia where they met Buddhism as it had developed after leaving its homeland.
2. The English were too absorbed in their political consolidation to pay much attention to the cultural heritage of their empire. The few scholars who did, such as Jones, Colebrooke, Prinsep, Hodgson et al, were more interested in Hinduism which was a vital force rather than in Buddhism which had almost disappeared from India.

However, in 1879 a great awakening took place when Sir Edwin Arnold published "The Light of Asia." This poem had a phenomenal success and by 1930 no less than 50 editions had appeared in London and at least 100 in the United States. It is based on the "Buddha - Carita" of Asvaghosha, a monk of the Mahayana school in the 1st Century A.D. and most western readers in the 19th Century acquired their knowledge and impression of Buddhism from "The Light of Asia." The metaphysics of Buddhism were carefully omitted, but the theme of human sorrow and its conquest was strongly emphasized. One result of the poem was the conversion of a young Englishman, Charles Henry Allen Bennett, who became a monk in Rangoon. In 1908 he returned to London and founded an organization of "The Followers of Buddha." He died in 1923 after establishing another group named "The International Union of Buddhists." In 1895, also, Paul Carus in Chicago wrote "The Gospel of Buddha" which turned out to be more correctly "The Gospel of Paul Carus." In 1881, there appeared a work entitlted "Buddhism according to the canon of the South in the form of a catechism" by Henry Olcott. He was a member of the Theosophical Society founded by Madame Blavatsky in 1875 and his work was translated into German, Tamil, Siamese and Japanese.

Olcott claimed that a Tibetan had helped him find the key to the lost teaching, and his exposition purified it of all accretions. He said that Buddhism taught the highest good without a god, the continuity of existence without a soul, a way of salvation without a savior, redemption by one's own efforts without rites, penitence, priests or saintly intercessors, and happiness in a real heaven. He clamied to be a re-incarnation of Asoka and the Theosophical center at Adyar near Madras, became notorious for its fantasies and claims. In general, they followed the teaching of A. P. Sinnett whose book on "Esoteric Buddhism" appeared in 1883. This also claimed to be based on secret information from Tibetan masters. Buddhism was a secret science, known only to the initiated and to be learned only in an inaccessible part of Tibet!

Leadbeater, one of the group at Adyar, taught that as Christ was the teacher of Christians, Krishna of the Hindus, so Buddha would return to

restore the spirituality which modern nations had lost. Madame Blavatsky deplored the way in which St. Paul had "Judaised" Christianity, and even Burnouf echoed the line that the Aryan philosophy of the Buddhists had been transmitted to Jesus by the Essenes! The most enduring of this Adyar group was Annie Besant. Among her achievements was a conference held at the Sorbonne in 1911 which was presided over by the Vice-Rector. In 1921, her discourse at a Theosophical congress in the same place was greeted by prolonged applause, and it will be remembered that she toured the United States with her protege, Krishnamurti, who is said to be still living at Adyar.[24]

It is with relief that we turn from such pseudo-science and religious quackery to the more permanent achievements of responsible scholarship. In 1879, Max Muller and a group of distinguished colleagues began work on "The Sacred Books of the East." He gave 30 years to the translation of the Rig-Veda alone! In 1881, the Pali text society was founded by Rhys-Davids, and in Germany, Hermann Oldenberg began the studies in Buddhism which gave him front rank in the field. In France, Sylvain Levi started the career which made him a worthy successor to Burnouf and Saint-Hilary; and Ananda Coomaraswamy produced studies which made him famous. At the beginning of the 20th Century, Aurel Stein began the explorations in Central Asia which astonished the world with the richness and extent of Buddhist remains.

While these men were western scholars, with the exception of Coomaraswamy who was a blend of both East and West, India began to produce her own scholars who could bear a worthy share in the study of their past. Sylvain Levi persuaded Rabindranath Tagore that the original texts in Sanskrit from China and Tibet could be satisfactorily reproduced. A group of translators was accordingly established at Santiniketan and the "Greater India Society" was formed at Calcutta in 1926. In Japan in 1928, a French-Japanese Center of Studies was established, and it began to publish an encyclopedic dictionary of Buddhism according to Chinese and Japanese sources.

Thanks to these developments and many others, Buddhism is becoming better known today than at any time in the past. However, much remains to be done, especially regarding its origins, the true meaning of the early teaching, the history of the sects, the canon of Scripture and its formation, the external influences upon it, the disappearance from India, and the thought of its leading exponents. The revolution in China, followed by the 1st World War, brought a new lease of life to Buddhism. If Christian nations had so tragically failed to follow the one who was called "The Prince of Peace" then Buddha was the obvious choice if men wished to attain true peace. It is significant that a verse from the Dhammapada was sent to the Conference at Versailles, and if it had been followed, the history of the world would have been far different. The verse read, "For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love. This is an old rule." Aldous Huxley is a modern writer who claims that Buddha, Lao Tse and Jesus all bear the same fundamental image as world teachers. He thinks that when Buddhism is stripped of its accretions it contains "a common denominator of all the mystic ways, a plain teaching, a flexible structure which it raises to the dignity of the perennial philosophy, the kernel and heart of all superior religions which it offers to our sick west as the only way of salvation."

While this may not commend itself to others in the West, we can summarize this discussion of Buddhism and Europe

[24] Cf. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, Ch. IV.

by pointing out that this religion has stood for three things which have increasingly attracted men's minds.

1. Buddha's character was and is an inspiration to those who know it. Of him it was said "No man ever lived so godless and yet so god-like a life." He felt immense compassion for all living things, for from man to insect we are all caught in the web of ignorance and the fetters of Karma. From this he would make us free.

2. The religion of Buddha was essentially ethical, not metaphysical, in its earliest expression. There are no priests, no rituals, no pilgrimages, no creeds, except the simple one that "all is sorrow and this is the way to end sorrow."

3. It is a religion of "The Middle Way." Buddha went from luxury to asceticism and he found a better way by avoiding extremes in favor of a middle path.

The key to success is the use of common sense, and the resources which every man has within himself if he will but use them. Buddha only shows others the way which brought Peace to him, and we can all travel the same path if we wish to attain the same goal. The end result is Peace, Freedom, Salvation, and this is what we all desire.

The Buddhist ideal has been expressed in a poem by the Indian poetess Sarojini Naidu. It is entitled, "To A Buddha Seated On A Lotus" and with it we conclude this paper.

Lord Buddha, on thy Lotus—throne,
With praying eyes and hands elate,
What mystic rapture dost thou own,
Immutable and ultimate?
What peace, unravished of our kin,
Annihilate from the world of men?

The wind of change forever blows
Across the tumult of our way,
Tomorrow's unborn griefs depose
The sorrows of our yesterday.
Dream yields to dream, strife follows strife,
And Death unweaves the webs of Life.

For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,
The flower deferred, the fruit denied;
But not the peace, supremely won,
Lord Buddha, of thy Lotus—throne.

With futile hands we seek to gain
Our inaccessible desire,
Diviner summits to attain,
With faith that sinks and feel that tire;
But naught shall conquer or control
The heavenward hunger of our soul.

The end, elusive and afar,
Still lures us with its beckoning flight,
And all our mortal moments are
A session of the Infinite.
How shall we reach the great, unknown
Nirvana of thy Lotus—throne?