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of Berlin, and its occupation by the soldiers of Greece. This gives to the new kingdom, not, indeed, all the territory she has claimed, but it gives her a more practicable boundary, and it adds to her area on the north a goodly share of Thessaly and Epirus.

ARTICLE III.

THE LEGEND OF THE BUDDHA, AND THE LIFE OF THE CHRIST.

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THE legend of the Buddha runs substantially as follows.¹ It is said that, at a time variously fixed at dates varying between the fifth and twenty-fifth century B.C.,² the Buddha, who had already existed in a great diversity of forms, in not less than five hundred and fifty previous births, and was at that time living under the name of Santusita in the Tusita heaven, — at the request of the gods of that celestial world, and out of love to man, — determined the next time to be born on earth; and there attain to that supernatural knowledge whereby he should become a Buddha, i.e. an enlightened one, and so be able to show to all men the way of deliverance from their sorrows.

Accordingly, having carefully considered all the various conditions under which the would-be Buddha must be born, he decided to be conceived in the womb of Maya, the queen of Suddhodana the king of the Sakyas, in the village of Kapilavastu, about a hundred miles northwest of Benares.

¹ I have drawn the account of the Legend for the most part from a translation of the Pujawaliya, in the Rev. Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*; some particulars are added from other authorities which will be indicated in their place. Mr. Hardy was for more than a quarter of a century Wesleyan Missionary to the Buddhists of Ceylon, and is justly regarded as a very high authority on all that pertains to Buddhism.

² See Chips from a German Workshop, Vol. i. p. 214; also Hardy's *Legends and Theories of the Buddhists*, pp. 78, 79.

This queen Maya had been a long time married, but thus far had been blessed with no child.¹ On this occasion she had a dream. In her dream she saw the guardian devas of the four quarters take up the couch upon which she lay, and convey it to the great forest of Himala, where they placed it upon a rock under the shade of a sal tree one hundred miles high. After this the four queens of these devas bathed, anointed, and clothed her; and then the four devas took her to a rock of silver, upon which was a palace of gold; and having made a divine couch, they placed her upon it. While she was there reposing the Bodhisat² appeared to her, like a cloud in the moonlight, coming from the north, and in his hand holding a lotus. After ascending the rock, he thrice circumambulated the queen's couch. At this moment Santusita, who saw the progress of the dream, passed away from the world of the gods, and was conceived in the world of men;³ and Maya discovered, after the circumambulations were concluded, that Bodhisat was lying in her body. This wonderful conception of the Buddha was accompanied by a multitude of the most astounding prodigies, which our space will not allow us to enumerate. As the time that the queen should be delivered drew nigh the queen informed her husband that she wished to visit her parents, and accordingly started on her journey. On the way, however, it came to pass that, in a grove called Lumbini, the child was born. The wonderful circumstances which attended his birth are many of them scarcely of a character to be here detailed. Suffice it here to say that upon his birth thousands and ten thousands of devas came to adore him, bringing him gifts; two cleansing silver streams of water, sent by the devas, came down upon him and his mother;⁴ at once the child began to walk, and to

¹ Buddhism, Rhys Davids, p. 26.

² Bodhisat or Bodhisatwa, means "the future Buddha."

³ Many authorities add that he came and entered, or seemed to enter her side in the shape of a young white elephant. See, e.g. Bigandet's Legend of Gaudama, Vol. i. p. 29; also Fausböll's Buddhist Birth Stories, p. 63.

⁴ Herein some have discovered an analogy with the baptism of Christ; see Eitel's Buddhism, p. 8.

exclaim "I am chief in the world! I am the most excellent in the world! Hereafter there is to me no other birth."

As compared with this account, as given in the Pujawaliya, the Fo-pen-hing, or Chinese version of the Abhinishkramana sutra, translated by Professor Beal, is much more detailed, and tells us that "at the time of the birth of Bodhisatwa in Lumbini the rishis and the devas, who dwelt on earth, exclaimed with great joy, 'This day Buddha is born, for the good of men, to dispel the darkness of their ignorance,' etc. Then the four heavenly kings took up the strain, and said, 'Now because Bodhisatwa is born to give joy and bring peace to the world, therefore is there this brightness.' Then the gods of the thirty-three heavens took up the burden of the strain, and the Yama devas, and the Tusita devas; and so forth through all the heavens of the Kama, Rupa, and Arupa worlds, even up to the Akanishta heavens, all the devas joined in this song, and said, 'To-day Bodhisatwa is born on earth to give joy and peace to men and devas, to shed light in the dark places, and to give sight to the blind.'"¹

Then we read how, shortly after the birth of the child, a venerable sage, named Asita, came from afar to see the king, the father of the future Buddha, saying, "I have come from very far to see the child just born to your majesty." When the old sage came in, the mother of the child endeavored to make the child bow his head in reverence to the venerable man. This, however, the child would not do, but turned around, and insisted upon presenting his feet to the sage. The old man then took the child in his arms, and, returning to his seat, rested on his knees. And when the king urged that Asita should allow the child to worship him, he answered: "Say not so, O queen; for, on the contrary, both I and devas and men should rather worship him." Then the sage proceeded to examine the child to see whether the three hundred and twenty-eight marks of a supreme Buddha were on his person. Having found them, he then looked to ascertain whether he would be permitted to live until the Buddha-

¹ Beal, *Romantic Legend*, pp. 55, 56.

hood of the child should be attained. When he saw that he would not, and that even a hundred thousand Buddhas should be born before he could receive any benefit from them, he began to weep like a broken water vessel, and cried :

“By grief and regret I am completely overpowered !
Not to meet him when he shall have attained supreme wisdom !

Alas, I am old, and stricken in years ;
My time of departure is close at hand.

What happiness from the birth of this child shall ensue !
The misery, the wretchedness of men shall disappear ;
And at his bidding peace and joy shall everywhere flourish.”¹

As the Bodhisat grew up he was kept in the harem ; and the king, his father, fearing because of the predictions concerning him, that he would leave his home to become an ascetic, surrounded him with every allurements of sensual pleasure. He had three wives and no less than six myriads of concubines. And again and again is the statement repeated, that the prince before he began his work as a Buddha, “indulged himself in all carnal pleasures,” “remained in the indulgence of his animal passions,” etc.²

To the same effect is the briefer narrative of the Puja-waliya and the Nidana Katha. It was at this time, — not during his infancy, — the Chinese version of the story tells us, that a certain king Bimbasara, who ruled in that region of country, was fearing lest some king might arise who should destroy his kingdom. Assembling his ministers, he bade them despatch messengers and make diligent inquiry and search throughout the kingdom, and see if there were any one capable of overcoming him. In the course of time the two messengers who were sent returned, having heard of the Buddha, and “exhorted Bimbasara at once to raise an army and destroy the child, lest he should overturn the

¹ Romantic Legend, p. 60.

² Beal, Romantic Legend, pp. 101, 102, 111, 115, et passim. And Mr. Edwin Arnold, in the Preface to his *Light of Asia*, comparing the Buddha with Christ, tells us that “the Buddhistical books agree in the one point of recording nothing — no single act or word — which mars the perfect purity of this Indian teacher.” (!)

empire of the king." This, however, we are told the king refused to do. "For," said he, "if this youth is to become a holy chakravarti raja, and to wield a righteous sceptre, then it becomes us to reverence and obey him. . . . If he becomes a Buddha, his love and compassion leading him to deliver and to save all flesh, then we ought to listen to him and become his disciples. So it is quite unnecessary to excite in myself any desire to destroy such a being."¹

When the prince had passed many years in the delights of the harem, and was now twenty-nine years old, we are told that, despite the precautions which his father had taken to have every glimpse of the sorrow and the misery of the great world kept from him, it happened that he saw, on successive occasions, a sick man, an old man, a corpse, and an ascetic who had renounced the world. All this brought home to his mind the utter vanity of all the pleasures of the world which held always such possibilities of misery, and at the last must end in death. And when he heard that these woes were absolutely universal, and that no possible rank or riches or wisdom known to man could enable any one to escape them, he formed the resolution to leave the palace and all its joys, take up the life of an ascetic, and not to rest until, if it were possible, he had solved this awful problem of human misery, and discovered for the world some way of deliverance from it. As by night he was leaving the palace to put his resolution into effect, we are told that Mara, the mighty prince of evil, appeared in the air, and cried, "Depart not, O my Lord! In seven days from now the wheel of empire will appear, and will make you sovereign over the four continents and the two thousand adjacent isles. Stop, O my Lord!"² To this temptation to give up his resolve the Buddha yielded not. But from that time on the tempter never left him, till at last he attained the secret of the great deliverance.

For six years the Bodhisat sought the way in vain, studying all the various systems of the greatest of India's holy men,

¹ Beal, *Romantic Legend*, pp. 103, 104.

² *Fausböll's Buddhist Birth Stories*, n. 84.

fasting and denying himself even almost unto death, till at last the final great conflict came under the bo-tree near Gaya. Thither came the prince of evil that he might make a last attempt to shake the Bodhisat from his resolution to become the saviour of the world. The story is told in the various Buddhist authorities with the greatest fulness of detail, magnifying to the utmost the horrors and the terrors with which the arch fiend sought to seduce the Bodhisat from his purpose. To be brief, Mara came, it is said, riding on an elephant one hundred and fifty yojanas (two thousand four hundred miles) high, appearing as a monster with five hundred heads, one thousand red eyes, and five hundred flaming tongues; he had also one thousand arms, in each of which was a weapon, no two of these weapons alike. With him came also an army of hideous demons of every conceivable frightful form, so large that it extended on every side one hundred and sixty-four miles, and nine miles upward, and its weight was sufficient to overpoise the earth. First he sent against the Bodhisat a terrific wind, which tore up the largest mountains; then a rain-storm, every drop the size of a palm tree; then a shower of burning rocks and mountains; then a shower of swords and spears and all manner of sharp weapons; then a shower of burning charcoal; then another of burning ashes; and then another of burning sand, and another of burning filth; and then a fourfold darkness. But the wind moved him not; the rain refreshed him; the burning mountains became garlands of flowers; the weapons a shower of blossoms; the burning coals, rubies; the fiery ashes, fragrant sandal-powder; the burning sand, a shower of pearls; and the darkness, a resplendent light. Then came the whole army of Mara, with the arch fiend at their head; but their combined assault did not move him. Then Mara himself, clothed in a form of frightful terror, cried with an awful voice, "Begone from my throne!" but the Bodhisat trembled not. "For," said he, "to gain this throne have I practised the ten virtues through more than four grand cycles of ages. How canst thou possess it, who hast never accom-

plished a single virtue?" Then he recounted the alms that he had given even in a single birth, and called upon the earth to bear him witness; and the earth cried with an awful roar, "I am witness to thee of that!" And her voice was so terrible that Mara and his army fled away discomfited.

Then the three daughters of Mara came to their father, and, to comfort him, told him that in another way they could overcome the prince. And they transformed themselves into several maidens, and going to the tree where the Bodhisat still remained sitting, sought in every way to seduce him from his virtue and so break his resolution; but they were as unsuccessful as the demon army. The conflict was over. And then in that night he attained the mystery of existence and discovered the way of deliverance. He acquired in the first watch of the night the knowledge of the past, in the middle watch, the knowledge of the present, and in the third watch, the knowledge of the chain of causation which leads to the origin of evil. And then he sung the hymn of triumph:

“Long have I wandered! long!
 Bound by the chain of life,
 Through many births:
 Seeking thus long in vain,
 Whence comes this life in man, this consciousness of pain?
 And hard to bear is birth,
 When pain and birth but lead to birth again.
 Found! It is found!
 O cause of individuality!¹
 No longer shalt thou make a house for me!
 Broken are all thy beams,
 The ridge pole shattered!
 Into Nirvāna now my mind has passed
 The end of cravings has been reached at last!”²

He was now thirty-five years old; and from this time on began to preach his doctrine, and continued so to do, till at last he died a natural death at the age of eighty.

¹ Not God, whose existence Buddhism denies, but *karma*, “action,” as the cause of repeated births. See a note by Prof. Max Müller on this hymn, in *Buddhaghosha's Parables*, p. ciii; also, his *Science of Religion*, p. 178.

² As rendered by Mr. Rhys Davids, in *Fausböll's Buddhist's Birth Stories*, pp. 103, 104, where Mr. Hardy's literal translation of the hymn is also given.

His preaching, the authorities assure us, was accompanied by the most astounding miracles, of which we may have more to say in the sequel. His disciples multiplied; and before his death the new religion numbered a great multitude of followers, his own royal father and his wife and child among them. When he died, in due time his body was laid upon the funeral pyre. For seven days they endeavored to set the pyre on fire, but it refused to burn. At last, to the great amazement of all who beheld it, a flame issued from the Buddha's breast and the pile ignited of itself. And when the body, all but a few of the bones, was consumed, the fire was extinguished by a great shower of rain.

Such in outline is the legend of the Buddha in its most striking features. The Rev. Dr. Eitel adds two other circumstances which may be mentioned for the sake of completeness. "Toward the end of his life," says Dr. Eitel, "he is said to have been glorified, or, as the Buddhist tradition literally calls it, 'baptized' with fire. He was on a mountain in Ceylon, discoursing on religious subjects, when suddenly a flame of light descended upon him and encircled the crown of his head with a halo of light."¹ Again, Dr. Eitel tells us of a tradition of his resurrection. "After his remains had been put in a golden coffin, which then grew so heavy that no one could move it, . . . suddenly his long-deceased mother, Maya, appeared from above, bewailing her son, when the coffin lifted itself up, the lid sprang open, and Sakyamuni appeared with folded hands, saluting his mother."² Others add that he both ascended into heaven and descended into hell to publish the doctrine of his religion; but this is said to have been during his lifetime and not after death.

We may thus sum up the legend of the Buddha, combining the features derived from various sources, in the language of Dr. Eitel, as follows: "Sakyamuni Buddha, we are told, came from heaven, was born of a virgin, welcomed

¹ Eitel, *Buddhism*, p. 12. This legend will be found (in its earliest form, according to Mr. Rhys Davids), in the *Mahaparinibbāna Sutra*, as translated by Mr. Davids in the *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. xi. pp. 81, 82.

² Eitel's *Buddhism*, p. 13.

by angels, received by an old saint who was endowed with prophetic vision, presented in a temple, baptized with water and afterward baptized with fire. He astonished the most learned doctors by his understanding and his answers. He was led by the spirit into the wilderness, and having been tempted by the devil, he went about preaching and doing wonders. The friend of publicans and sinners, he is transfigured on a mount, descends to hell, ascends up to heaven. In short, with the single exception of Christ's crucifixion, almost every characteristic incident in Christ's life is also to be found narrated in the Buddhistic traditions of the life of Sakyamuni, Gautama Buddha."¹

Every candid person will feel that these coincidences between the story of the Buddha and the story of the Christ are quite too numerous and striking to be ignored. And the question which unbelief presses upon us in this matter is certainly fair and reasonable. How are we, on the basis of the received faith of the church as to the historical trustworthiness of the gospel narrative, to explain the remarkable fact that so much that is most characteristic of the life of Jesus of Nazareth is also recorded of Sakyamuni, who lived some five hundred years or more before him? One might, indeed, cut the knot by declaring that all the agreements of the two narratives are merely accidental; but this will scarcely be regarded as a satisfactory explanation of the difficulty.

There are some who offer as a solution of the question a theory such as follows. It is supposed that there were certain myths, solar or other, floating about the East centuries before Christ; that these in the first instance were attached by the disciples of Sakyamuni, to the person of their master; and that at last, somehow, through the Essenes, as Mr. De Bunsen thinks,² these stories concerning the Buddha found their way to Palestine, and were there by the disciples of Jesus transferred to him, and came to be regarded, in the form in which we have them in the Gospels, as veritable

¹ Eitel, *Buddhism*, p. 14.

² In *The Angel-Messiah of Buddhists, Essenes, and Christians*. London, 1880.

history. Historical basis, on this hypothesis, there was none in either case. This theory, when set forth, as, e.g. in *The Angel Messiah* of Mr. De Bunsen, with a great parade of oriental learning, may be made, no doubt, to appear to many minds very plausible; but, as any one can see, this is but to resuscitate the old mythical interpretation of the gospel in a Buddhist dress. The theory granted, the Gospels, then, are not reliable history; and since they are the only authorities of any account, it follows that no one either knows or can know much of anything about the life of that Jesus who has transformed half the world. It is of so great consequence for unbelief to be able to make out this point, that we find many grasping eagerly at this legend of the Buddha, and in a spirit of somewhat premature triumph holding forth these various agreements with the gospel history as evidence conclusive that in its essential features the story of the Christ was afloat in the East before ever Christ appeared, and is therefore of no historical value. Hence it is that the legend of the Buddha comes to have a special claim just now upon the consideration of the Christian apologist. What are we who believe in the Gospels to do with this strangely coincident narrative?

In dealing with this question, we have to observe that, quite antecedent to any minute consideration of the facts of the case, an overwhelming presumption rests against this imagined derivation of any part of the narrative in the Gospels from a pre-existing legend of the Buddha. This presumption is so strong as to throw the whole burden of proof upon those who make the suggestion. It cannot be set aside or neutralized by any demonstration of any number of mere abstract possibilities. The case is such that we may justly demand from such objectors to the credibility of the Gospels proof the most full and explicit. And this presumption against the truth of this theory is twofold. In the first place, there is not the slightest evidence yet brought in from any quarter that in the age when Christ appeared or immediately thereafter this legend of the Buddha as we have it now was

so much as known in Palestine. It is not even possible to prove that there had been opportunity for this geographical transfer of the story.

This line of argument has been very ably and conclusively set forth by Professor J. Estlin Carpenter,¹ and we need only here to indicate his conclusions, for which he gives abundant and satisfactory evidence. In the first place, there is no evidence that the influence of Buddhism extended beyond India at all till after the time of Alexander the Great, when, in the reign of Asoka, about 250 B.C., the missionary work of the Buddhists began. Yet not until the first century of our era had Buddhism extended so far as China in the East; while not even the Buddhist historians ever claim that any of their missionaries so much as attempted the conquest of the far West, or reached the lands on the Mediterranean. Nor is there any evidence that the story could probably have reached Palestine by way of commerce and travel. There is no evidence that the dispersion of the Jews had by the Christian era yet reached India. There exists he tells us, a very early list of the synagogues for foreign Jews in Jerusalem;² but there is in it no intimation of the existence of Indian Jews. Some, like Mr. De Bunsen, have endeavored to make out a connection between Essenism and Buddhism; but his frequent inaccuracy and failure to furnish undoubted facts where they are most needed for his demonstration have caused his argument to be condemned as a failure by both Christian and Jewish critics.

History seems to indicate that from the time when the Greek Megasthenes, as the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator, lived at the Buddhist capital of Pataliputra, until the Christian era, intercourse of any kind between India and the West was but very irregularly maintained; and there is little evidence that the peoples of the West knew much of Buddhism. In particular, there is no trace of any knowledge of Buddhism

¹ In the *Nineteenth Century*, December, 1880; Art. "Buddhism and the New Testament."

² See Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, iii. 292.

among the Palestinian Jews in the literature of the centuries immediately preceding that in which the Gospels were written. All this, it is true, is merely negative proof, and is not offered as demonstration. It is still, we will admit, conceivable, notwithstanding this silence of all literature, that the legend of the Buddha may have been known in Palestine at the time when the Gospels were written; but assuredly the entire absence of any proof of such acquaintance with Buddhistic ideas raises a very strong presumption that up to the time in question the legend of the Buddha was not known to the Jews of Palestine, and therefore could not have formed the original of any part of the narrative of the Gospels.

And this presumption against any such connection between the two stories is greatly strengthened by another, yet more conclusive, to the same effect. For if there has not yet been any thorough critical examination of the scriptures of the Buddhists, we must bear in mind that there has been such an examination of the testimony which we have recorded in the four Gospels. In this examination, as every one knows, rationalistic and unbelieving, no less than believing, critics have taken part. And the latest and most reliable results of this criticism of the New Testament, we affirm, are such as to give of themselves abundant warrant for dismissing this theory of an admixture of Buddhist legend in the story of the Gospels as utterly irreconcilable with well-ascertained facts. And it will be easy to show this. For if we assume that the legend of the Buddha, as we now have it, had gradually grown up in the East in the centuries between Buddha and Christ, and, having in some way unknown found its way into Palestine, was then transferred to the life of Jesus of Nazareth, it is plain that this must have required considerable time. Not until the figure and history of Jesus had begun to lose somewhat of its distinctness in the haze of the past could men by any possibility have been brought to believe that these old Buddhist legends referred to him.

It is therefore safe to say that the supposed commingling of Buddhist stories with the story of the life of Christ could in

no case have taken place till, at the soonest, two or three generations after the time of Christ. But nothing in literature is now better established than that the synoptical Gospels, in which the alleged coincidences with the legend of the Buddha chiefly occur, were published to the world in substantially their present form before the generation contemporary with Christ had passed off the earth. Unbelief may be said to be near giving up in despair the attempt to demonstrate a later origin. Hitzig, Schenkel, and Volkmar, Weiss and Meyer all agree in assigning the composition of the Gospel of Mark to a period within forty years of the crucifixion. Matthew's Gospel is by a few extreme critics assigned to a rather later date; but even Schenkel and Keim suppose it to have been written not far from A.D. 70. Luke, according to Godet, was written between A.D. 64 and 80, and according to Weiss between A.D. 70 and 80; while even such critics as Hilgenfeld, Keim, and Volkmar do not give it a later date than A.D. 100.¹ Here, then, were the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke existing, according to the practically unanimous consensus of the ablest critics of every school of thought, in essentially the form in which we have them now, before the end of the first century. This imagined transference of parts of the old legend of the Buddha to the story of the Christ could therefore by no possibility have taken place in a period later than the first century.

Thus the well settled results of the latest scientific criticism of the New Testament compel us to believe that if the hypothesis before us be true, then the old tales about the Buddha were written into these pretended histories of the life of Jesus, and successfully passed off for veritable history upon a contemporary generation. The apostles themselves were not all dead when this was done,—if done at all,—and yet there is not a word of doubt or protest which has come

¹ For a brief and clear exhibit of the general consensus of the critics on this subject, with full references to original authorities, see, among others, an admirable little book by Rev. Prof. Curtiss, of Chicago Theological Seminary, *The Date of Our Gospels*, especially pp. 43–45; see also Fisher's *Supernatural Origin of Christianity*, *Essays* iii. and iv., and *Supplementary Notes* to the same.

down from any of them against this imposition. No more have any of the early opponents of the Gospel betrayed any knowledge of this fraud. Even supposing that any motive had existed for the fraud,—of which no one adduces the slightest evidence,—yet how utterly incredible that the immediate disciples of Christ should have been persuaded to accept those old Buddhist myths as truly relating to the life of one with whom not a few of them had been personally acquainted, when, in point of fact, they must every one of them have known better. And the case is even stronger than this. For we have not assumed anything thus far as to the authorship of the Gospels. But when men like Renan, who can be suspected of no leaning to orthodox beliefs,—to say nothing of other no less able critics,—tell us that the evidence is such that we are compelled to believe that the synoptic Gospels were ‘substantially’ written by the men whose names they bear,¹ the rest of us can justly affirm with confidence that not only the date, but also the authorship, of these three Gospels, must now be regarded as a settled question. Those Gospels, then, were not only written in the apostolic age, but came out of the very midst of the apostolic circle. Even if it were conceivable that some unknown men, personally unacquainted both with Christ and his immediate disciples, should have ignorantly mixed up the story of the Buddha with the life and works of Jesus, and succeeded in imposing this incongruous mixture of fact and fable upon the whole church of that age for trustworthy history, how more than absurd it is to suppose that the apostles or their immediate associates should have done this. Who can believe, for example, that Matthew, after three years of constant association with Jesus, should have confused

¹ Renan says (in the translation of the *Vie de Jesus*, p. 21, published by Trübner, London, 1864), “On the whole I admit as authentic the four canonical Gospels. All, in my opinion, date from the first century, and the authors are, generally speaking, those to whom they are attributed.” His depreciation of their historical value on account of the miraculous element they contain does not affect the value of the above testimony for the present purpose. See Fisher’s *Supernatural Origin of Christianity*, p. 435.

the story of Christ with a number of old Buddhist fables, or, worse still, deliberately discredited his whole testimony by indiscriminatingly mingling with various matters of fact, scraps of old Indian myths, which, by the hypothesis, must have been floating about Palestine on the lips of the people for some time before Jesus appeared?

We may then affirm, without fear of successful contradiction by any one who is acquainted with the facts, that the conclusions of the latest and most impartial criticism as regards the date and the authorship of the Gospels are such as to make the theory that many of the incidents recorded in the Gospels were originally derived from a previously existing legend of the Buddha in the last degree improbable, if not absurd. The evidence upon which these conclusions are based is of such a character that it is not, and cannot be, affected in the slightest degree by any number of such alleged coincidences, however clear and striking. We may not, indeed, be yet in a position to be able to say with confidence what the true explanation of each and every asserted coincidence between the two stories really is, but the historical criticism of the New Testament has at least placed us in a position to say what that explanation cannot be. So firmly established are those results by the application of every critical test, and so universally accepted by the general consensus of competent critics of the most divergent schools, that to insist in the name of scientific candor that we shall ignore those results in dealing with this legend of the Buddha is much as if one should insist that, in order to deal in a scientific and unprejudiced spirit with some unexplained celestial phenomenon, we should begin by ignoring the principle of gravitation.

Nevertheless, it is, no doubt, a question of interest how we are to account for the many agreements which are pointed out in the two stories of the Buddha and the Christ. And to this question we reply, first, that to give a full and satisfactory solution of the problem is not yet within the power of any one. For in order to this, it is plainly necessary that we shall have

before us all the Buddhist authorities, and that these shall then be submitted to the same rigid criticism, as regards date, authorship, etc., which has been so successfully applied to the Gospel histories. But a large part of these voluminous records is as yet unknown and inaccessible to European scholars, being locked up in Pali, Chinese, Thibetan, and other Oriental manuscripts, which have yet to be opened up to the world at large by competent scholarship. Nor have the critical questions which arise been satisfactorily settled, even as regards the various authorities already accessible.

The very first question which arises when one is confronted with these coincidences, is that of the date and origin of each one of these various legends. Can this legend of the Buddha, in any one of the various forms in which we have it now, as embodying the alleged coincidences with the story of Christ, be proven to have been in existence antecedent to the Christian era? It is no disparagement to any one to say that no man living is able to prove this. We have not yet the data which are absolutely necessary to prove that vital point. Even Professor Beal, who seems to lean distinctly toward the opinion of a pre-Christian origin for the legend, frankly admits that "in our present state of knowledge there is no complete explanation to offer. We must wait until dates are certainly and finally fixed."¹ Nor need it give any Christian man the slightest uneasiness that he is obliged to make this admission. For it is evident at sight that the same lack of the requisite data which makes it impossible to furnish an absolute demonstration of any view of the legend which shall be in full accord with the faith of the church in the Gospels, no less authoritatively forbids any and every dogmatic assertion of any inference from that legend, either contradictory to, or even disparaging to, the historical accuracy of the narrative in the Gospels. And meantime the presumptions to the contrary, as above set forth, remain in all their force. But while all this is true, we yet believe that we are in a position to be able to give, if not a demonstration, yet a highly probable explanation

¹ Romantic Legend. Preface, p. ix

of the chief agreements which are by one and another alleged as between the legend of the Buddha and the story of Christ. Let it be observed, to begin with, that we are by no means to assume that all such agreements in the two stories are to be of necessity explained in the same way. The contrary is not only possible, but highly probable, as we shall be able to show. The full and complete explanation even of a single case of asserted agreement may very possibly be found in a combination of several facts. Premising this, let it be noted, first, that many of the alleged coincidences between the two narratives are only superficial and apparent. It is a fact that the resemblance between the story, as also the doctrines, of Buddha and of Christ, to those who are quite unfamiliar with the Oriental languages and peoples, is often made to appear much closer than it really is, though by the rendition of Buddhist ideas by Christian terms. These, whatever literal equivalence they may have to the words of the original, in the great majority of cases convey ideas entirely different from, and often contradictory to, those which the original terms suggest to a Buddhist. To a certain degree, no doubt, such translations are unavoidable. The writer has had too much personal experience in endeavoring, as a missionary, to teach the Christian religion in a language steeped in pantheism, not to appreciate fully the great difficulties which in this case beset the translator. But, making all allowance for this, we are constrained to place on record our protest against the unnecessary and persistent misrepresentation of a certain class of writers, who, whether through ignorance or through their scarcely concealed eagerness to break down the high and exclusive claims of Christianity by a glorification of heathenism, habitually, and often quite needlessly, clothe heathen ideas in Christian terms, without the slightest intimation to their readers that such terms are to be understood in a sense entirely different from that which they have in our ordinary language. Illustrations might be multiplied. Let two or three, however, suffice as examples, which may put the ordinary reader on his guard against the mischievous plausibilities of such blind guides.

The author of the Angel Messiah of Buddhists, Essenes, and Christians, renders the title *tathàgata*, commonly applied to the Buddha, as literally "he that should come";¹ thereby, of course, meaning to suggest an identity of this title with the Jewish phrase denoting the Messiah as מָשִׁיחַ, or ὁ ἐρχόμενος.² As a matter of fact, however, the word *tathàgata* does not have this meaning, nor is it easy to see how possibly any such meaning could ever be got out of it, or put into it. The word is a compound, of which the first element is the Sanskrit *tathà*, *thus, so*; and the second either *gata*, past part. from the root *gam*, *to go*, or *dgata*, compound past part. from *d* and *gam*, meaning *come*. Whichever it be, the idea of futurity, the essential thing to make out the asserted coincidence, is excluded. Authorities give the meaning of the title as follows: Dr. Edkins renders it "thus come," and says, "It is explained, 'bringing human nature as it truly is, with perfect knowledge and high intelligence, he comes and manifests himself.'"³ Mr. Rhys Davids says, "*tathàgata*, *gone or come in like manner*, subject to the fate of men, is an adjective applied originally to all mortals, but afterwards used as a favorite epithet of Gotama."⁴ Bishop Bigandet, missionary to Burmah, says, "It means 'he who has come like all his predecessors.' The Buddhas who appear have all the same mission to accomplish; they are gifted with the same perfect science, and are filled with similar feelings of compassion for and benevolence toward all beings. Hence the denomination which is fitly given to Gotama, the last of them."⁵ We have thus abundant authority⁶ for

¹ See the work cited, p. 18.

² So also, Prof. Beal, *Romantic Legend*, p. 4, note 1.

³ Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 6, note 2.

⁴ In *Fausböll's Buddhist Birth Stories*, p. 71, note 2.

⁵ *The Legend of Gaudama*, p. xv.

⁶ If necessary, we could add much more testimony of the highest authority to the same effect. Thus, Burnouf, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, pp. 75, 76, gives the following as the definition of M. Csoma, the Thibetan scholar: "Tathàgata signifie 'celui qui a parcouru sa carrière religieuse de la même manière que ses devanciers.'" Burnouf expresses himself as inclined to regard this version of the term "comme la première et la plus authentique." He gives other definitions as follows: "'parti ainsi,' c'est a

affirming that the coincidence with a title of our Lord which some have supposed that they had discovered here has no existence except in the imagination of those who assert the agreement.

Again, we read constantly of the Buddha, as, e.g. in *The Light of Asia*, as a Saviour or a Deliverer; words which as applied to Christ have a very precise and definite sense, but one as far as possible removed from that which they have as applied to the Buddha. For it is of the very essence of the doctrine of Buddhism that man cannot, in any Christian sense of the words, be saved by another, but must save himself. Buddha is only in such a sense supposed to be a saviour as that he has pointed out the way whereby men may save themselves. Thus the *Dhammapada* says explicitly, "You yourself must make an effort; the *Tathàgatas* [i.e. the Buddhas] are only preachers."¹ Here, again, an agreement appears to the superficial reader where, as soon as the word is understood, it is plain that there is really no coincidence at all.

Coming to the legend itself, we may note again its teaching as to the pre-existence of the Buddha, which is referred to by Professor Beal as one of the remarkable coincidences of the legend with the story of Christ.² Christ, we are told in the Gospel, existed in heaven before he was born of the Virgin Mary, and so did the Buddha before he was born of Maya. Here, again, the analogy seems plausible, but will not stand the least examination. For, in point of fact, the pre-existence of Buddha is represented after a fashion so entirely different from that which the Scriptures attribute to Christ that it is simply impossible that there should be any historical connection between them. The Scriptures teach, according to the faith of the universal church, that the Christ, the self-

qu'il ne reparaitra plus dans le monde." . . . Suivant les *Buddhistes du Sud*, *Tathàgata* (*Tathà àgata*) signifie 'celui qui est venu comme de la même façon que les autres *Buddhas* ses prédécesseurs'; ou encore *Tathàgata* revient à *Tathà gata*, 'celui qui a marché ou qui est parti comme eux.'

¹ *Dhammapada*, 276, translated from the Pali, by Prof. Max Müller, as given in *Buddhaghòsha's Parables*, p. cxxxvi.

² *Romantic Legend*, Preface, p. viii.

same spiritual being which was conceived in the womb of the virgin, existed from eternal ages in the glory of God the Father; and that in this pre-existence he was alone and peculiar among all that are born of women. As regards the pre-existence of the Buddha, however, it is not represented as anything peculiar to him, but the contrary. It is the uniform teaching of the Buddhist authorities, that every human and superhuman being, as also every animal, has had an existence previous to this present, whether in heaven, earth, or hell. Here, then, is a radical difference at once. Christ, in that he pre-existed, is distinguished from all men; the Buddha, in that he pre-existed, only shared the common lot of all men.

But even this is by no means the whole or the chief contrast between the two doctrines. For when the Buddhist writings speak of the pre-existence of the Buddha and of other men, they do not mean to teach their pre-existence, in our sense of the term, at all. For when we speak of a previous or a future existence of any one, we mean, of course, the previous or future existence of the animating soul. But nothing can be clearer than that Buddhism, according to its own authorities, denies *in toto* that there is such an essence as the soul. That, therefore, which pre-existed in the case of the Buddha, as of any other man, was not, according to the Buddhist conception, the very soul of Buddha at all. Not to go into the intricacies of Buddhist metaphysics, let it suffice to say that, according to the Buddhist conception, that of me which persists after I die, and also existed before I was born, is not my soul,—for I have none,—but my *karma*, or actions; that is, it is the fact of a previously accumulated succession of moral actions in successive moral beings which necessitates the existence of every individual man before he is born; and it is that, and that alone, which survives death, and in like manner necessitates the production of another being in the same line to reap the fruit of such actions. The unity and identity, therefore, of the successive beings in a given line is not found in their

possession of one and the same individual soul, but in their representing the effect of one continuous line of moral activity. Thus when the orthodox Buddhist asserts the pre-existence of the Buddha, he refers to a pre-existence in this sense only.¹ It is plain at sight, whether we are able to understand precisely what is intended by this Buddhist mystery or not, that the orthodox doctrine of the pre-existence of the Buddha has absolutely nothing in common with the Scripture doctrine of the pre-existence of the Christ. There is no coincidence here at all.

But even if we concede that in Buddhist countries many of the common people do believe in the existence of the soul, and consequently the pre-existence of the soul of Buddha, still there is no coincidence with the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ. For whereas the pre-existence of Christ is represented as a state of unchanging glory with God, the Buddha is represented in the popular birth stories as having been born no less than five hundred and fifty times,² sometimes as a god, sometimes as a man, sometimes as a beast. According to Mr. Hardy,³ the Buddha is declared to have pre-existed in every form from that of the god Sakka, down to that of a thief, a devil dancer, and a pig. No argument is needed. The coincidence asserted here, again, has no existence except in the imaginations of those who make the assertion. The two doctrines of the pre-existence of the Christ and the pre-existence of the Buddha are so utterly diverse that by no possibility can the one have arisen from the other.

In like manner, the analogy which is alleged between the Buddhist legend of the incarnation and miraculous conception and the story of the miraculous birth of Christ, if not also

¹ There can be, it would seem, no doubt that this is the real teaching of the Buddhist authorities. For a full argument to this effect, see Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, pp. 93-99. See also his remarks in Fausböll's *Buddhist Birth Stories*, pp. lxxv, lxxvi, and also Bigandet on "The Seven Ways to Neibban," in *The Legend of Gaudama*, Vol. ii. p. 213, and Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 410, 454, sec. 12, p. 457, sec. 17 et passim.

² *Buddhist Birth Stories*, pp. 1, lxxxii.

³ *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 102.

wholly superficial and apparent, is at least often greatly exaggerated. In the case of Christ, the teaching of the gospel is that the Son of God, being sent by the love of the Father for the salvation of men, freely gave himself in like love to that work, was born of a virgin, lived and died for the sins of men. The legend of the Buddha tells us that ages ago the Bodhisat, when born as a hermit, and having it in his power then and there, obtaining Nirvána, to cease from the weary round of births and deaths, out of pity for man determined to postpone that final deliverance, in order that slowly progressing upwards through successive births, and at last attaining to omniscience, he might become a Buddha, and show to suffering men the way of deliverance from births and deaths.¹ Is it easy to believe that the Scripture doctrine of the sending of the Son by the Father for our redemption is a copy of this Buddhist legend?

But many insist much on the legend of his miraculous conception, and think that we have here a clear and most remarkable analogy. Mr. De Bunsen even ventures to head the section of his book which treats of this part of the legend, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Maya."² But how much is there in this coincidence? What are the facts of the case? According to Bishop Bigandet, "The conception of Phralaong (Buddha) in his mother's womb is wrapped up in a mysterious obscurity — appearing as it does to exclude the idea of conjugal intercourse. The Cochin Chinese in their religious legends pretend that Buddha was conceived and born from Maya in a wonderful manner, not at all resembling what takes place in the order of nature."³ On the other hand, Mr. Hardy quotes the Thibetan scholar Csoma Korösi as saying that he "does not find any mention in the Thibetan books" of that virginity of Maya "upon which

¹ See Fausböll's *Buddhist Birth Stories*, "Nidána Kathà," pp. 10-14, for a full version of this legend.

² The *Angel-Messiah*, p. 33. Some have even fancied they could discern a connection between the Páli name *Màyà*, and the Greek name of the mother of our Lord, *Mapla*! Eitel, *Three Lectures on Buddhism*, p. 7.

³ *Legend of Gaudama*, Vol. i. p. 27, note 17.

the Mongolian accounts lay so much stress.”¹ Mr. Rhys Davids, however, alluding to this statement of Csoma Korösi, says, “His reference to a belief of the later Mongolian Buddhists that Maya was a virgin has not been confirmed.”² The facts of the case are, as regards the authorities before us, that while something supernatural is suggested in connection with the birth of the Buddha, they distinctly exclude the idea of Maya’s virginity. The mother of Buddha is not represented, like the Virgin Mary in the gospel, as having never known man, and never having lived with her husband; but, on the contrary, as having lived with her husband childless to the age of forty five years.³ It is, moreover, distinctly taught, in terms we need not here cite, that up to that time she had lived with him after the ordinary manner.⁴ In the Chinese account, among the thirty-two signs which must mark the mother of a Buddha the virginal birth is not mentioned, but only that “she must never have borne a child before.” In fact, the idea that she should be, like the Virgin Mary, an unmarried woman is excluded by the thirty-first mark, that “she must be a woman obedient to her husband.”⁵ To the same effect reads the legend in the Nidána Kathà, the Pùjã-waliya, and the Mallalingàra Wouttou. Whether or not in any Buddhist documents not yet before us, the doctrine of the miraculous virginal conception be taught, we will not affirm, but it is certainly true that the authorities accessible do not so represent the case. Jerome (Cont. Jovian, Lib. i.), speaks of it as an oral *tradition* of the gymnosophists of India.

As for the statement that the legend represents the Buddha as having been conceived by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the virgin Maya, we find no warrant for this statement except in the assertion of Mr. De Bunsen, — for which he gives no authority, — that the Chinese Buddhistic writings say “it was the Holy Ghost, or Shing-shin, which descended upon the virgin Maya.”⁶ With regard to this, we can only

¹ Manual of Buddhism, p. 145, note.

² Buddhism, p. 183, note 1.

³ Buddhism, p. 26.

⁴ See Romantic Legend, pp. 36, 37, 41.

⁵ Romantic Legend, p. 32.

⁶ Angel-Messiah, p. 33.

say that in none of the authorities before us — Chinese, as well as others — is there any suggestion of this kind. Not only this, but the very idea of the Holy Ghost is utterly alien to Buddhism. The very existence of spirit is again and again denied. If, however, it should nevertheless appear that the conception of the Buddha is so represented in any Chinese authorities, it is certain that the coincidence cannot be explained by a derivation of the gospel conception from the Buddhistic, but rather by the reverse. For, since the religion of the Buddha was only introduced into China in the first century after Christ, a derivation of the idea from Christian preaching is therefore quite possible, the contrary is quite impossible.

In fine, then, the only demonstrated analogy between the legend of the birth of the Buddha and that of the Christ is found in the suggestion of a miraculous element in both cases. But the idea of a supernatural birth, it need not be said, is by no means peculiar to Buddhism. In various forms it occurs in the mythologies of many nations. What may be the relation of this fact to the Scripture doctrine of the miraculous conception of our Lord we cannot now stop to inquire; but it certainly diminishes, if it does not remove, the special significance of the occurrence of this idea in the narrative of the Buddha.

Professor Beal calls attention to “another of the singular coincidences of the narrative of the Buddha with the gospel history” in the chapter of the Fo-pen-hing, entitled “The Fear of Bimbasara.”¹ That chapter tells us that when the Buddha was a young man, the king Bimbasara was filled with fear lest there might somewhere be some enemy able to overthrow his kingdom. He accordingly sent two messengers to seek throughout all the regions round about to see whether any such there were. In their search they heard of the Buddha, then a young man between twenty and thirty years of age, and, impressed with his power, returning, exhorted the king to destroy him. The king, however, utterly refused to entertain this suggestion. The “singular coincidence” with

¹ Romantic Legend, pp. 103, 104.

the history of the gospel which the learned professor here discovers we suppose must have reference to the story of Herod, who "sought the young child to destroy him," though this is not explicitly stated. The coincidence is, indeed, very "singular"; for we read that, so far from wishing to destroy the Buddha, the king utterly refuses to entertain the suggestion. The only coincident feature in the two cases is found in the fact that both Bimbisara and Herod appear to have been anxious lest they should lose their kingdom. But we surely need to add no further illustration of coincidences which are simply apparent and imaginary.

2. Another element which must be allowed some place in any explanation of the coincidences is undoubtedly that of accident. While we would not press this unduly, yet we think that there can be no doubt that there is no need of going beyond this for the explanation of not a few points which are urged. Thus, for example. Mr. Arnold, in his poem, tells us how

"From afar came merchantmen
Bringing, on tidings of his birth, rich gifts."¹

To suppose that the mention of this incident can only be accounted for on the supposition of a direct connection of some sort between the gospel story and that of the Buddha is, as it seems to us, absurd. There is no more common custom in India, and the East generally, than the presentation of gifts on the birth of a son, especially to a person of rank. That men should have come bringing gifts both in the case of the birth of the Buddha and of the Christ is only what was to be expected.

Little, if any, more significance can we see in the blessing of the infant Buddha by Asita, in which many have thought that they could see the story of the blessing of the infant Jesus in the temple. In the case of Christ, he is taken to the temple, and Simeon there receives him, and through the Holy Ghost predicts his future glory as the Christ of God, in the words which begin, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in

¹ *Light of Asia*, Book i.

peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." In the case of the Buddha and Asita, almost every detail of the story is different. Asita is said to have descended from heaven, where he had gone by his magic power to rest during the heat of the day. He goes to the king to see the new-born son, of whom in heaven he had heard; proceeds to look for the marks on the body of the child which should indicate the future Buddha. Having found them, he congratulates the king, but mingles his congratulations with mourning and weeping, saying,

"What loss, what damage is mine!
Alas, I am old and stricken in years!
My time of departure is close at hand."¹

The only coincidence is in the circumstance of something like a blessing by an old man in the case of the Buddha as well as of Christ. Surely this is not so rare and unusual a circumstance but that it may easily be a merely accidental agreement. As for the rest, the two stories are marked by contrast in almost every particular. Mr. Arnold, however, puts in the lips of Asita the additional words,

"A sword must pierce
Thy bowels for this boy."²

The phrase evidently suggests — whether so intended by Mr. Arnold or not — a verbal coincidence with the story of Simeon in the gospel, which would deserve attention were such coincidence really to be found in the original authorities. To what authorities Mr. Arnold may have had access, we know not; but it is certain that no such phraseology occurs either in the Ceylonese Pūjāwāliya or the Nidāna Kathā, the Burmese Mallalingara Wouttou, nor the Chinese version of the Abhinishkramana Sūtra. We venture to raise the question, whether the above phraseology can be justified from any original authority whatever. This is not the only instance in the poem of Mr. Arnold, as also in the work of Mr. De Bunsen,³ wherein the phraseology of the Gospels is used in the narrative in a manner for which we can find no warrant

¹ Romantic Legend, pp. 56-60.

² Light of Asia, Book i.

³ The Angel-Messiah, pp. 33, 34,

in any of the authorities before us. Except such warrant can be clearly shown, we must protest, in the name of common honesty, against this mischievous practice, as practically involving, however, unintentionally gross misrepresentation, and occasioning of necessity very serious misapprehension of facts. It suggests a verisimilitude between the two stories of the Buddha and of Christ, frequently extending even to the words of the two accounts, whereas, such verbal agreements, if we are not greatly mistaken, cannot, with a few possible exceptions, be shown to exist.

Mr. Arnold, in the preface to his poem, refers reverentially to "the miracles which consecrate the record."¹ And here, again, many see another significant parallel to the story of the life of Christ. But all will agree that in the mere fact that miracles are attributed to the Buddha as well as to Christ there is no such coincidence as of necessity suggests some kind of historical connection between the two narratives. Every one knows that miraculous deeds have been attributed to almost every one to whom men have ever rendered religious reverence or worship. The fact that miracles are attributed to both the Buddha and Christ may therefore be rightly regarded as a merely accidental circumstance. Only in case that the miracles attributed to the Buddha should be found closely similar in character to those of Christ would we be justly warranted in a different opinion. As a matter of fact, the two classes of miracles are marked not by similarity, but by contrast the most complete and suggestive. We are, indeed, told that at the moment of the conception of the Buddha, as also on his attaining the Buddhahood, many prodigies occurred, some of which remind one of what our Lord is said to have done. We read that at the time of the conception² "in the ten thousand world-systems an immeasurable light appeared; the blind received their sight; the deaf heard the noise; the dumb spake one with another; the crooked became straight; the lame walked; all prisoners were freed from their bonds and chains; in

¹ *Light of Asia*, Preface.

² *Fansböll's Buddhist Birth Stories*, p. 64.

each hell the fire was extinguished; the hungry ghosts received food and drink," etc. But these are not represented as the acts of the Buddha. As for his miracles, we are rather reminded of the prodigies that are related of Christ in some of the apocryphal gospels than of anything in the New Testament.¹ We are told, for example, that, when born, he immediately began to walk, while under every step a lotus sprang up. At the same time he spoke also, crying, "I am the chief of the world." He is said to have sat unsupported in the air, to have thrown an elephant a distance of sixteen miles, and so on indefinitely. In these miracles which "consecrate (!) the record," we see no coincidence which requires an explanation. As for the fact, then, that miracles are attributed to both the Buddha and Christ, most readers will, we believe, agree that there is nothing in this which is not abundantly accounted for as a mere accidental circumstance. And very possibly it will be found in the end that yet other features in the legend resembling more or less certain features in the gospel story may be sufficiently explained in like manner.

3. Another element which should probably have a place in the complete explanation of the relation of the two stories to each other, the believer in the word of God may not unreasonably find in the influence of an indistinct lingering memory among our race of a promise of a deliverer who should struggle with the tempter, and struggling overcome him. If that promise were made, as we Christians believe, then it were natural that the remembrance of such a momentous fact should outlive most early memories of the race. And this being so, it is also easy to see how men should readily come to believe with regard to any one whom from time to time they might mistakenly suppose to be the expected deliverer, that he had had the struggle and the victory predicted. Until the memory of the ancient promise had entirely faded away, something like this would even seem to be a condition of faith in any one claiming to be a deliverer of men from the curse. And, as a matter of fact, it would appear that

¹ See, e.g. instances noted by Prof. Beal, in the *Romantic Legend*. nn. 390. 391.

this has been even so. Every one knows how among almost all the great nations of antiquity we find a story or a prophecy of a conflict of one or another great deliverer with a personal power of evil, the enemy of man.

The story of the conflict of the Buddha with Mara the prince of evil is thus not an exceptional fact, without any parallel except that of the temptation of Christ. The coincidence of such a spiritual trial in each case is real and undeniable; but it is not of such a sort as only to be explained by the theory of a common mythical origin of the two stories, or a derivation of one from the other. Presumably we are to look for an explanation of the agreement which shall be broad enough to include the other numerous phenomena of a similar nature. Such an explanation, we believe, is found in that redemptive tradition of the first promise which, if we allow any kind of historical character to the records of the Scriptures, must have existed. It accounts both for the story of the temptation of the Buddha and for other similar stories among other peoples. It accounts, also, no less for the actual temptation of the Christ than for the fancied conflicts of these others. For if that promise was ever made at all, it follows of necessity that the true Deliverer, when indeed he should come, must have that experience in fact which had been attributed to others in fancy. Nor would the fact of the previous mistakes of men invalidate in the least whatever testimony there might be as to the reality of the conflict in this case. The primal redemptive promise, then, may be fairly urged as the ultimate explanation of the fact that both to Buddha and Christ is attributed a struggle with the evil one.

Still, it may be reasonably asked whether there are not coincidences of detail between the two stories such as to compel us to infer in this case a much closer connection between them? To which we answer, that this particular case will be found, we believe, to illustrate a previous remark that the explanation of some of the asserted agreements between the two stories will prove to be more or less complex. While the fact of the story of the conflict we are

inclined to explain by reference to the primeval promise, we can easily grant that some of the details of the story — as at least it is given to us by some — require a further explanation than this. In some particulars we believe it can be shown, as above, that the alleged agreements are only imaginary. It is the experience of the writer that as one compares the two stories — that of the temptation of the Christ with that of the Buddha, not as transmuted by the poetic wand of Mr. Arnold, but as it stands in the original authorities,—the contrasts do so overwhelmingly outweigh any casual coincidences here and there, as to make it very easy to believe in the original independence of the two stories. Granting that very possibly single features or phrases may have been added under the influence of Christian teaching at a late day,¹ yet it is almost impossible, laying the two stories side by side, to believe that either one has been derived from the other, or both from a common source.

The whole case, as it seems to us, is often very much exaggerated, both by the friends and enemies of the gospel. Especially will those be grievously misled who depend on the Light of Asia for their knowledge. We are free to affirm that, however unintentionally, the poet has so constructed, e.g. the story of the temptation of Buddha as to convey to the mind of the reader an impression exceedingly different from what he will receive from any of the original authorities we have above mentioned. Space will not allow us to show this in detail; but let any one who is curious read, e.g. the story of the temptation of the Buddha as given in the translation of the *Ablinishkramana Sūtra* in the *Romantic Legend* of Professor Beal.² Any one who will do this will readily see how, by throwing that which contrasts with the story of Christ quite into the background, and omitting entirely the gross and even indecent features of the legend, an impression is given of verisimilitude between the two stories which the actual facts are very far from justifying. The erroneous impression is the more deepened that through an apparent

¹ See *infra*, pp. 495, 496.

² *Romantic Legend*, pp. 199–225.

misapprehension of the meaning of certain Pali terms employed the poet has given to the conflict a moral character different from, and vastly higher than that which it really has. Of this we may give two notable illustrations.

According to Mr. Arnold, the first temptation of Mara was to the sin called Attavàd, which he thus explains :

“ The sin of self, who in the universe
As in a mirror sees her fond face shown,
And, crying ‘ I,’ would have the world say ‘ I,’
And all things perish so if she endure.
‘ If thou be’st Buddh’¹ she said, ‘ let others grope
Lightless ; it is enough that thou art thou
Changelessly. Rise, and take the bliss of gods,
Who change not, heed not, strive not.’ ”²

In this passage the nature of the sin called Attavàd seems to be entirely misunderstood, and the misunderstanding gives the temptation an inner moral similarity to that of Christ which really does not exist. Attavàd is here made to mean selfishness ; but, in fact, it does not mean selfishness, nor anything like it. The word is literally *self-saying*, and in Buddhistic phraseology has the precise and definite meaning, “ the affirmation of the existence of soul or self.” That this is the true meaning of the word is conclusively shown by such Buddhist scholars as Davids, Hardy, and other most competent authorities, from the writings of the Buddhists themselves.³ The first temptation of the Buddha, then, by Mara, according to this form of the legend, was not to selfishness, but to the belief that he had a soul distinct from the body. And so any imagined analogy with the spirit of the temptation of Christ vanishes so soon as the word is defined. In fact, so far from being tempted herein to a sin, it had been much better for the world had Mara succeeded in persuading the Buddha to attavàd.

¹ We note here another verbal agreement with the story of Christ, for which we have been able to find no warrant in any original authority. In fact, it is inconceivable from a Buddhist point of view, that Gautama should have been represented as so addressed at that time, inasmuch as he did not claim yet to be Buddha, nor was Buddha (lit. *enlightened*), until *after* this conflict with Mara.

² Light of Asia, Book vi.

³ See, e.g. Davids, Buddhism, pp. 95, 109.

No less misleading is the account which is given of the temptation to the sin called arùparàga, which is rendered, "lust of fame"; a meaning, again, which the word in nowise has. For as the sin previously mentioned, called rùparàga, and rendered "lust of days," means in Buddhist phraseology desire of life in the rùpaloka, the present or some like world of form, so arùparàga means desire of life in the arùpaloka, "the formless world." Mr. Davids thus very properly gives as the equivalent of the former of these two terms, "desire of life on earth," and for arùparàga, "desire of life in heaven." And this was another of the temptations of the Buddha. Again, a correct definition suffices to dispel any shadow of a fancied analogy with the temptation of Christ.

But while the suggestions thus far made will, we believe, either singly or together, furnish the true explanation of many points of agreement in the story of the temptation and other parts of the two stories of the Buddha and of Christ, we are quite willing to admit that there may still remain here and there such agreements in detail as may not unreasonably suggest a derivation of some elements in the two stories either from a common source or from one story to the other. But as for any theory which supposes a pre-Christian origin of such features as they exist in the gospel histories, we believe that the argument already given for the historical credibility of the gospel narrative rules out any such theory as untenable.

4. The question only remains of the possible derivation of individual features in the legend of the Buddha from Christian sources. And this is, we believe, another and the last element in the full explanation of the legend of the Buddha. That such a derivation can as yet be demonstrated we do not claim; that it is not only possible, but highly probable, can, we believe, be clearly shown. The chief facts which point toward this conclusion are as follows: It is admitted on all hands that the Buddhist scriptures were committed to writing a century or more before Christ. But, admitting also that a legend of the Buddha was contained in

those early documents, yet no competent scholar professes to be able to prove that the legend as at that time therein contained had a single feature of detail coincident with the later gospel story. Buddhist scholars appear to agree with Dr. Eitel, who says, "No reliable information exists as to the extent and character of the Buddhist scriptures said to have been finally revised by that council of Kanishka, between A.D. 15 and 45. The very earliest compilation of the Buddhist canon that history can point out is that of Ceylon, which was first compiled and fixed in writing between the years 412 and 432 of our present Christian era."¹ Mr. Hardy, in his *Manual of Buddhism*, says that the legend is translated by him chiefly from the *Pūjāwaliya*, which was written between A.D. 1267 and 1301.² None of the twelve works from which he has drawn appear to be of earlier date than this. The Chinese version of the *Abhinishkramana Sūtra*, translated into English by Professor Beal, is dated by Mr. Rhys Davids in the sixth century after Christ. He adds that the date of the Sanskrit original is unknown.³ Bishop Bigandet of Burmah has translated a Burmese life of Buddha, called *Mallālinkāra Wouttou*. But according to the bishop, this was composed as late as A.D. 1773. The author's name is not given.⁴ Not to be tedious, according to Mr. Rhys Davids, the oldest of all the authorities which we have for the life of Buddha, is to be dated not later than the fourth century B.C. But this oldest authority, the *Mahāparinibbāna Sūtra*, only rehearses the incidents which are said to have occurred in connection with the death of Buddha, and thus does not contain the most striking coincidences of the legend with the life of Christ.⁵

¹ *Buddhism*, p. 17 and see also p. 25, where he shows that the Chinese Buddhist canon was not completed until A.D. 1410.

² *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 143, note †, and Appendix, p. 538, etc. See also Hardy, *Legends and Theories of the Buddhists*, p. xxvi.

³ Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 12. No Chinese version of the Legend can be earlier than A.D. 66, when Buddhism was introduced into China; and none is proven to be as old as that.

⁴ *Legend of Gaudauma*, 3d ed., Vol. ii. p. 149. See also *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. xi.; *Buddhist Sutras*, p. xxxii.

⁵ Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 12.

The oldest authority containing the legend of the birth, etc.,—the commentary on the Jātaka,—is assigned to the middle of the fifth century of our era.¹ So much for the date of the chief original authorities for this legend of the Buddha. There is not one of them which can be traced with any certainty to an earlier date than the fifth or sixth century after Christ, except the Mahāparinibbāna and Mahāsudassana Sūtras,² and these present no difficulty as regards the present argument. And even this does not state the whole case; for it also remains to be shown that the earliest authorities containing the legend have come down without any material corruption or addition. Of this, again; there is no proof, nor are we likely to be able to obtain any.

The contrast, in this respect, with the writings of the New Testament, is most striking and suggestive. As every scholar knows, we possess manuscripts of the New Testament which reach back to the fourth century, and these are found to give the story of the life of Christ, in every essential particular, just as we have it in the most modern authorities. And this testimony is further corroborated by still earlier translations of the New Testament books, and by a multitude of quotations and references by numerous writers of the first three centuries of our era. We can therefore affirm, with the utmost assurance, that we have the story of the Gospels in essentially the very same form in which it was originally written. As regards the authorities for this legend of the Buddha, the case is the exact reverse. Dr. Eitel asserts, and he is contradicted, we believe, by no one, that “not a single ancient manuscript of the Buddhist scriptures has withstood the ravages of time.”³ Nor have we any ancient collateral testimony that can give us any assurance that the authorities originally contained all that we find in them now. Clemens Alexandrinus, in the third century, barely states that some of the Indians “worshipped Boutta as a God”; and Jerome, in the fourth century, alludes to the belief of some of the

¹ Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 13. ² Translated in *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. ix.

³ Eitel, *Buddhism*, p. 25.

Indians that the Buddha was born of a virgin. From this we may infer that at this date something of the modern version of the story of the Buddha was known in the West. But it is not conceivable that if it had existed in its present fully developed form such opponents of Christianity as Celsus and Porphyry would have been any less ready than their modern followers to make use of it in their argument against the gospel of Christ. At least, if it had existed and they did not so use it, this is hardly to be explained, except on the supposition that they knew that it was of so late origin as to be unavailable as an argument.

The conclusion from all this seems to be almost self-evident. If the legend of the Buddha in its full modern form does not occur in any literature earlier than several hundred years after Christ, the natural explanation of this fact is, that in the form in which we have it now it did not exist until at least a considerable time after the Christian era. And this is the conclusion reached by so competent a scholar as Dr. Eitel.¹ It should be remarked, however, that Professor Beal is plainly disinclined to this conclusion. His argument against it is substantially as follows:² He admits that the Chinese version of the *Abhinishkramana Sūtra*, of which his *Romantic Legend* is a translation, was rendered into Chinese not earlier than the sixth century of our era. But he refers to the statement of a Chinese writer that the above Sanskrit work was translated also into Chinese as early as A.D. 69 or 70. Whence the origin of the story must be put back at least some little time previous to that date. Even this date, however, would not exclude the possibility of a Christian origin for many things in the legend. Waiving that, however, what proof is there that the legend as translated A.D. 70 agreed with the legend as translated five hundred years later, and that the most striking coincidences may not have been later additions? Of this no proof is given. On the contrary, Professor Beal himself argues that "it would seem that originally the story of the *Abhinishkramana* was

¹ Eitel, *Buddhism*, p. 31.

² See *Romantic Legend*, pp. v-ix, for the argument as here reviewed.

simply that of Buddha's flight from his palace to become an ascetic." "Afterwards," he suggests, "the same title was applied to the complete legend which includes his previous and subsequent history." This argument may therefore be dismissed, as proving nothing against the late origin of the coincidences in the legend with the story of Christ.

He argues further, however, that the Chinese translator of the sixth century tells us that the story is also called *Ta-chwang-yen*, "great magnificence," which points it out as the Sanskrit work known as the *Lalita Vistāra*. But, he says, according to M. Foucaux, the translator of the Thibetan version of this work, the *Lalita Vistāra* was put in its present form in the reign of Kanishka, four hundred years after Buddha. He himself, however, does not venture formally to endorse this opinion; while Mr. Davids broadly affirms that M. Foucaux assigns the Sanskrit to Kanishka's Council "without any evidence whatever."¹ Certainly, there is nothing in all this to raise a presumption for the pre-Christian origin of the legend.

The only other argument given for the early date Professor Beal derives from certain sculptures upon the Buddhist topes at Sanchi and Bharhut. He simply says: "Many of the stories related in the following pages are found sculptured at Sanchi, and some, I believe, at Bharhut. . . . If the date of these topes is to be placed between Asoka, about 300 B.C., and the first century of the Christian era, it will be seen that the records of the books and of the stone sculptures are in agreement." But as regards the precise question before us, all this amounts to very little. First, there is the question of the date of the topes containing these sculptures. Can it be positively proven that they are earlier than the first century of the Christian era? If not, then they do not prove the legend of necessity pre-Christian. But Mr. Beal, it will be observed, only says that "many" of the stories in the Chinese version of the legend are found on those sculptures. But many is not all. And the question is not whether much

¹ Buddhism, p. 11, note.

of the legend may not have been in existence at the early date named, but whether those sculptures show us that those parts of the legend which exhibit the close agreement with the story of Christ were certainly in existence at a date earlier than the Christian era. Of this we find nowhere any proof. Professor Beal, in the notes to the *Romantic Legend*, calls attention in all to twenty-four instances in which he thinks that incidents in the story of the Buddha are to be identified on various sculptures in India. Of all these there are only two incidents—the incarnation scene and the old sage Asita holding the infant Buddha in his arms—which have even any apparent similarity with anything in the gospel narrative. But the representation of an old man holding a child in his arms can hardly be held as proof conclusive that the artist must have known the story of the blessing of Simeon as it appears in our Gospel of Luke. And as for the incarnation scene, wherein, as Professor Beal tells us, the Buddha is “generally represented as descending in the form of a white elephant,”¹—surely there is nothing in this to remind one of the gospel story of the incarnation of our Lord, and show that it had a pre-Christian origin. And that the monuments do really bring no proof to this effect, we may safely conclude from the fact that even so eminent a scholar as this same Professor Beal, after all this argument, is compelled to admit that “in our present state of knowledge there is no complete explanation of the coincidences to offer.”²

In view, then, of the total absence of proof that the legend of the Buddha in its pre-Christian form contained details coincident with the story of the life of Christ; regarding also the weighty testimony of the most direct and positive sort to the actual occurrence of the incidents in question in the case of Christ; and finally, in view of the positive proof that all the authorities which contain the legend in the full modern form, must be dated, at the earliest, several centuries after Christ, we may justly infer that such details of the

¹ *Romantic Legend*, p. 36, note 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. ix.

legend as are really coincident with the facts of Christ's life were derived from the gospel story at a period considerably subsequent to the Christian era. And the case is even stronger than this. For it can be shown conclusively that within the limits of time and place required by the facts such opportunity for the transfer of incidents from the gospel to the legend of the Buddha did beyond doubt occur.

In the first place, it is a familiar fact that a body of Christians in fellowship with the Syrian church has existed on the southwest coast of India from a very remote antiquity. They themselves have an uncontradicted tradition that their church was originally founded by the apostle Thomas. But, whether we accept this tradition, or, with some modern critics, suppose this ancient Indian church to have been established by a Syrian Thomas in the third century, it matters not for our present argument. In any case, we have positive and independent testimony to the existence of Christian churches on the Malabar coast by the middle of the fourth century,¹ a date earlier than that of any of the existing authorities for the now existing legend of the Buddha. It is also matter of undisputed history that among the Nestorian Christians there was a great quickening of missionary zeal in the sixth and seventh centuries, and that they had already before A.D. 500 sent forth "multitudes of missionaries" into Eastern, and perhaps also Southern, Asia.² We have, in particular, testimony of a Syriac inscription in China, — accepted by scholars like Huc, Abel Remusat, and others, — that the gospel was preached in China in A.D. 636 by a Nestorian Christian Olopen.³ In the century following, we read of the appointment by the Nestorian patriarch Salibazach of metropolitans of Samarkand and of China, — a fact which shows that there must have been at that time a considerable number of churches in the regions indicated.⁴

¹ Kurtz, Kirchengeschichte, s. 190.

² Mosheim, Ecclesiastical History, p. 421; Smith, Mediaeval Missions, pp. 203, 204; Kurtz, Kirchengeschichte, ss. 190, 191.

³ Mosheim, Ecclesiastical History, p. 421, note (1); Smith, Mediaeval Missions, pp. 205-209.

⁴ Mediaeval Missions, p. 210.

Not to enlarge further, it is the significant fact that nearly all of the existing original authorities for the legend of the Buddha were written about the time of that great missionary activity of the Nestorian church in Southern and Eastern Asia, and none whatever antedate the known existence of Christian churches in India. Here, then, was the opportunity required for a transfer of details from the story of the Christ to a pre-existing legend of the Buddha. Of the existence of any real agreements between the two stories before the establishment of Christian churches in India we have no evidence at all. Only subsequent to that were all the works written in which the alleged coincidences appear. We maintain, then, that whatever may be the residuum of agreement between the story of the Buddha and of Christ, more or less, which cannot be fairly accounted for by considerations we have previously mentioned, it may be with the highest reason ascribed to the influence of Christian teaching in China and in India between the first and the seventh centuries of our era.¹

In conclusion, we may sum up our argument as follows: Against the theory that the features in the legend of the Buddha which are said to be coincident with similar details in the recorded life of our Lord are to be explained either by a common origin of such parts of the two stories, or else a derivation of such details in the story of Christ from the story of the Buddha, lies the most weighty presumption, for the reasons following, namely,

1. Negatively, we have no evidence that the legend of the Buddha was known in Palestine at so early a date as is required by the hypothesis.

2. Positively, we have such proof of the apostolic origin of the gospel histories as utterly forbids us to believe that there was opportunity for any such confusion of the facts of the life of Christ with pre-existing myths of the Buddha.

¹ With this conclusion Dr. Eitel agrees, but is even more definite as to the precise date of the transfer of the Christian elements to the legend of Buddha. *Buddhism*, pp. 31, 32. See also J. Talboys Wheeler's *History of India*, Vol. iii. p. 146, note 48.

3. Negatively, again, it is impossible to prove that the legend of the Buddha, in the form under discussion, was in existence until some centuries after Christ.

4. The full and complete explanation of the facts concerned, whenever such explanation shall be possible, will in all probability be complex, and will include at least the following particulars: Some of the coincident features are, either in part or wholly, superficial and apparent; others, merely accidental. Others, again, may be reasonably ascribed to the influence of a tradition of the promise of a Redeemer; and a remainder, more or less numerous, may be with good reason attributed to an actual transference to the original legend of the Buddha of certain elements in the story of Christ, as preached through the East in the early centuries of our era. In what precise proportion, indeed, these various elements should enter into the solution of the problem, no man yet knows enough to be able to say with confidence. We have, however, for all this, a sufficiency of ascertained facts before us to vindicate the gospel record fully from all suspicions which have been of late so freely cast upon it from this quarter.¹

¹ Since the above was written, we have received Vol. ix of the Sacred Books of the East, containing the Buddhist Suttas, as translated by T. W. Rhys Davids, in which we find that the learned author expresses himself fully and decisively against the theory that the New Testament has borrowed anything from Buddhist sources. As regards the alleged similarities of the two literatures, he says (p. 164), "there does not seem to me to be the slightest evidence of any historical connection between them."