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Translated by
G. R. WOODWARD
HAROLD MATTINGLY
Introduction by
DAVID M. LANG

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AND

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PREFACE
to 1967 Printing

SINCE *Barlaam and Ioasaph* first appeared in the Loeb Classical Library in 1914, a number of discoveries have been made, relating especially to the Indian Buddhist origins of the tale and its transmission to the West. Ancient fragments in vanished languages of Central Asia have been recovered at Turfan in Chinese Turkestan; Arabic and Persian recensions have become available for study; and the researches of N. Y. Marr, Paul Peeters and R. L. Wolff on the Georgian text, of which a new and more complete manuscript was found in Jerusalem in 1956, have cast fresh light on the origins of the familiar Greek redaction, from which all the European versions trace their descent. The effect of these discoveries has been to undermine the former attribution of the work to St. John Damascene, and to render necessary new assessment of the evolution of this remarkable hybrid Buddhist–Christian document.

These facts in no way affect the excellence of Woodward and Mattingly's edition, the Greek text of which is in fact that originally established by J. F. Boissonade, occurring in vol. IV, pp. 1–365, of his *Anecdota Graeca*, Paris, 1832. Boissonade's text has yet to be superseded. The value and originality of Woodward and Mattingly's work, however, lies in the splendid English translation, with its rich Biblical and slightly Gothic flavour, which makes it a delight to

read. This translation, along with the numerous Biblical and Patristic references, and the copious index, have been reprinted without change.

I take this opportunity of expressing my special gratitude to Professor Ilia Abuladze, Director of the Institute of Manuscripts of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Tbilisi, who has made available to me the results of his authoritative researches on the manuscripts of the Georgian recension, of which our Greek Barlaam and Ioasaph is itself an adaptation.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE are few medieval Christian worthies whose renown exceeds that of Barlaam and Josaphat, who were credited with the second conversion of India to Christianity, after the country had relapsed into paganism following the mission of the Apostle Thomas. Barlaam and Josaphat were numbered in the roll of saints recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, their festival day being 27 November. In the Greek Church, Ioasaph (Josaphat) was commemorated on 26 August, while the Russians remember both Barlaam and Ioasaph, together with the latter's father, King Abenner, on 19 November (2 December Old Style). Sir Henry Yule once visited a church at Palermo dedicated to 'Divo Josaphat'. In 1571 the Doge Luigi Mocenigo presented to King Sebastian of Portugal a bone and part of the spine of St. Josaphat. When Spain seized Portugal in 1580, these sacred treasures were removed by Antonio, the Pretender to the Portuguese crown, and ultimately found their way to Antwerp, where they were preserved in the cloister of St. Salvator.

After the European settlement of India, and the arrival there of Roman Catholic missionaries, certain enquiring spirits were struck by similarities between features of the life of St. Josaphat, and corresponding episodes in the life of the Buddha. Early in the

seventeenth century, the Portuguese writer Diogo do Couto remarked that Josaphat ' is represented in his legend as the son of a great king in India, who had just the same upbringing, with all the same particulars that we have recounted in the life of the *Buddha* . . . and as it informs us that he was the son of a great king in India, it may well be . . . that *he* was the Buddha of whom they relate such marvels.' Diogo do Couto was on the right track, though it was not until the 1850s that scholars in Western Europe embarked on a systematic comparison between the Christian legend of Barlaam and Ioasaph, and the traditional life of Gautama Buddha, and came to the startling conclusion that for almost a thousand years, the Buddha in the guise of the holy Josaphat, had been revered as a saint of the principal Churches of Christendom.

The Buddhist Background

The parallels between the book of Barlaam and Ioasaph and the life and ministry of Gautama Buddha fall into two categories: first, many identical features of incident and biographical detail; and second, doctrinal and philosophical resemblances, where Christian apologetic is seen to stem ultimately from Buddhist ethical teaching.

The relevant features of the life of the Buddha, as contained in the ancient Indian traditions and later reflected in the Barlaam and Ioasaph romance, include the following: The Bodhisattva or Buddha-elect is born in miraculous fashion to Queen Maya, consort of King Suddhodana, who ruled over the

Sakyas of Kapilavastu on the Nepal border. The king consults his advisers and astrologers to find out the boy's future destiny. According to the *Jataka Tales*, a Brahmin named Kondanna foretold that the prince would forsake the world after witnessing Four Omens, that is to say, a man worn out by age, a sick man, a dead body and a monk. To prevent this, the king tries to shelter the boy from all contact with worldly misery. Whenever the prince is taken to the temple, the streets are cleaned and decorated beforehand, trumpets are blown and bells rung, and all cripples and blind or deformed beggars cleared out of the road.

King Suddhodana has a dream in which he sees his son leaving the palace and putting on the ochre-coloured garb of an ascetic. He takes stringent precautions against his son's escape, providing him with three palaces in which all forms of pleasure and recreation are provided. On one occasion, however, the young prince sets out with his faithful charioteer Chandaka to visit a garden by the eastern gate, and catches sight of a broken-down, toothless and grey-haired old man leaning on a stick. Chandaka tells him that none can escape this fate if they attain old age. On later trips, the Bodhisattva prince sees a sick man, a corpse and mendicant. The charioteer explains their condition to the prince, who is downcast by this revelation of human decay and mortality. In the *Mahavastu*, the Bodhisattva's encounter with the mendicant foreshadows the appearance of the hermit Barlaam to Ioasaph. To quote the rendering of the late J. J. Jones, the *devas* ' conjured up to stand before the prince a wanderer who wore the

yellow robe, whose faculties were under control, who had mastered the four postures, who did not look before him farther than a plough's length in the crowded royal street of Kapilavastu. . . . When he had seen him, the prince asked the wanderer, " Noble sir, with what object did you become a wanderer? " The wanderer replied, " O prince, I became a wanderer for the sake of winning self-control, calm, and utter release." ' Shortly after this encounter, the Bodhisattva, like St. Ioasaph in the Christian context of the Barlaam romance, ' grew calm with the thought of Nirvana . . . and aspired after it.'

King Suddhodana tackles this crisis in the royal family by distracting the prince with dancing girls and similar allurements, but the Buddha-elect is adamant. He begs his father for permission to depart from the court, though offering to remain if Suddhodana can promise him immunity from decay, disease and death. Since these things exceed the king's powers, he is obliged to give his son leave to go. Riding out at dead of night on his horse Kanthaka, the Bodhisattva prince gallops till dawn, when, dismissing his horse and groom, he changes clothes with a wandering hunter, cuts off his hair and goes to seek the truth.

The Bodhisattva prince studied under two Brahman philosophers, and practised such extremes of asceticism that he almost died. At length, meditating under a pipal tree (*ficus religiosa*), he received illumination and was arrayed in the perfect intelligence of a Buddha. He then repaired to the sacred city of Benares, and in the deer park ' set the wheel

of the law rolling ' by preaching his first sermon. Forty-three years of wandering and preaching followed. He died at the age of eighty at Kusinagara near his old home in Nepal, in the arms of his faithful disciple Ananda, who crops up in the Arabic version of Barlaam and Ioasaph under the name of Ababid. His last words to his disciples were: ' Behold now, brethren, decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence! Be a light unto yourselves, for there is no other light! ' After this, the Buddha died and attained to Nirvana, his body being cremated and the ashes distributed among eight tribes, who deposited them beneath burial mounds or *stupas*.

On the doctrinal and metaphysical plane, the resemblance between the ethical system of the book of Barlaam and Ioasaph and the teachings of the Buddha is not complete in every respect, particularly since the Manichaeans of Central Asia, the Arabs of Baghdad, and then the Christian translators, all worked over the text in their turn, and adapted it to fit the dogma of their particular faith. When it is said that Barlaam and Ioasaph is largely 'Buddhistic', what is meant is that a good deal of the subject matter came originally from a Buddhist book, or rather books; but the result was a new work, containing relatively little that is peculiar to the creed or doctrines of Buddhism. For example, the Barlaam romance contains no hint of atheism or even agnosticism, no denial of human personality and no explicit hint of *karma* and metempsychosis. The peace of Nirvana is, naturally, exchanged in the Christian Barlaam for the concept of heavenly bliss.

On the other hand, any doctrine or practice that had a common basis in Christianity or in Christian human nature, and in Buddhism and Buddhistic human nature is emphasized and exaggerated, such as the presence of suffering in the world, the impermanency of earthly things, their unsatisfying character, the unending round of changes that go on for ever, the strength of temptation and the necessity to guard against it, the evils of the world, the flesh and the devil, of all self-seeking, and the duty of penance, endurance and celibacy. All these are stressed in the Christian Barlaam to a disproportionate degree and their validity, in fact, is virtually taken for granted, to the extent that the contrary viewpoint, summed up in the exhortation, 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!' is not even given a hearing.

It is interesting to note that the holy Barlaam, for all his Christian eloquence, retains many traits of the Buddhist monk, whose rules of conduct were to abstain from: (1) destruction of life; (2) theft; (3) falsehood; (4) sexual intercourse; (5) intoxicants; (6) meals after midday; (7) dancing and gaiety; (8) personal adornment; (9) comfortable beds; and (10) the use of money. Possessions could be held only by the order as a whole. There was originally no hierarchy of rank in the confraternity, only respect for seniority of membership. These particulars agree closely with the description given by Barlaam of his own life and that of his comrades in the desert. Certainly, the seventeen inoffensive monks whom King Abenner tortures to death (see pp. 333–343 below) are portrayed as more like

wandering Indian holy men than as members of any monastic order known to medieval Christendom.

Manichaean Influences

During the early centuries of our era, Buddhism spread rapidly northwards into Tibet, where it remained the official religion until our own times, and also north-westwards into Central Asia, including the region nowadays called Chinese Turkestan. From here, its influence spread into adjacent areas, notable Sogdiana and Bactria. According to Clement of Alexandria, Buddhist holy men were active in Bactria during the second century after Christ. They were said to have deified the founder of their religion, and to pay homage to relics of their god buried beneath a pyramid, that is to say, a Buddhist *stupa*.

In this region, Buddhism came into contact with Manichaeism, the dualistic faith founded by the prophet Mani (216–274). Manichaeism was an eclectic faith, assimilating and adapting elements of older local creeds wherever it spread in Asia, Europe and North Africa. Mani himself declared:

'Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger called Buddha to India, in another by Zoroaster to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this present revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age, through me, Mani, messenger of the God of Truth to Babylonia.'

Professor R. C. Zaehner has reminded us that

'Manichaeism equates evil with matter, good with spirit, and is therefore particularly suitable as a doctrinal basis for every form of asceticism and many forms of mysticism.' From the Manichaean viewpoint, 'the body is composed of the substance of evil . . . it is a prison and a carcase.'[1] It is precisely this idea which underlies much of Barlaam's teaching in the Christian Barlaam and Ioasaph; it has well-established authority in many Buddhist texts, as for instance the well-known *Questions of King Milinda*, in which the human body is referred to as:

> 'Covered with moist skin, the nine doored thing, a great sore, [which] oozes evil-smelling bodily secretions all round.'[2]

If one examines the course of conduct laid down for the 'Elect' Manichee, as distinct from the lay adherent or 'Hearer', one finds precepts recalling the life of the Buddhist monk, on the one hand, and the Christian ascetic on the other, but most peculiarly similar to the austerities practised by Barlaam, Ioasaph's mentor. Thus, while all Manichaeans were vegetarians, the Elect abstained from wine, from marriage and from property. They were supposed to possess no more than food for one day and clothes for one year. Their obligation not to produce fresh life or to take it extended even into the vegetable kingdom: they might neither sow nor reap, nor

[1] R. C. Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, London, 1956, pp. 53–4.

[2] *Milinda's Questions*, trans. I. B. Horner, London, 1963, Vol. I, p. 101.

even break their bread themselves, ' lest they pain the Light which was mixed with it.' So they went about, as Indian holy men do, with a disciple who prepared their food for them. It would be hard to think of anyone who fulfilled these prescriptions more faithfully than the hermit Barlaam, with his single tattered hair garment, wandering in the desert and existing on a diet of herbs.

Internal textual evidence does much to confirm the assumption that the Christian Barlaam romance originated in Central Asia as a Manichaean religious tract. An Old Turkish fragment brought back by A. von Le Coq from Turfan in Chinese Turkestan contains the episode of the encounter of the Bodisav (Bodhisattva) prince with a decrepit old man, and his consequent disillusionment with the life of this world.[1] A second Turfan fragment contains a Manichaean Turkish version of an unsavoury tale which later occurs in an Arabic adaptation of the Barlaam story made by a certain Ibn Babuya of Qum in Persia (*d.* 991). This anecdote relates how a certain prince became so intoxicated that he falls into an open grave and mistakes a corpse for a desirable maiden. After attempting sexual intercourse, he awakes in the dead body's embrace, and is horrified at his own depravity. This anecdote, illustrating the Manichaean aversion to sexual pleasure, is omitted from all the Christian recensions. Particularly significant, in view of the eclectic character of Mani's doctrine and writings, is the insertion into the early versions of the Barlaam romance of the Parable of

[1] References in D. M. Lang, *The Wisdom of Balahvar*, London, 1957, p. 27.

the Sower from the New Testament. Professor W. B. Henning has drawn attention to the Manichaean character of an important part of the 'wisdom' of the book, as it appears in the Arabic texts, in spite of superficial Islamicisation.[1]

Certainly, the early Muslim theologians had no doubt that Budhasaf, or the Bodhisattva, was one of a number of dangerous heretics in vogue among the Persians. In a work on Muslim schisms and sects composed by a Baghdad divine around A.D. 1000, we read that the Orthodox 'approve of considering a heretic everyone who falsely claims to be a prophet, whether he lived before the days of Islam, like Zoroaster, Yudasaf (i.e. Budhasaf), Mani, Bardaisan, Marcion and Mazdak . . . and the others after them who falsely claimed prophecy.' In a very different context, the alacrity with which the Cathars or Albigensians of southern France—themselves a late offshoot of the Manichaean world movement—adopted the Christian Barlaam romance as one of their own favourite tracts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries provides further testimony to the work's affinities with Mani's own authentic teachings.

Arabic and Persian Texts

According to the historian Mas'udi, the reign of Harun al-Rashid's father the Caliph Mahdi (775–785) in Baghdad was marked by an upsurge not only

[1] W. B. Henning, 'Persian manuscripts from the time of Rudaki,' in *A Locust's Leg: Studies in honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, London, 1962, p. 93.

of Iranian cultural influences generally but of Manichaean propaganda in particular. Baghdad was flooded, it is alleged, with translations of works by heretics and false prophets such as Mani, Bardaisan and Marcion. From a bibliographical treatise called the *Kitab al-Fihrist*, written in A.D. 987–988, we learn that these foreign books circulating in Baghdad included no less than three works about the Buddha (al-Budd), also known as Budhasaf (i.e. the Bodhisattva prince). One of these books was called *Kitab Bilawhar wa-Yudasaf* (corruption of Budhasaf), and this is the direct ancestor of our Greek Barlaam.[1] It is interesting to note that this work is cited in the 'Philosophical Treatises' of the Brothers of Purity (*Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa*'); this was an esoteric philosophical sect which flourished in Basra towards the end of the tenth century. From the Arabic was made a Hebrew paraphrase by the Spanish rabbi Abraham ibn Chisdai (*d.* about 1220).

Also going back to the Middle Iranian Manichaean tradition is an early tenth century Persian metrical version, fragments of which were identified by Dr. E. M. Boyce and Professor W. B. Henning in the Berlin collection.[2] This verse rendering ranks as the most ancient poem known in Classical Persian. Another Persian adaptation was made later on from the Arabic recension of Ibn Babuya of Qum.

The importance of the Arabic versions in the transmission of the Buddha's life story to the West

[1] I have discussed these Arabic versions at length in *The Wisdom of Balahvar*, pp. 30–39, also the article 'Bilawhar wa-Yudasaf' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition.

[2] Henning, op. cit., pp. 89–98.

is very great. They contain a number of parables later omitted in the Christian versions, as being inappropriate or out of harmony with Christian theology and ideals. Furthermore, the vagaries of Arabic orthography, which relies heavily on diacritical marks in the form of groups and combinations of dots to distinguish between one letter and another make it possible to trace variations in the spelling of the names of the principal actors in the drama. Thus, confusion between Arabic ' i ' and ' b ' results in the transition from Budhasaf (Bodhisattva) to Yudasaf (Ioasaph); Ioasaph's father, the pagan king of India, features as Janaisar in the Arabic, then as Habeneser or Abenes in the Georgian and finally as Abenner in the Greek. Ioasaph's teacher, the ascetic Barlaam, first appears in the Arabic under the name of Bilawhar, which becomes Balahvar in the Georgian, and is finally Hellenized into the more familiar form Barlaam.

The First Christian Version: the Georgian *Balavariani*

So far we have been discussing the recensions of the Bodhisattva's life story and Great Renunciation which were current between A.D. 500 and 1000 among peoples such as the Sogdians of Central Asia, and the Arabs and Persians, who owed no allegiance to Christianity. It remains to determine how and where the Buddha became admitted into the ranks of Christian saints through the medium of the Christian versions of the Barlaam and Ioasaph romance.

The Greek Barlaam first appears as a separate