

**THE INFLUENCE OF  
BUDDHISM ON  
PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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The influence of Buddhism on primitive Christianity by Arthur Lillie

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BY  
ARTHUR LILLIE  
AUTHOR OF "BUDDHISM IN CHRISTENDOM," ETC.



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## PREFACE.

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A VOLUME that proves that much of the New Testament is parable rather than history will shock many readers, but from the days of Origen and Clement of Alexandria to the days of Swedenborg the same thing has been affirmed. The proof that this parabolic writing has been derived from a previous religion will shock many more. The biographer of Christ has one sole duty, namely, to produce the actual historical Jesus. In the New Testament there are two Christs, an Essene and an anti-Essene Christ, and all modern biographers who have sought to combine the two have failed necessarily. It is the contention of this work that Christ was an Essene monk; that Christianity was Essenism; and that Essenism was due, as Dean Mansel contended, to the Buddhist missionaries "who visited Egypt within two generations of the time of Alexander the Great." ("Gnostic Heresies," p. 31.)



The Reformation, in the view of Macaulay, was the struggle of layman *versus* monk. In consequence, many good Protestants are shocked to hear such a term applied to the founder of their creed. But here I must point out one fact. In the Essene monasteries, as in the Buddhist, there was no life vow. This made the monastery less a career than a school for spiritual initiation. In modern monasteries St. John of the Cross can dream sweet dreams of God in one cell, and his neighbour may be Friar Tuck, but to both the monastery is a prison. This alters the complexion of the celibacy question, and so does the fact that the Christians were fighting a mighty battle with the priesthoods.

The Son of Man envied the security of the crannies of the "fox." He called his opponents "wolves." His flock after his death met with closed doors for fear of the Jews. The "pure gospel," says the Clementine Homilies (ch. ii. 17), was "sent abroad secretly" after the removal to Pella. The new sect, not as Christians but as Essenes, were tortured, killed, hunted down. To such, "two coats," "wives," daily wine celebrations were scarcely fitted.

Twice has Buddhism invaded the West, once at

the birth of Christianity, and once when the Templars brought home from Palestine Cabbalism, Sutism, Freemasonry. And our zealous missionaries in Ceylon and elsewhere, by actively translating Buddhist books to refute them, have produced a result which is a little startling. Once more Buddhism is advancing with giant strides. Germany, America, England are overrun with it. M. Léon de Rosny, a professor of the Sorbonne, announces that in Paris there are 30,000 Buddhists at least. A French frigate came back from China the other day with one-third of the crew converted Buddhists. Schopenhauer admits that he got the philosophy which now floods Germany from a perusal of English translations of Buddhist books. Even the nonsense of Madame Blavatsky has a little genuine Buddhism at the bottom, which gives it a brief life.

The religions of earth mean strife and partisan watch-cries, partisan symbols, partisan gestures, partisan clothes. But as the daring climber mounts the cool steep, the anathemas of priests fall faintly on the ear, and the largest cathedrals grow dim, in a pure region where Wesley and Fenelon, Mirza the Sufi and Swedenborg, Spinoza and Amiel, can shake hands. If

this new study of Buddhism has shown that the two great Teachers of the world taught much the same doctrine, we have distinctly a gain and not a loss. That religion was the religion of the individual, as discriminated from religion by body corporate.

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## CONTENTS.

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CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	I
I. MOSES . . . . .	4
II. BUDDHA . . . . .	23
III. THE FOUR PRESAGING TOKENS . . . . .	35
IV. AFTER BUDDHA'S DEATH . . . . .	77
V. THE APOSTLES OF THE BLOODLESS ALTAR . . . . .	98
VI. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS . . . . .	111
VII. THE ESSENE JESUS . . . . .	135
VIII. THE ANTI-ESSENE JESUS . . . . .	144
IX. THE CHURCH OF JERUSALEM . . . . .	160
X. JOHANNINE BUDDHISM . . . . .	169
XI. RITES . . . . .	174
INDEX . . . . .	181