

THE SOURCES OF BARLAAM AND JOASAPH.

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, M.A. (LITT.D.), D.THEOL., ETC.

THE Romance of Barlaam and Joasaph is one of the most beautiful compositions, of its kind, in the Christian literature. It is difficult to decide whether to praise it most as a work of Art or as an interpretation of Religion.

Its appeal in favour of the Ascetic life is more alluring than any other we can recollect in Eremite or Monastic story ; yet, had it been merely a call from the desert, or to the desert, it would not have captured the imagination of the Middle Ages, been told and re-told in half the languages of the world, nor have incited the artist to illustrate its situations in wood and stone.

This lovely story for long delighted the faithful and finally passed into a strange oblivion. Happily, in our day it has come to light again. Time has drawn the veil from its hidden worth, and readers everywhere are delighting in its matter and its manner. Its literary merit, its history, the fortunes of its heroes, (once canonized and now deposed), the question of its authorship, its form, subject matter and sources, are all elements that combine to form a fascinating study for the student and the scholar.

Some of the conclusions already reached are of a very challenging nature. A Romance itself, it has given birth to more ; for what could be more surprising than the discovery made by the first modern critics of Barlaam and Joasaph, that the writer has actually found a place amongst Christian saints for the Buddha himself, whose great Renunciation serves as model for a similar act on the part of the converted Indian prince.

When, to this, was added the further discovery that the writer had incorporated, in his romance, a long line of Eastern stories, unrelated to the Christian religion, but each capable, in skilled editorial hands, of receiving a Christian interpretation, it will be seen that the work is one of first-rate importance. Certainly, if what we have said

above be correct, (and Dr. Budge, in the *Introduction* to his edition of the Ethiopic text, is quite convinced that it is), we have not seen, elsewhere, the Propagation of the Christian Faith conducted on this wise, nor on so grand a scale. Even if we consider the alleged Buddhist colouring excessive, and the argument over-strained, we should still regard with wonder the attempt to re-write and express one great religion, in the language of another. It is a phenomenon in the art of interpretation. Buddha is brought forward to endorse the doctrines of Jesus, to encourage Christians in the practice of these, and to be canonized rather than disowned.

But a find more romantic even than these, to many scholars, was Dr. Armitage Robinson's discovery, that the same veil of anonymity that covered the Buddha had been thrown over a great Christian figure of the second century, and that his brave speech, on behalf of the Christian Faith, to the Roman Emperor of his day, had been boldly utilized, by the author, for his hero, in a similar situation. Who would have thought to see the form of Aristides the Christian philosopher step out from behind the arras in the palace of King Abenner and his son Prince Joasaph? Such a discovery at once enables the Christian scholar to say that, however much the shadow of Buddha may be over the story, we have here a personality much more definite, and one, therefore, more useful to the historian than many Buddhas.

The next stage of the critical investigation into the history and sources of the story of Barlaam and Joasaph, is our own recent discovery, that the writer (whoever he was, let us, for convenience, still call him John of Damascus), had already tried his 'prentice hand, on the religious novel, and had been so pleased with his first effort, and its reception, that he soon wrote a second, in which he followed closely the form of the first, repeated some of its matter, and amid much that was fresh included the famous "*Apology*" of *Aristides*.

For his first theme, he selected the fortunes and fate of an entirely mythical personage, known to the West as Catherine of Alexandria. The crux of the story is her trial, before a persecuting emperor, and her confutation, in the presence of an assembled court and crowd, of fifty-five Pagan orators. Catherine defends the Faith in terms borrowed, (as in the case of the other Romance), from a Greek Apology, (since lost, and not yet identified as to author), and the

story is told with such skill and so convincingly, that it has been accepted for centuries as authentic history. Catherine has her seat among the Saints, and by her influence helps others thither; for the frequent interviews that Joan of Arc had with the imaginary heroine of Alexandria, must have been a powerful factor in the chain of events that finally assigned the Maid a place amongst the Martyrs in Paradise.

Let us now briefly re-state our case, so far, and our conclusions.

John of Damascus writes a novel called *Catherine of Alexandria, her life, her Christian testimony and her glorious Martyrdom*: (let us call it A. C., Acts of Catherine).

In so doing, he incorporated portions of an *Apology for the Christian Faith*, which we will denote by the sign Q,

(Q = *Quelle* or *Quadratus*).

He then proceeded to write a much longer story, for which he drew from nearly all the books in his library. The identification of these is still far from complete, but his chief sources were (1) his Catherine novel, (2) the *Apology of Aristides*, and (3) a group of *Apologies or Parables*, ten in number, which clearly belong to a single collection, and appear to be Oriental in origin; (we may call them Par₁, Par₂, etc.).

So far, so good, but here the objection arises that though there may be much in common, the method of composition is different in each, and that the difference is not altogether explained by the variation in the points of view of the two incorporated *Apologies*. In Barlaam, the transferred matter has been taken nearly *en bloc*; the *Apology* itself has been recovered and we can see, from the Syriac Version, what Aristides discoursed on; to wit, the Stoic Doctrine of God and Providence, the wickedness and folly of the Olympians, the partial illumination of the Jews, the sublime doctrine and incomparable virtue of the Christians. When we turn to the Catherine legend and its embedded matter, we find a complete change in the thought and ground of argument. Catherine, i.e. her source (Q), is frankly Euhemeristic; the doctrine of Euhemerus, that the gods are only dead men heroized, is to be proved from the Pagan writers themselves, from historians like Diodore and Hecataeus (the real father of Euhemerism), from philosophers like Plato, and from poets, including Homer and Hesiod. All of this is promised, but all is not fulfilled.

Plato, for instance, who should have been spokesman for the others, is missing, and we wonder if we were right in assuming that he was meant to appear in the witness box.

Here we are helped by a discovery made by myself, and described in an article entitled *The Quest for Quadratus* in the BULLETIN of the Rylands Library. In the Greek Calendar records, at a date only a little later than that assigned to St. Catherine, mention is made of a saint and martyr named Eustratius, who, with a group of martyrs from Cappadocia and Armenia, defended the Faith before the representative of Diocletian. In the story of his martyrdom, a similar situation is described, to that of Catherine. He too, is an Apologist, and in his Defence, and to our great satisfaction, we find part of the matter missing from Catherine's. Here is the Plato part of the Apology we are in search of. Doubt as to this, if we had any, would disappear, when we see the same Euhemeristic turns of speech in both; not only does Plato talk side by side with Diodore and Orpheus, but he is "your Plato" as Diodore is "your Diodore," etc. We do not need further proof that a common document has been used.

We must, however, go carefully. How comes it that Eustratius (whom we will, for brevity, call E) selected the very portions of Q which Catherine had omitted? Has E some direct link of authorship with Catherine, and is it possible to maintain that the same hand can be detected in Barlaam, in Catherine, and in part, at least, in Eustratius? This seems unlikely, especially as to the latter, the writing of which is, for the most part, very poor, scarcely rising above the level of conventional hagiography. Can we then, by any method, connect the three writings, either wholly or in part, with one another? To this interesting enquiry we now address ourselves.

It will be remembered that one of the sources of the Barlaam story is a series of Apologues, not necessarily Christian, and not improbably Indian. The monk Barlaam makes much of these in his instruction of the young Prince Joasaph. They are, in the editorial judgement, ten in number, and may be described as follows:

1. The King's brother, and the Trumpet of Death.
2. The Four Caskets: (cf. *Merchant of Venice*).
3. The Fowler and the Nightingale.
4. The Man and the Unicorn (which the Ethiopic version very properly changes to a Rhinoceros).

5. The Man and his Three Friends.
6. The story of the Annual Kingship (important for Frazer).
7. The King and his Counsellor who went about the city.
8. The King's Son and the Poor Man's Daughter.
9. Story of the Tame Gazelle.
10. Devils (feminine) that deceive men.

Now let us see how the writer introduces the stories. Mostly, they are unprefaced, but of number three he says "the story was told me by a very wise man"; and he continues thus :

οὗς τίμη ὁμοιώσω, καὶ ποτάπην σοι εἰκόνα τῆς τούτων ἀβελτηρίας παραστήσω ; ἀλλά σοι παραθήσω ὑπόδειγμα παρά τινος ἀνδρὸς σοφωτάτου λεχθὲν πρὸς με.

Nos. 4 and 5 come in with a simple ὅμοιοι, and No. 6 is introduced as follows :

ἀνατύπωσόν μοι καὶ ἔτι εἰκόνα τῆς ματαιότητος τοῦ κόσμου κτέ. ἀναλαβὼν δὲ τὸν λόγον ὁ Βαρλαὰμ ἔφη· ἄκουσον καὶ τούτου δὴ τοῦ προβλήματος ὁμοίωσιν.

No. 10 has this prologue ;

καὶ ἄκουσον διηγήσεως τῷ ἐμῷ συμμαρτυρούσης ῥήματι.

Now if we turn to the story of the Martyrdom of Eustratius we shall find a parable of a certain king, who sent his servant to kill a bear ; notice how it is introduced :

C. 26.

λάβωμεν δὴ καὶ εἰκόνα, δικαστά, ὁμοίαν ταύτης μου τῆς διηγήσεως.

The recurrence in the formula of quotation, of the words we have underlined, promptly suggests that this is another story from the same source, and as deftly, as in the other case, converted to the service of Christian doctrine. We cannot but think we are in the same workshop from whence came Barlaam and Joasaph. The parable itself we will call *The Story of the King, the Slave and the Bear*.

We turn now to another quarter looking for light on the relations of John of Damascus to Q, A-C, E and B-J.

Modern readers of B-J, who did so critically, and with the knowledge necessary for comparison, were quick to notice the resemblance between the author's views as expressed therein, and

those associated with the writer known as John of Damascus. And certainly the internal proof is all in favour of the assumption, now general, that they are one and the same. For not only are similar views expressed, but much of the matter of the Romance consists of extracts from the writings of John of Damascus, and from one in particular, namely, a treatise entitled *De Fide Orthodoxa*. For illustration, we turn to the seventh chapter of B-J, where Barlaam begins the definite instruction of the young Prince in the Christian Faith. He first transcribes some sentences from *De Fid. Orth.*, Bk. I. c. 2, on the being and attributes of God; then he narrates the story of the creation of man and the planting of Paradise in terms almost exactly in agreement with those in Bk. ii. c. 12, after which he explains how Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, fell from heaven with all his crew. Here is a sample of his method.

John Dam : *De Fid. Orthod.*, Bk. ii., c. 4 (17).

Ἐκ τούτων τῶν ἀγγελικῶν δυνάμεων πρωτοστάτης τῆς περιγείου τάξεως καὶ τῆς γῆς, τὴν φυλακὴν ἐγχειρισθεὶς παρὰ Θεοῦ γεγονώς, ἀλλὰ ἀγαθὸς ὢν καὶ ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ γενόμενος, καὶ μηδόλως ἐν ἑαυτῷ παρὰ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ κακίας ἐσχηκὼς ἴχνος, μὴ ἐνεγκὰς τὸν τε φωτισμόν, τὴν τε τιμὴν, ἣν αὐτῷ ὁ Δημιουργὸς ἐδώρησατο, αὐτεξουσίῳ προαιρέσει ἐτράπη ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν εἰς τὸ παρὰ φύσιν, καὶ ἐπήρθη κατὰ τοῦ πεποιηκότος Θεοῦ, ἀντάραι αὐτῷ βουλόμενος.

The same theme in B-J, c. vii., is treated as follows :

Εἰς δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων ἀγγελικῶν δυνάμεων, μιᾶς στρατίας πρωτοστάτης, οὐδόλως ἐν ἑαυτῷ παρὰ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ κακίας φυσικῆς ἐσχηκὼς ἴχνος ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ γενόμενος, αὐτεξουσίῳ προαιρέσει ἐτράπη ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ εἰς τὸ κακόν, καὶ ἐπήρθη τῇ διανοίᾳ, ἀντάραι βουληθεὶς τῷ Δεσπότη καὶ Θεῷ.

The comparison of the two passages, and in particular of the underlined words shew clearly the dependence of B-J upon the *De Fid. Orthod.*

Let us look now at the Eustratius story. When the Martyr is challenged by the Governor to give an account of himself as regards the faith he has embraced, he uses the opportunity thus afforded him for apologetic discourse, and proceeds in the same manner as Barlaam, telling first of the Fall that has no Redemption of the Angels, and then of the Fall and the Redemption of Man. As thus :

Mart. Eustrat., c. 24.

Εἰς δέ τις τῶν ἀρχαγγέλων, καὶ αὐτὸς προστάτης τάγματος ἀγγέλων, προαίρῃσει ἰδίᾳ ἀφηνιάσας κατὰ τοῦ πεποικηκός αὐτόν.

The writer is apparently abbreviating John of Damascus. We take the quotation a little further.

John Dam. *ut supra* :

συναπεσπίασθη δέ, καὶ ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ, καὶ συνέπεσε πλῆθος ἄπειρον τῶν ὑπ' αὐτῷ τεταγμένων ἀγγέλων.

B.J. *ut supra* :

διὸ ἀπεβλήθη τῆς τάξεως . . . ἔρριψε γὰρ αὐτὸν ὁ Θεὸς ὡς ἀνάξιον τῆς ἄνωθεν δόξης· συναπεσπίασθη καὶ συναπεβλήθη καὶ πλῆθος πολὺ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτὸν τάγματος τῶν ἀγγέλων, οἵτινες, κακοὶ γεγονότες τὴν προαίρῃσιν κτέ.

Mart. Eustr. *ut supra* :

ἀπεβλήθη τῆς τάξεως αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς προεδρίας [ὑπὸ] τοῦ Θεοῦ μετὰ τοῦ τάγματος αὐτοῦ· τότε τοίνυν διὰ τὴν τσοαύτην αὐτοῦ ἀπείθειαν ἔρριψεν αὐτὸν ὁ Θεὸς τῆς ἄνωθεν ἐξουσίας.

Here again the interdependence of the three passages is clear, but it looks as if Eustratius were again more nearly dependent upon B-J than upon *De Fiid. Orthod.* This dependence of E upon B-J comes out again if we read a little further. Barlaam tells his disciple that the first man, after having eaten the forbidden fruit, is banished from Paradise, and that the devil gloats over his victory :

B.J. vii., 47.

καὶ φαγὼν ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος τοῦ φυτοῦ τῆς παρακοῆς ἐξόριστος γίνεται τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ . . . ἐντεῦθεν ἰσχὺν ὁ διάβολος λαβὼν καὶ τῇ νίκῃ ἐγκαυχόμενος κτέ.

with this we compare E. c. 24

ὡς ἐντεῦθεν ἐξόριστον γενόμενον τοῦ παραδείσου ὑπὸ τοῦ Παντοκράτορος . . . εἶχετο οὖν τῆς νίκης ὁ πονηρὸς καὶ ἐνεκαύχαστο κτέ.

where the conjunction of the two passages suggests that we read *ἰσχύετο οὖν τῇ νίκῃ*. Assuming, then, that E is directly dependent

on B-J and indirectly on John of Damascus, we have before us a phenomena of relationship that requires elucidation.

We have in the first case two complementary apologies ($Q_1 + Q_2$), and Aristides (Ar.) :

Catherine (AC) depends on Q_1 ;

B-J depends on AC and Ar. on Par. ₁₋₁₀ and on Joh. Dam. ;

E depends on Q_2 on Par. ₁₁ and on B-J :

the last line meaning that E has not only copied the language of B-J, but has thoughtfully picked up the missing part of Q and a missing element in the Apologues.

Clearly, the natural conclusion as to these relations is, that John of Damascus is responsible for the Catherine story, the Barlaam romance, and the apologetic section of Eustratius. The workshop where all these delightful fictions were produced is the Monastery of S. Saba near the Dead Sea ; and the writings that were utilized (Aristides, Quadratus (?), a collection of Eastern Stories, the Oration of Gregory of Nazianzus, the instructions of Agapetus, etc.), were in the Library of the convent in question. None of the Apologetic tracts is now to be found, either at St. Saba or amongst the books that were removed from St. Saba to Jerusalem.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

Since we published, in the BULLETIN for Oct. 1923, our argument that the *Acts of Catherine* contained fragments of *A Lost Christian Apology*, and that these Acts were by the same author as the Romance of *Barlaam and Joasaph*, in which the *Apology of Aristides* is embedded, the hypothesis has met with contradictory criticism from various quarters. It is agreed that the *Acts of Catherine* has been used freely by the writer of B-J, (that fact being incontrovertible), but it is argued by Dr. Armitage Robinson that the supposed apologetic matter in the *Acts* is taken from the Byzantine Chronographer, John Malalas, and that, in consequence, the hypothesis of the incorporation of a second century Apology does not survive criticism. It is also maintained, in a recently published and, at first sight, exhaustive treatment of the subject by E. Klostermann and E. Seeberg, that the Apologetic matter in Catherine is to be credited to Malalas on the one hand, and to a collection of sixth

century oracles on the other, and that the supposition and argument in favour of a second century apology is finally shattered.¹

Clearly, from the confident tone of the critics (the German verdict is that "the Passion of Catherine depends upon John Malalas and only on him,") the enquiry must be carried further, if the second century hypothesis is not to be regarded as dead and buried. We proceed, therefore, to point out some further considerations which have escaped the observation of the acute critics to whom we have referred.

Catherine, in the legend, opens her Apology by an argument on the lines of Euhemerus, that the Greek gods are the apotheosis of dead men, and she proceeds to quote two writers, in the first instance, from the ranks of the Greek historians, in favour of the Euhemeristic position. The first is Diodorus Siculus, the second is anonymous, and is introduced as "another of your wise historians." It does not seem to have occurred to the critics that, in real life, it would hardly be convincing to a Roman Emperor to be referred to as a casual and unknown historian; and the same thing would be true in the case of a writer of romance, making an argument before an imaginary emperor. Evidently, the name of the second of the pair of Euhemerist authors has been lost; it is, however, easy to restore it: a single letter has dropped; for ἄλλος read Θάλλος, and we have the missing historian. If further confirmation were needed for restoring Thallus to the text, we may find it in the fact that in Christian Apologetic, Diodorus and Thallus go together; they support one another in the argument that Kronos or Saturn was a man who lived and died, and that, consequently, Zeus and the rest of his family, sprung from mortal parents, were themselves mortal men. They were even buried, Saturn in Italy, Zeus in Crete.

"Their graves are green,
They may be seen."

We may begin our verification with Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, c. 10: "neither the Greek Diodorus *nor Thallus*, nor Cassius Severus, nor Cornelius Nepos, has proclaimed him [Saturn] anything but a man." The same argument is repeated by Tertullian in *ad nationes*,

¹Their position is endorsed by G. Krüger in a recent review in the *Theol. Lit. Zeitung*.

ii., 12, where the text has, by error, Tacitus for Thallus ; and in Minucius Felix ("Thallus et Diodorus hoc loquuntur"), and by Lactantius, *div. inst.* i., 13, "hominem fuisse consentiunt. . . . Graeci Diodorus et Thallus." We are not, however, multiplying evidence, since Minucius and Lactantius are probably using Tertullian's statement. We are, then, justified in our emendation ; nor need we any longer doubt (as the German writers seem to do) that Catherine is a Euhemerist. Tertullian is clear that the two writers are Greeks, that they both affirm that the gods (from Kronos downwards) were mortal men, and as a Christian Apologist, he endorses their belief.¹

The emendation being allowed, the argument of Catherine is transferred to the second century. Tertullian took it from earlier Greek writers, not from Malalas, who is centuries later. The Catherine extracts and the attached arguments cannot have come from Malalas, for the chronographer in question does not mention Thallus (except in one obscure passage which does not concern us here). Moreover, in the passage, which Catherine takes from Thallus (describing the origin of idolatry in the days of Serug), Malalas, in the corresponding text, cites his authority for his statements ; the two names which he gives are Eusebius, and a certain very wise Rheginus who compiled the names of the deified men. On Catherine's evidence, the extracts come from Thallus, not from Eusebius, who does not mention Thallus, nor from Rheginus, who is another writer altogether.

Thus Malalas cannot be the source of the *Passion* of Catherine, in the extracts to which we refer. He, himself, must have ultimately drawn, as we at first suggested, from the same source as Catherine, that is to say, in all probability, from a Christian Apology of the second century.

The next stage, then, in the investigation will be the determination of whatever other apologetic matter in Catherine belongs to the same century, and for this identification we shall not only be able to use the second century apologists as known to us, but to have the advantage of the discovery that Tertullian and certain other Latin apologists have been working on Greek matter. Very often the missing Greek can be found in Justin, Athenagoras or in the *Cohortatio ad Gentes* ascribed to Justin. The enquiry will also throw light on Tertullian

¹ A similar conjunction of Thallus and Diodorus in Africanus, quoted in Euseb., *P.E.*, x., 10, and Ps. Justin, *Cohort.*, c. 9.

himself, who will become more intelligible as soon as we have satisfied ourselves that the first and greatest Latin Apologist draws freely upon the Greek Apologists who preceded him. Here is an instance, by way of illustration. Tertullian tells us (*Apol.*, c. 14) of the wounding of Aphrodite by Diomedé; the passage is rendered by Souter as follows: "Venus wounded by an arrow from a human hand, because she wished to snatch her son Aeneas, when almost killed, from the same Diomedé (who had wounded herself)." Souter has added the words in brackets to explain the obscurity in the reference to "the same Diomedé." The expansion is awkward, for Venus had not yet been wounded, when she tried to rescue her son. Evidently there should have been a previous statement concerning someone else who had been wounded by Diomedé: nor is it difficult to find the missing clause. For, on turning to Ps. Justin, *Cohortatio*, c. 2, we find that "Homer says that *Ares and Aphrodite* were wounded by Diomedé." Tertullian, then, has either accidentally or carelessly omitted the words which describe the wounding of Ares: and we see now what he means by "ab eodem Diomedé." This simple illustration shows us that in the account of the mishaps and misdeeds of the gods which the early apologists extracted from Homer, place must be found for the wounds which warriors inflicted on their deities. But, in fact, nearly the whole of the Homeric matter in the *Cohortatio* is a stratum from the primitive Christian Apologetic. Further development of this theme may be expected in the BULLETIN for next July.