Barlaam and Josaphat

Saint Josaphat	
Saint Josaphat preaching Christianity. 12th century Greek manuscript	
Born	unknown
Died	4th CenturyIndia
Venerated in	Roman Catholic Church Eastern Orthodox Church
Feast	27 November

Barlaam and Josaphat is a Christianized version of the story of Siddharta Gautama, who became the Buddha.[1] In the Middle Ages the two were treated as Christian saints, being entered in the Greek Orthodox calendar on 26 August, and in the Roman Martyrology in the Western Church as "Barlaam and Josaphat" on the date of 27 November.[2]

According to the legend, King Abenner or Avenier in India persecuted the Christian Church in his realm, founded by the Apostle Thomas. When astrologers predicted that his own son would some day become a Christian, Abenner had the young prince Josaphat isolated from external contact. Despite the imprisonment, Josaphat met the hermit Saint Barlaam and converted to Christianity. Josaphat kept his faith even in the face of his father's anger and persuasion. Eventually Abenner converted, turned over his throne to Josaphat, and retired to the desert to become a hermit. Josaphat himself later abdicated and went into seclusion with his old teacher Barlaam.[3]

The legend

The Greek legend of "Barlaam and Ioasaph" is sometimes attributed to the 7th century John of Damascus, but actually it was transcribed by the Georgian monk Euthymius in the 11th century.[4] The first Christianized adaptation was the Georgian epic *Balavariani* dating back to the 10th century. A Georgian monk, Euthymios of Athos, translated the story into Greek, some time before he was killed while visiting Constantinople in 1028. There the Greek adaptation was translated into Latin in 1048 and soon became well known in Western Europe as *Barlaam and Josaphat*.[5]

It was ultimately derived, through a variety of intermediate versions (Arabic and Georgian), from the life story of the Buddha.[1] [2] Wilfred Cantwell Smith traced the story from a 2nd to 4th century Sanskrit Mahayana Buddhist text, to a Manichee version, which then found its way into Muslim culture as the Arabic *Kitab Bilawhar wa-Yudasaf*, which was current in Baghdad in the 8th century.

Ioasaph (Georgian *Iodasaph*, Arabic *Yūdhasaf* or *Būdhasaf*) is derived from the Sanskrit Bodhisattva,[1] [2] "enlightenment being," one destined to attain nirvana, enlightenment.[6] *Bodhisatta* in Sanskrit changed to *Bodisav* in Persian texts in the sixth or seventh century, then to *Budhasaf* or *Yudasaf* in an eighth-century Arabic document (Arabic initial "b" ب could become initial "y" ي by duplication of a dot in handwriting). This became *Iodasaph* in Georgia in the 10th century, and that name was adapted as *Ioasaph* in Greece in the 11th century, and then as *Iosaphat* or *Josaphat* in Latin.

The story of Barlaam and Josaphat was popular in the Middle Ages, appearing in such works as the *Golden Legend*, and a scene there involving three caskets eventually appeared, via Caxton's English translation of a Latin version, in Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice".[7] Although Barlaam was never formally canonized, Josaphat was, they were included in earlier editions of the Roman Martyrology (feast day 27 November) - though not in the Roman Missal - and in the Eastern Orthodox Church liturgical calendar (26 August). The story of Josaphat was re-told as an

exploration of free will and the seeking of inner peace Meditation in the 17th century. "Perhaps the flower of religious literary creativity in the German Middle Ages."[8]

Notes

[1] "Barlaam and Josaphat". *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. 1913.

[2] Macdonnel, Arthur Anthony (1900). " Sanskrit Literature and the West.". *A History of Sanskrit Literature*. New York: D. Appleton and Co.. pp. 420.

[3] The Golden Legend: The Story of Barlaam and Josaphat (http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/golden329.htm)

[4] F.C. Conybeare, "The Barlaam and Josaphat Legend in the Ancient Georgian and Armenian Literatures" (Gorgias Press)

[5] William Cantwell Smith, "Towards a World Theology" (1981)

[6] Kevin Trainor (ed), "Buddhism" (Duncan Baird Publishers, 2001), p. 24

[7] Sangharakshita, "From Genesis to the Diamond Sutra - A Western Buddhist's Encounters with Christianity" (Windhorse Publications, 2005), p.165

[8] *Die Blüte der heiligen Dichtkunst im deutschen Mittelalter ist vielleicht »Barlaam und Josaphat«...* See Heinrich Heine, Die romantische Schule (Erstes Buch) (http://www.heinrich-heine.net/schule/schuled1.htm) at heinrich-heine.net. **(German)**.

External links

- Barlaam and Ioasaph (http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/relg/historygeography/BarlaamandIoasaph/toc.html) (Legend in form attributed to St John of Damascus)
- Version in *Golden Legend* (http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/golden329.htm)
- "Barlaam and Josaphat". *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. 1913.
- Barlaam and Josaphat (http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=296&letter=B) in Jewish Encyclopedia
- Chisholm, Hugh, ed (1911). "Barlaam and Josaphat". *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Eleventh ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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