

THE CROSS  
AND  
THE LOTUS

*Christianity and Buddhism in Dialogue*

Edited by  
G. W. HOUSTON

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To my gurus  
The Very Reverend  
URBAN T. HOLMES, III  
and  
DR. HELMUT HOFFMANN  
*Professor Emeritus, Indiana University*



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## Introduction

Alfred North Whitehead once wrote:

Buddhism is the most colossal example in history of applied metaphysics. Christianity took the opposite road. It has always been a religion seeking a metaphysic, in contrast to Buddhism which is a metaphysic generating a religion. The defect of a metaphysical system is the very fact that it is a neat little system of thought, which thereby over-simplifies its expression of the world. Christianity has, in its historical development, struggled with another difficulty, namely, the fact that it has no clear-cut separation from the crude fancies of the older tribal religions. But Christianity has one advantage. It is difficult to develop Buddhism, because Buddhism starts with a clear metaphysical notion and with the doctrines which flow from it. Christianity has retained the easy power of development. It starts with a tremendous notion about the world. But this notion is not derived from a metaphysical doctrine, but from our comprehension of the sayings and actions of certain supreme lives. It is the genius of the religion to point at the facts and ask for their systematic interpretation. In the Sermon on the Mount, in the Parables, and in their accounts of Christ, the Gospels exhibit a tremendous fact. The doctrine may, or may not, lie on the surface. But what is primary is the religious fact. The Buddha left a tremendous doctrine. The historical facts about him are subsidiary to the doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

There are many truths hidden in this brief statement of Whitehead. Buddhism, in fact, is not considered a religion by some, at least in its Theravāda form, and one could argue that Mahāyāna had to develop in order to attempt to satisfy the hunger for the religious in the Buddhist cultures. By this we mean the later notion of a savior, prayer, and more developed liturgical practices. None of this is evident in primitive Buddhism. Christianity clearly starts, on the other hand, as a religion and is not meant

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: New American Library, 1960, many reprints), pp. 50, 51.

to be a philosophical or metaphysical answer to the universe. And Christianity has always argued from an historical sense, God redeeming His people, Israel, from the slavery in Egypt, the prophetic succession, the Messiah idea to come at a historical time of oppression, and so on. The concept could of course be much further expanded and commented upon. But the historicity of the Christ is fundamental to Christianity. Without a historical Christ, not necessarily a historical Jesus—there is a difference—there would be no Christianity.<sup>2</sup> There had to be a death and resurrection for the Christian to believe, or else there is nothing to the religion. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:15-19 :

We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. (RSV)

With Buddhism, however, the historical Buddha is not important. What is important is that there is a system to overcome suffering. If Buddha had not discovered it, any yoga could have. The primary focus is not on the Buddha, but what the Buddha taught. With Christianity one can search the parables of Jesus and undoubtedly find many interesting stories; what is really important is not what Jesus taught, but what He did (at least for those who follow Christianity) and that is to die and be resurrected for all men. Buddhism points to a doctrine; Christianity points to a savior. This is the real difference between the two religions in a most dramatic and condensed form.

Now it does not take too long for a religious person to notice that his religion is not the only one. However, with theology it does seem to have taken them a long while to start to treat the situation. I remember even as a young man reading Christian theology

2. This is not meant to reopen the “quest for the historical Jesus” problem. I use “historical Christ” to mean that there was a Christ who died and was resurrected as distinct from a “historical Jesus” which would imply that we have detailed knowledge of particulars of his life. Also, the notion of Christ is more universal than is Jesus, the man that some call the Son of God.



and when it came to other religions they were strangely quiet. But even now many beg the question. For example, even the prominent thinker David Tracy in one of his latest books *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York : The Seabury Press, 1975), although he admits we all live in a pluralistic universe, seems to imply that all we have to choose from are different forms of Christianity, or should I even go so far as to say different forms or models of doing theology? It would seem that either a Christian theologian gets all excited about the East, such as did Harvey Cox in his (superficial) book, *Turning East* (New York : Simon and Schuster, 1977)<sup>3</sup>, or else he ignores it as non-existent and assumes that Christianity is the only religion in the world. Perhaps, however, the problem is that most Christian theologians are ignorant of other religions—not necessarily through the fault only of themselves, but also through their different seminaries—and therefore do not discuss them. To be fair, though, one should state here that there is little in the way of Buddhist “theology” that treats the encounter with Christianity with erudition. One recent book that has dealt specifically with this has been: *Buddhism and Christianity* edited by Geffre and Dhavamony (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979)<sup>4</sup>, but even here we are dealing with a book seen not really from the Buddhist side but from a comparative viewpoint. I do, aside from this, recommend the book to anyone beginning to take Christianity and Buddhism in dialogue as their “field”.

When we turn to a dialogue proper between these two religions there are many obvious questions and problems of approach. What aspect of Christianity are we talking about? What denomination is represented? What group of Buddhists—Tibetan groups or what? As Roger Corless once put it in a private communication to me: “Who is talking with whom about what?” This is the question. If we take the Roman Catholic representatives two names especially turn out as active in this area, one specifically and one generally. The specific one is William Johnston. He has written such books as *Christian Zen*, *Silent Music*, *The Inner Eye of Love*, and so on. What Johnston does, however,

3. See my review of this book in *The Saint Luke's Journal of Theology*, Sept. 1980, vol. 23, n. 4, Sewanee, TN, pp. 296, 297.

4. This is a truly excellent book. See my review in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, March 1980, vol. 48, n. 1, p. 137.

is to relate the two religions together on the mystical level—the emotive level—and dismisses, or should one say ignores, the cognitive level. The one who deals with Buddhism more generally, or more accidentally as a side effect of his “system” is Karl Rahner. Rahner has developed the following ideas, which I think are relevant :

1. The “anonymous Christian”—by this, very briefly, Rahner means that insofar as one is faithful and trusting toward “an ultimate Horizon” (what some Christians would simply call faith in God) then one is an anonymous Christian and therefore saved by the grace of God.
2. The “instant of death” is important concerning a man’s ultimate and eternal destiny.
3. Following Vatican II people can be saved even outside the Church. Or to put it another way—grace exists wherever God deems it to develop.

Before one begins to touch on, even briefly, these ideas of Rahner, I should point out that not everyone involved in dialogue would accept the “anonymous Christian” as a useful term. In fact, these types of idea could be seen as an expression of Christian condescension :

Approaching the theological questions in this spirit (i.e., the theological significance of people of other faiths and ideologies, G.W.H.) Christians should proceed...with humility, because they so often perceive in people of other faiths and ideologies a spirituality, dedication, compassion and a wisdom which should forbid them making judgements about others as though from a position of superiority; in particular they should avoid using ideas such as “anonymous Christians”, “the Christian presence”, “the unknown Christ”, in ways not intended by those who proposed them for theological purposes or in ways prejudicial to the self-understanding of Christians and others...<sup>5</sup>

Since this is not an article on Karl Rahner, but instead an introduction to a book on Buddhist-Christian dialogue, I will not go too far into his ideas, but must briefly summarize some of his

5. *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* (World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1979), p. 12.

thought. In order to understand what Karl Rahner means by number 1, “anonymous Christian”, he says :

The anonymous Christians—whether they know it or not, whether they distinguish it from the light of their natural reason or not—are enlightened by the light of God’s grace which God denies to no man.<sup>6</sup>

And

...if the human subject’s free response to his world includes in its intentionality an act of loving surrender to the world’s Absolute Horizon, the human subject has made an implicit act of salutary Christian faith. Ontologically, and not just metaphorically, he has become an anonymous Christian.<sup>7</sup>

But he concludes, a Christian has

a still greater chance of salvation<sup>8</sup>

than merely an anonymous Christian. In other words there is a Christian attitude of superiority here in Rahner’s thought. One could conclude that although a Buddhist “might go to heaven” it is far better to be a real (Catholic?) Christian.

Concerning idea number 2, the “instant of death” Rahner says: each soul’s ultimate destiny is settled by the choice of its fundamental option at the instant of its death.<sup>9</sup>

And

The ultimate act of freedom, in which he decides his own fate totally and irrevocably, is the act in which he either *willingly accepts or definitively rebels against* his own utter impotence, in which he is utterly subject to the control of a mystery which cannot be expressed—that mystery which we call God.<sup>10</sup>

But how do we reconcile the following statement with the notion expressed above that a “real” Christian has a better chance of salvation? :

6. *A Rahner Reader*, ed. Gerald A. McCool (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 78.

7. *ibid*, p. 212.

8. *ibid*, p. 220.

9. *ibid*, p. 352.

10. *ibid*, p. 355.

Scripture knows of no life which is not worthy to be definite, it does not recognize any life as superfluous. Since God knows each man by name, since *everyone* exists in time before God who is judgment and salvation, *everyone* is a man of eternity, not just the enlightened spirits of human history.<sup>11</sup>

Is Rahner inconsistent here? Or is he implying universal salvation? To me, he remains unclear. However, one should contrast this notion with the idea of the importance of death in the system of Tibetan Buddhism (*rnying-ma pa*) which developed in a combination of folk belief (*Bon*) and Mahāyāna—some would say Vajrayāna.<sup>12</sup> This could be an area of mutual exploration between the two groups, Rahner type Christians and certain *rnying-ma pa* type Buddhists.

When we turn to number 3, grace outside of the Church, Rahner states :

it is *a priori* quite possible to suppose that there are supernatural, grace-filled elements in non-Christian religions.<sup>13</sup>

And

The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (No. 7) expressly states that these people too (i.e., non-Christians, G. W.H.), by the grace of God and in ways not known to us, can reach a real *saving* faith even without having accepted the explicit preaching of the Christian Gospel.<sup>14</sup>

So he concludes,

Theology has been too long and too often bedevilled by the unavowed supposition that grace would be no longer grace if it were too generously distributed by the love of God...<sup>15</sup>

11. *ibid*, p. 356.

12. See *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trans. by Francesca Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa (Berkeley and London: Shambhala, 1975); *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trans. and edited by W.Y. Evans-Wentz and Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup (London: Oxford University Press, 1927, many editions). Neither of these translations is satisfactory, but they will have to do for the non-Tibetan readers.

13. Rahner, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

14. *ibid*, p. 222.

15. *ibid*, p. 182.

an atheist can be justified and receive salvation if he acts in accordance with his conscience.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, to conclude for now with Karl Rahner, it would seem that Buddhists can be saved, but they are somehow inferior to Christians. This then may not be a good model for Buddhist-Christian dialogue. But since little else exists—except some silly ranking of religions with Christianity at the top of the heap—what do we have to work with for now? Protestant theologians have offered little if anything to this field. One new book shows some promise: Charles S. McCoy, *When Gods Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), but it is only a beginning. Why must the historians of religions pave the way for the theologians? Are they afraid of dealing with a live issue? One thinks here, for example, of the possible areas of exploration between Pure Land Buddhists who feel that everyone prays to *Amitābha* Buddha (Japanese: *Amida*) whether they know it or not. Perhaps some Catholic-Pure Land dialogue would be in order.

We are definitely in a pluralistic world. Many cultures and religions are coming into closer contact than in the past. But so often one side is ignorant not only of their own traditions but of the other side's as well. We have problems of experience and language. There must be an openness developed in order to do dialogue and one must do dialogue, or else rot in self-complacency. And I, for one, do not buy the party line that Christians must simply learn all the wisdom from the East. Christianity can teach the Buddhist cultures something also. The aggressive, rationalist Christian culture has developed technology; whereas, we seem to see the passive, mystical cultures of the eastern countries producing starvation. Perhaps it is time that Christianity learned to reclaim its mystical quietness, with the help of the East, and the East learned to formulate some of its more muddy thinking and put ethics into action. If a Christian dialogues with a Buddhist he need not lose his faith, nor must he convert. He must first try to understand. There must be an arena of openness and expression. Once this takes place one can rediscover one's own roots. This of all things modern civilization needs to do. We are all eroding at the roots.

16. *ibid*, p. 221.

Generally when two religions encounter each other one of the following happens :

1. they ignore each other
2. they borrow from each other (syncretism)
3. they form a new religion (total syncretism, e.g. Manichaeism)
4. they attempt to destroy each other (conversion).

What Christianity and Buddhism have tended to do is to follow option number one. However, one essay in this book shows that number three can take place (Klimkeit's article). Another shows that number four can take place (Govinda's article). What I would suggest is not number two, but what we will call here number five: *Why not learn from each other?* Any system that is not integrated into a life's experience is useless. But going forth into the mystery of the unknown can help you bring into a new awareness of where you have been. A Christian and a Buddhist can teach each other about the ultimate mystery—this is what Christians, and I, call God.

G.W. Houston

# **Christian-Buddhist Encounter in Medieval Central Asia**

by

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Editor's introduction :

Professor Klimkeit shows the importance played by Nestorianism and the Gnostic Manichaeism as a valuable link between Buddhism and Christianity proper. Many Manichaean texts depict a clear encounter of Christian and Buddhist ideas. This link even allowed Buddhist influence upon the development of Alexandrian Christianity. This article should help to rectify the minds of those scholars who think little is known of Gnosticism except for what was written by the Church Fathers. There are many texts available for those who read Syrian, Sogdian, Turkic, Chinese, Middle Persian and Parthian that not only tell us of Manichaeism, but also demonstrate early contacts between Christians and Buddhists. Some strange concepts resulted such as the "Buddha Jesus" to mention only one example. Much of this contact was established by a Central Asian people known as the Sogdians who were multi-lingual silk merchants connecting China with the West. Therefore, one may certainly see Central Asia as an encounter spot. One is reminded of Kublai Khan's comment on why he was not a Christian. He replied that they had no power like the Buddhists. Thus it seems that even in the remote regions of Central Asia religious dialogue had difficulty and tended to foster new syncretistic religions.

## *1. The land of the silk routes and the spread of Buddhism*

The land of the silk routes, the vast area of steppes and deserts between China and East Iran, has been, since the beginning of our time, a region where peoples from almost all parts of Asia came into contact with each other. The routes connecting China with India, Persia and the Near East served not only for an exchange of goods, but also of ideas. Representatives of the major religions of the Orient met here and lived side by side. Buddhism and Confucianism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism and

then Islam were represented by smaller or larger communities of monks and believers in the towns of the Tarim basin and the adjoining areas in the east and the west.

In this historically unique situation of religious and cultural contact the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism played a definite role, though the written sources we have reflecting that contact are scarce. We shall mainly turn our attention to the direct contact between both religions, but shall also take into account the role played by Manichaeism, which was established as the state religion of the empire of the Turks from 762 to 840 A.D., and which was the religion of the Uighur kings of Kocho (Turfan Oasis) from about 850 to c. 1250 A.D. Manichaeism related Gnostic Christian notions to Buddhist ideas in that it understood itself as superseding and fulfilling both religions.

Let us turn first to the diffusion of Buddhism in Central Asia. Its spread cannot be traced historically in all its details. We know that the faith of the Buddha was transmitted into the towns of Central Asia from northwest India. As is well known, Aśoka (c 297-232 B.C.) sent missionaries to the upper Indus valley and fostered the establishment of monasteries in that area. It was here, especially in Gāndhāra and Swat, that a very specific, hellenistically influenced type of Buddhism was to develop.

From northwest India Buddhism spread through what is now Afghanistan to the areas beyond the Oxus to the Tarim Basin. Not only the adherents of Mahāyāna, but also of Theravāda schools settled in the oasis towns of Central Asia. Thus the Vaibhāṣikas, a branch of the Sarvāstivādins, were strongly represented in Kucha, maybe also in Turfan.

We cannot here assess the role of the Kuṣāṇa ruler Kaniṣka (120-162 A.D.?) in the propagation of the Buddhist religion. But it is clear that in and since his time the faith from India established various important centers between the Indus and the Oxus.

Of the Iranian people in Central Asia, it was especially the Parthians and Sogdians who were open to the foreign religion and who spread it further to the East. Indicative of the situation is the fact that a Parthian prince of Arsacide blood, stemming from Bukhara, whose name is transmitted to us as An-Shi-Kao, travelled to China in 148 A.D. both on a religious and diplomatic mission.



An especially important role in the spread of the Buddhist faith to the east was played by the Sogdians. An east Iranian people with centers around Samarkand and Bukhara, they possessed a string of commercial settlements all along the northern and southern silk routes leading into the heartland of China. Both traders and missionaries of Sogdian stock communicated Buddhism as well as Christianity and Manichaeism to their fellow nationals as well as to people of foreign tongue. Remnants of Buddhist and Christian literature are both preserved in Sogdian.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the Parthians and Sogdians, the Sakian Iranians, living especially in and around Khotan, were followers of the Buddhist faith. In Khotan, Theravāda and Mahāyāna were both represented, the latter predominating. Along with the indigenous Khotanese, Sanskrit was used as an ecclesiastical language. At times, Christians resided at Khotan, but there is no reflection of their presence in either Khotanese or Sanskrit literature, the same being true of the vast Central Asian Sanskrit literature studied and transmitted in other Central Asian towns.

From the 8th century on, the Turks, living originally in Western Mongolia, spread their influence to the southwest, until, in the course of centuries, the areas named after them, East and West Turkestan, came under their cultural influence. Originally confessing their indigenous ethnic faith, as it is reflected in the Orkhon inscriptions<sup>2</sup>, they first adopted Manichaeism as a state religion, but gradually turned more and more to Buddhism. In the beginning Indian, Sogdian and Tocharian Buddhist traditions influenced the Turkic understanding of the foreign faith. From the 9th/10th century onward Chinese prototypes in literature and art gained greater importance, as the texts and paintings of Turfan demonstrate.

Turkic Buddhism in turn had a great impact on the Mongolian Buddhism of the 13th/14th centuries, i.e., the adopted religion of the Mongolians at the time of the so-called first missionary era. The Mongolian rulers employed Turkic (Uighur) scribes and scholars in their administration. In the so-called second mis-

1. O. Hansen, "Die buddhistische Literatur der Sogdier", *Handbuch der Orientalistik* I, 4: *Iranistik*, 2. Abschnitt. Leiden/Köln 1968, 83-90; Cf. also O. Hansen, "Die christliche Literatur der Sogdier", *Ibid.*, 91-99.

2. T. Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*. (Indiana University Studies, Uralic and Altaic Series, Vol. 69), Bloomington/Den Haag 1968, 231/261.

sionary period, following the revival of the indigenous religion, Lamaism from Tibet gained prominence in Mongolian lands and Christianity, though still well represented in Mongolia and even at the Mongol court, was increasingly overshadowed by the Indo-Tibetan religion.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. *The spread of Christianity in Central Asia*

In Acts 2,9ff the peoples who were assembled at Jerusalem during Pentecost are enumerated. Of the many nations represented, the first named are the Parthians. This is understandable since Parthian control over Iran and portions of the Near East was firmly established since the time of Mithridates I around 150 B.C. There is no proof that the western Parthians who came into contact with the growing Christian faith had direct contact with Buddhist Parthians in the eastern areas of the Arsacide realm. Basically, however, it is possible and even probable that the contact between Christians and Buddhists, mediated by Parthians, was established already in the first century. Ernst Benz has pointed out that there was an Indian, probably even a Buddhist, influence on early Christian theology as it was formulated mainly in Alexandria.<sup>4</sup>

The details of early Christian, i.e., primarily Nestorian, expansion into Iran and Turan cannot be discerned. But the main stations along the way are known to us. Thus it is clear that Merv, Sistan, Herat and Balkh were important Christian centers, as were Kashgar and Samarkand, which were to become Nestorian archbishoprics. From Transoxania, Nestorians, using Syrian as their church language, spread as far east as China. The first Syrian Christian monk whose arrival in China is recorded in history is Alopen, who came to Hsian in 635 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the Syrians, whose language, due to its official role, is preserved in inscriptions and documents at various sites in

3. Cf. W. Heissig, "Die Religionen der Mongolei", in: G. Tucci/W. Heissig, *Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei*. Stuttgart 1970, 325ff.

4. E. Benz, *Indische Einflüsse auf die frühchristliche Theologie*. (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz: Geistesund Sozialwiss. Kl., Jg. 1951, Nr. 3). Wiesbaden 1951.

5. For an overview of Nestorian activity in Central Asia, v. G.W. Houston, "An Overview of Nestorians in Inner Asia", *Central Asiatic Journal* 24 (1980), 60-68.

Central Asia, the Sogdians also played a decisive role in the transmission of the Christian faith in the centers along the silk routes. Here they had their own trading communities. Christian documents have been found—besides Syrian texts—at Turfan and Tun-huang. And Sogdian Christian inscriptions have come to light in areas as remote as Western Tibet (e.g. Tankse—inscription).

Apparently Syrians, Iranians and Sogdians passed the Christian message on to the Turks. The Christianization of the Turkic peoples sets in systematically in the second half of the 8th century and is initiated by the Syrian Patriarch Timothy I. At his time, West Turks along the Syr Daria embraced the Christian faith. At the beginning of the 8th century, a Christian king ruled in Kashgar, the entrance gate to the southern silk route. There is evidence of Nestorian Christians in Khotan, though no Christian documents from that oasis town are preserved. Nestorian Christian texts are, however, preserved in Old Turkic.<sup>6</sup>

Of the northeastern Turks, the tribes of the Öngüt and Keräit are Christianized in the 10th century. A mass conversion to Christianity takes place in the 11th. It is especially the Keräit who carry the Christian faith to the Mongols. The extent to which they as religiously tolerant rulers allowed Christianity to spread can only be surmised. It is known that various Mongol rulers married Christian wives and Western visitors to the Mongol court attest to the presence of Christians there.<sup>7</sup>

Though Nestorians are nowhere mentioned in Mongolian literature, they are referred to as being present at Mongol courts in Tibetan literature of the 15th century. Here it is said of them that they and the shamans were degraded in favour of the Buddhists.<sup>8</sup>

It is the Mongols who again bring Christianity to China after that country's subdual by the forces of Kublai Khan in 1279. For almost a century, until 1368, when Mongol rulership was

6. Cf. for instance F.W.K. Müller, *Uigurica I.* (Abh. der Preuss. Akad. der Wiss., 1908, Nr. 2). Berlin 1908, 4-10.

7. Cf. (P. Pelliot), *Recherches sur les Chrétiens d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême Orient.* Paris 1973.

8. Cf. W. Hage, *Untersuchungen zum Leben der Christen Zentralasiens im Mittelalter.* (Unpublished 'Habilitationsschrift') Marburg 1976, Chapt. 6 Also, v. Houston, *op. cit.* p. 65.

brought to an end by the Ming dynasty, Nestorianism experienced a certain revival in China, without, however, being able to establish itself firmly there. Yet it was in the pre-Muslim period of the Mongols that a whole chain of Christian provinces reaching from Persia to China was established. Certainly even here Christians remained minorities—except in areas where whole tribes had converted—yet they were bound together not only by a common faith, as were the Buddhists, but also by the jurisdiction of the patriarch in Bagdad, later in Samarkand. They were also bound by the Syrian church language.<sup>9</sup>

After the conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism in the second missionary era (15th/16th centuries) Christians were condemned to a more peripheral existence in Central Asia. This trend was accelerated when the successors to the Mongols, the Western Turks, converted to Islam. Severely persecuted, Christians fled to mountainous areas, being able to survive only in the hills of Kurdistan.

### 3. *Central Asian documents reflecting Buddhist-Christian encounter*

Archaeological, as well as textual, evidence makes it obvious that Buddhists and Christians, i.e., mainly Nestorians, but also Chalcedonenses and Jakobites, and at some places like Olo n Süme in Mongolia in the 13th/14th centuries also Catholics, lived side by side in the main centers along the silk routes.

Christian documents have been found mainly in sites near Turfan and in Tun-huang; they have been preserved in Syrian Sogdian, Turkic and Chinese. Though these materials are to some extent very fragmentary, they allow us to discern a basic attitude. Increasingly, Christians attempt to express their faith in Buddhist terms, almost to the point of losing their own identity, yet they always remain aware of the core of their faith.

It should be pointed out at the outset that there are, however, hardly any Buddhist texts mentioning Christians or Christianity. It is only at the time of the spread of Islam, when Buddhist congregations are threatened and oppressed, i.e., in the post-Mongol period, that expression is lent to bitter feelings about ad-

9. Cf. H.-W. Gensichen, "Asien, christliche Kirchen in", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. iv. Berlin 1979, 174-178.

herents of the foreign faiths. Thus we have from that period a document, the *Insādi-Sūtra*, which denounces Christian and Islamic figures like “the Messiah”, “the mother Mary”, Mohammed, etc., and expresses the messianic hope that Maitreya may soon return, and that even the kingdom of Bagdad (*bağdat*) and East Rome (*urum*) may gain confidence in him.<sup>10</sup>

The *Insādi-Sūtra* reflects a time of persecution and eschatological hope. In this it corresponds to similar ideas expressed in the *Kālacakra* literature which was formulated in India at a time when the onslaught of Islam similarly afflicted the Buddhist community.<sup>11</sup>

Whereas there are hardly any significant Buddhist documents dealing directly with the Christian faith, various Christian documents, stemming from the sites of Bulayiq and Sui-pang near Turfan and from Tun-huang do, to some extent, reflect the relationship between both religions, at least the attitude of the Christians towards the Buddhists. As pointed out, the texts that come into question are written in three languages. Disregarding Syrian, they appear in Sogdian, Turkic and Chinese. Furthermore, Manichaean texts reflect in their own way the encounter of Christian, i.e., Gnostic and Buddhist thought. Finally, there are archaeological and artistic materials of Christian and Manichaean nature, which reflect the encounter of Christian and Buddhist ideas.

#### (a) *Sogdian documents*

The first Nestorian Sogdian document to be named here, the so-called Bar-Shabbā-Fragment (T II B 52)<sup>12</sup>, is probably the translation of a Syrian original, as a preserved Syrian fragment of the text would indicate.<sup>13</sup> The story of our text tells of the healing and conversion of Queen Shir by bishop Bar Shabbā. Furthermore, it tells of the Christianization of provinces north-east of Fars and of the establishment of missionary centers in

10. S. Tezcan, *Das uigurische Insādi-Sūtra*. (Berliner Turfantexte III). Berlin 1974, 71.

11. Cf. H. Hoffmann, “Kālacakra Studies I. Manichaeism, Christianity and Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 13 (1969), 52-63; H. Hoffmann, “Kālacakra Studies I. Addenda et Corrigenda”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 15 (1972), 291-301.

12. F.W.K. Müller/W. Lentz, *Sogdische Texte II*. (Sitzungsberichte der Preuss. Akad. der Wiss.; Phil.-hist. Kl. 1934, XXI). Berlin 1934, 21-27.

13. I.e., document T. II B 3; cf. Müller/Lentz, *Sogdische Texte II*, 21.

cities like Meshed, Merv, Sistan, Herat and Balkh. Finally, it strikes a tone which remains central to Christian thinking in Central Asia in that it lays emphasis upon the resurrection of the dead.

The belief in resurrection, so very foreign to Buddhism, is again documented in the so-called Simon-Fragment (T II B 16), also from Turfan, which is apparently a translation of the account of the resurrection of one Nicostratus, related in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*.<sup>14</sup> A further Nestorian Sogdian confession of faith (T II B 28)<sup>15</sup> makes it clear that this article of faith was so decisive because it repudiated the docetic understanding of Christ's suffering and death as propagated by the Manichaeans.<sup>16</sup>

Another Sogdian fragment from Turfan (C 1) reflects the Nestorian criticism of the Mahākāla cult; it denounces the deity in the Mahākāla image as being of the devil, summoning it to vanish in the earth until the day of judgement. This document has also preserved Buddhist criticism of Christianity. St. George, the Christian opponent of the Buddhists, is rebuked with the words: "He brings forth before us (demon)-like men, and he says 'I have resurrected the dead'."<sup>17</sup> It is readily understandable that the Christian concept of corporeal resurrection appears objectionable to the Buddhists as it does to the Gnostics, for the basic Buddhist notions concerning salvation: attainment of *nirvāṇa*, rebirth in the Buddha land (e.g. *Sukhāvati*), recognition of *śūnyatā* or of the Buddha nature (*tathatā*) in self all imply the surpassing of corporeality.

In this connection it may be pointed out that the motive of the saviour's *descensus ad infernos* is common to both Christian and Mahāyāna thinking, in both cases hell being often identified with worldly existence. It is indicative that the concept of resurrection

14. Cf. E. Hennecke/W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, Vol. II. Tübingen, 4th ed., 1971, 177-221.

15. Cf. F.W.K. Müller, *Sogdische Texte I.* (Abh. der Königl. Preuss. Akad. der Wiss., 1912). Berlin 1913, 84-87.

16. Though some Manichaean documents like *Kephalaia I*, 13 speak of Christ's resurrection, this idea is not at all part of Manichaean Christology, which sees in the suffering and crucifixion of the historical Jesus a pattern of the soul's suffering in the material world.

17. O. Hansen, *Berlin Sogdische Texte I.* (Abh. der Preuss. Akad. der Wiss., Jg. 1941, Phil.-hist. Kl. Nr. 10). Berlin 1941, 9.

of the saviour from hell remains foreign to Buddhist imagery which avails itself of other notions for redemption.<sup>18</sup>

(b) *Turkic documents*

In spite of the decisive role the Turkic people played in the political and intellectual history of Central Asia, and in spite of the fact that there were also Christian centers in Turkic areas, only four Christian documents are preserved in Old Turkic. The most noteworthy of these texts (T II B 29) tells of the three magi who go to Bethlehem to present to the Christ child three precious gifts. We cannot say definitely that there is an allusion here to the *triratna*, the three gems of Buddhism, though this idea seems to be implied. Anyway, the gifts are associated with three titles to which the Christ child lays claim and which are brought into correspondence with the gifts, and the thoughts, of the magi. The child speaks: "O magi, you have come with three sorts of thoughts. God's son am I also; a ruler am I also, a physician and saviour am I also."<sup>19</sup> It is quite obvious that a comparison is being made here to religious and worldly authorities known to the Turkic Buddhists, authorities including the King (Khan), whose position was represented as that of the son of heaven or god (*tngri oġli*), and that of the Buddha as "physician and saviour" (*otaŷi änci ymä*).

Christian texts of various content were transmitted to Central Asia by the Manichaeans. Besides many fragments from the gospels, apocryphal works like the "Shepherd of Hermas" were known in centers like Turfan. Only a small portion of this material was apparently translated into Turkic, much being preserved in Middle Persian, Parthian and Sogdian.<sup>20</sup>

18. For Christian thought on the descensus motif cf. W. Maas, *Gott und die Hölle. Studien zum Descensus Christi*. Einsiedeln 1979. The earliest Mahāyāna text narrating the descensus motif is probably the *Karaṇḍavyūha*. Cf. E.B. Cowell, "The Northern Buddhist Legend of Avalokiteśvara's Descent into the Hell Avishi", *The Indian Antiquary* 8 (1879), 249-253. Nag Hammadi evidence of the concept of Christ's descent into the hell of this world is to be found, for instance, in the second part of "The Teachings of Silvanus" (Nag Hammadi Codex vii, 4).

19. Turkic concepts of religious authority ascribed to the Buddha are expressed on a wide range in: K. Röhrborn (ed.), *Eine uigurische Totenmesse*. (Berliner Turfantexte II). Berlin 1971.

20. Cf. W. Sundermann, "Christliche Evangelientexte der iranischmani-

Various Christian texts have been integrated into Manichaean documents. Thus Mani's *Shābuhragān* includes Christ's (here Xrade-shahr's) blessing of those who receive him unknown and his condemnation of those who disavow him unknowingly.<sup>21</sup>

(c) *Chinese documents*

Most Chinese Christian documents reflect an almost unthought usage of Buddhist terminology to such an extent, in fact, that they stand in danger of losing their own identity. Yet exactly this state of affairs prompted the Nestorians to formulate anew the core of their faith. Such an attempt was made in the so-called "Jesus-Messiah-Sūtra" (Hsu-t'ing Messias-Sūtra).<sup>22</sup> In this Sūtra, "Hsü-po (Jehova), who is Lord of heaven", is first described in terms taken from Mahāyāna. Thus it says: "...the Lord of Heaven is like the wind in His countenance. And, who would possibly see the wind?... The Lord of Heaven is incessantly going around all over the world, is constantly present everywhere. ...On account of this, every man existing in this world only obtains life and continues his existence by the strength of the Lord of Heaven..."<sup>23</sup>

After the description of the Lord of Heaven, the life story of Jesus is related, also in Sino-Buddhist terms, ranging from his conception and birth to his crucifixion. The description of his death makes it clear that at that time "the graves were opened and men received life."<sup>24</sup> Hence here, too, in spite of all attempts to adapt to Buddhist terminology, the central idea of resurrection as a distinctly Christian concept is maintained. Otherwise, however, the use of Buddhist terms is so extensive that one almost gains the impression of dealing with Mahāyāna texts when reading Chinese Nestorian documents.

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chäischen Literatur", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 14 (1968), 386-405. (See especially note 51.)

21. New materials for this work are supplied in D.N. Mackenzie, "Mani's Sabuhragān", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London 42 (1979), 507-509.

22. Cf. P.Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*. 2nd ed., Toyo 1951, 125ff.

23. Saeki, *op. cit.*, 125f.

24. Saeki, *op. cit.*, 146.



(d) *Buddhist terms in Manichaeic literature*

Right from the beginning, Manichaeism strove to encompass and surpass the truths of Christianity and Buddhism. Mani (216-276 A.D.), growing up in the Jewish-Christian baptist community of the Elchasaïtes in Mesopotamia, understood himself as the promised paraclete. He refers to his person as an apostle of Jesus, and he regards his work as that of a second Paul or Thomas. One of his first missionary journeys takes him to the Buddhist area of the Indus valley, and it is in Tūrān (in today's Beluchistan), according to a document from Turfan (M 48), that he converts a Buddhist ruler to his faith. The king hailed him as the Buddha (pth. *bwd*) and as the path to salvation.<sup>25</sup> Of course this could be the Manichaeic interpretation of an event that was basically historical or had a historical core. Still it is true that from the very beginning Mani (as an "apostle of Jesus") is familiar with Buddhist ideas. When Al-Bīrūnī surmizes that he became familiar with the doctrine of reincarnation in India, this is not improbable.<sup>26</sup> Mani's idea of life being inherent not only in men and creatures, but also in plants is, furthermore, reminiscent of a basic Jaina notion.

In Parthian Manichaeic documents, terms are used which would refer to Buddhist notions. Thus the terms for "salvation" (pth. *mwxš* < skr. *mokṣa*), and for "merit" (pth. *pwn* < skr. *puṇya*) are reminiscent of corresponding Buddhist concepts.

In Sogdian Manichaeic literature, which bears witness to a much stronger Buddhist influence, a very central identification is made.

The *Jesus patibilis*, the suffering Jesus, whose presents the sum of the light bound in matter and yearning for salvation, is equated with the *Buddha gotra*, the "Buddha family", which is mentioned repeatedly in the Chinese Manichaeic texts.<sup>27</sup> The "Buddha-

25. M. Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaeic Middle Persian and Parthian*. Leiden 1975, 36.

26. Cf. A. Adam, *Texte zum Manichäismus*. 2nd ed., Berlin 1969; document quoted from Al-Bīrūnī, *India*, I, 54f.

27. Cf. the Sogdian *Xuāstvānist*, in W.B. Henning, *Sogdica*. (James G. Furlong Fund, Vol. XXI). London 1940, 64f. The term *Buddha gotra* (sogd. *pwt'ny kw't'r*) is not mentioned in the Uighur *Xuāstvānist*, but the corresponding Turkish text makes it quite clear that the five-fold primal deity is meant, who is incorporated in "the day and wet ground, the five-fold plant beings, the five-fold animal beings". *Ibid.* 65. Also in a Chinese text, the *Buddha*

family” is also referred to as that “body of light” which awaits salvation and seeks to be freed from the fetters of corporeality. This captured light is cosmologically represented by the first messenger sent out by the Father of Light, i.e., Primal Man, to fight against the powers of darkness. So closely associated with him are his five sons, that they in themselves can represent him. They are referred to as the “five Buddhas of Light”, the light elements scattered in the world considered to be fivefold.

The connection between the *Buddha gotra* and the *Jesus patibilis* becomes obvious in a Sogdian confession of sins. According to Manichaeism, the light that is dispersed throughout the world is especially concentrated in certain plants and food-stuffs. This holy light is referred to in Christian sacramental terms as “the flesh and blood of Jesus”. Hence every meal, especially for the *elect* (the monks) is a holy communion which obliges those partaking thereof to become aware of the great cosmological implications involved. Hence in a confession for *electi* it says: “In receiving the daily gifts of the divine table, I did not sit down with a thankful heart, remembering God, the Buddha, and men. I also refrain from remembering (as I should) the primal battle (i.e., between light and darkness). And, this also I did not consider: “In whose sign do I now stand? What is it, that is eaten? ...Whose flesh and blood is this (which is eaten)?...”<sup>28</sup>

A corresponding Chinese text makes it explicit that the elements of lights in the world, referred to as pearls in mud and mire, “are exactly the flesh and blood of Jesus”, and that they are to be “restored to the original Lord, dignified and solemn, clean and pure”. Hence the devout are exhorted: “Seek precious treasures in the gloomy, deep sea of tortures, and run to offer them to the clean and pure Lord of Nirvāṇa.”<sup>29</sup>

In Turkic Manichaean texts—as in Chinese document—one of the most conspicuous identifications is that between Jesus,

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*gotra* is referred to as the “Five Great Buddhas of Light”, which, as the body of light, will be freed from the fetters of corporeality. Cf. Tsui Chi, “Mo Ni Chiao Hsia Pu Tsan. ‘The Lower (Second?) Section of the Manichaean Hymns’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* XI (1943-46), 196.

28. W. Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*. (Abh. der Preuss. Akad. der Wiss., Jg. 1936, Phil. hist. Kl. Nr. 10). Berlin 1937, 41.

29. Tsui Chi, *op. cit.*, 28.

Mani, and Buddha. Mani is repeatedly referred to as a “Burxan”, i.e., a Buddha. (In Christian and Manichaean texts the term could also be rendered as “apostle”; however, the prime meaning remains “Buddha”.) In the “Large Hymn to Mani”<sup>30</sup> the “Buddha Mani” is called upon as a “celebrated father, worthy of praise”. He has led all living beings, his children, from *samsāra*, from the five forms of earthly existence, to Nirvāṇa. He has piled up a Sumeru mountain of good deeds for them; he has shown them the path to the realm of the Buddhas; he has let them be reborn in the fivefold realm of the gods. Having acquired complete Buddhahood (*burqan quti*), Mani the Buddha, as the paraclete promised by Jesus, saves innumerable beings.

Though Buddhist theology is not made explicit to the same extent with regard to the “Buddha Jesus” who is repeatedly mentioned in Chinese as well as Turkic texts, the latter is also conceived of as entering Parinirvāṇa (e.g. in M 104/M 734 R/M 459 c), and as being expected to return (e.g. in S 9 R ii 33f). In the “Book of the Coming of the Buddha” (T II D 173 a) the return of Mani as Jesus is anticipated. And, in TM 180 the return of the son of God as *mitrii burxan*, as Buddha Maitreya, is contrasted to the appearance of a false Messiah, a false Maitreya, one whose *vāhana* (Türk. *mingü*) is the bull, who is hence reminiscent of the Iranian Mithra.

The presently active Jesus in Central Asian Manichaeism is referred to in cosmological terms as the god of the moon, or the moon itself. It is through his wisdom (*vidyā*; Türk. *bilgä bilig*) that he revives the dead (TM I, 24); it is in his ship, the moon, that he leads the redeemed souls to the world of light which is equated with Nirvāṇa.

In Chinese Manichaean literature, the number of equations with Buddhist terms is so manifold that a definite system of Gnostic-Buddhist correlations can hardly be discerned. Suffice it to point out that the world of light, the realm of the redeemed, is thought of as the sphere where dwells the “king of nirvāṇa”, who is the father of light. He is conceived of as not only a *dharmakāya*—a *dharma*-body, but as being composed of four *dharma*-bodies: purity, light, power and wisdom. Here the classi-

30. W. Band/A. von Gabain, *Türkische Turfantexte III*. (Sitzungsbericht der Preuss. Akad. der Wiss.) Berlin 1930, 183-211.

cal Iranian-Manichaeic concept of the “fourfold god” or “father with four faces” (God, light, power and wisdom) is interpreted through Buddhist terms, in a manner, however, which hardly does justice to the Buddhist concept of the *dharmakāya* as the body upon which is based the *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*.

Over against the Father of Light stands the Mother of Life, who is called the “mother of all the Buddhas”, and is identified with Wisdom: *prajñā*. From the union of the two go forth three messengers, the first being Primal Man (uig. Xormuzda-Indra in Buddhist texts), the second the Living Spirit who fashions the heavens and earths, and the third the so-called “Third Messenger”. One of his main emanations is “Jesus the Splendour”, who can be accompanied by a female counterpart, the “Maiden of Light”. Another representation of the Third Messenger is the “Column of Glory” (*Sroš-haray*, chin. *Lu-she-na*), who is equated in Buddhist terms with Vairocana.

The great many Buddhist concepts that have found their way into the Chinese Manichaeic documents can hardly be dealt with systematically here. The central core of the teaching, however, the doctrine concerning Jesus, can and should be summarized.

If we disregard the very complex Christological system elaborated by E. Rose<sup>31</sup> which takes Coptic materials into account as well as those from Central Asia, and if we follow the system as sketched by Mary Boyce<sup>32</sup>, we can basically differentiate between three entities named Jesus :

1. “*Jesus the Splendour*”, an emanation of the Third Messenger, the redeeming god, who never really died and suffered, but is a transcendent messenger from the realm of Light, taking on in history various forms, and appearing also as Zarathustra and as Buddha Śākyamuni. One of his celestial appearances is Hui-ming (i.e., Wise Light, lit. Kind Light), and as such he is termed the *Dharmarāja*, the “King of Law”. Of him it is said that “with wisdom and convenient methods (i.e., *prajñā* and *upāya*) he teaches good sons, making them all perfectly sufficient. . . .”<sup>33</sup>.

Jesus the Splendour himself is repeatedly referred to as the

31. E. Rose, *Die manichäische Christologie*. Wiesbaden 1979.

32. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, 10.

33. Tsui Chi, *op. cit.*, 196.

“Great Saint” who as the “Light-son”, together with the “Compassionate Father” and the “Wind of Pure Law” (i.e., the Holy Spirit) forms a trinity, but who is also invoked together with another trinity, i.e., the Maiden of Light, the Great Mind (Lushena = Vairocana) and himself, the three being evocations of the Third Messenger. Of the many characterizations of the “Great Saint”, or “Jesus the Buddha”, as he is also called, one of the most striking is that he is the embodiment of good deeds”. Hence, he is not only to be considered a being of celestial quality, but also the embodiment “of our Buddha-nature”.<sup>34</sup>

2. *Jesus the Messiah* is the second basic entity in Eastern Manichaean christology. He is the prophet of Nazareth, who assumed the appearance of man. Mani understands himself as the last in a series of prophets, one of the most prominent of which was Jesus the Messiah. His suffering and death is a model of the suffering of each and every soul. Hence the great importance of the gospel narratives concerning his suffering and crucifixion, paralleling his death with that of Jesus.

3. *The Suffering Jesus (Jesus patibilis)*, the third entity in Manichaean christology, is the sum of light suffering in matter and yearning for salvation. The souls of men, as of beasts and of plants, are all part of this suffering mass of light. The symbol of the passively suffering light is the cross of light; the symbol of the suffering light crying for salvation is a boy. Being aware of the close associations between the Manichaeans and the Buddhists in Central Asia, it is not surprising to find these symbols in Manichaean and even in Buddhist art<sup>35</sup>.

Since the suffering Jesus is paralleled to the Primal Man, i.e., the first saviour who himself fights with darkness and is accompanied by his five sons who issue from him and are of his nature, it is not surprising to see that he is equated with the “five Buddhas of Light” who according to Mahāyāna thought issue from the Ādi Buddha. It would not be surprising if this doctrine which was formulated in Central Asia not before the 6th century A.D.

34. Tsui Chi, *op. cit.*, 184ff.

35. Cf. H.-J. Klimkeit, “Das Kreuzessymbol in der zentralasiatischen Religionsbegegnung” in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 31 (1979), 99-115. Also, H.-J. Klimkeit, “Vairocana und das lichtkreuz, Manichäische Elemente in der Kunst von Alchi (West Tibet)”, in *Zentralasiatische Studien* 13 (1979), 357-399.

and became so central in Mahāyāna doctrine was influenced by Christian Gnostic thinking.

(e) *Archaeological and artistic documents*

A wealth of archaeological finds, as well as a few murals and paintings on cloth and silk, attest to the co-existence in Central Asia of Christians and Buddhists. Especially Manichaean art reveals strong syncretistic tendencies. Christians tended to live in greater seclusion than Manichaeans, as is obvious in places like Bulayik near Turfan, where the valley populated by Nestorians is somewhat remote. Yet there was a Nestorian temple, or Church, in the Manichaean capital of Kočo, and a Christian center at Tun-huang, too. As pointed out, Christians and Buddhists were not seldom related to one another, and trade relations could obviously also imply intellectual contact.

*Conclusion*

With such interrelationships existing, it is not amazing to see how Christian and Buddhist symbols are intertwined, typical being the connection between the cross and the lotus<sup>36</sup>. Of course, it is not always clear to what extent these symbolic connections were purely ornamental or conceived of as theological attempts to relate the imagery of one religion to the other. Basically, we can assume that conscious attempts were made to relate the symbols and concepts of both world religions to one another.

36. Cf. evidence in Saeki, *op. cit.*

# **“Grace” in Martin Luther and Tantric Buddhism**

by

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Editor's Introduction :

Can one really be saved by “works” in either Protestant Christianity or Tantric Buddhism? In this essay Professor Elder discusses the ramifications of “faith” and “grace” as found in both traditions, as well as the psychic split noted by C.G.Jung regarding this tension. To what extent may baptism be equated with the Tantric initiation of “power transferal” (Tib. *dbaṅ bskur*)? What is the function of a guru in both traditions? Can man really “save” himself? These and other important theological considerations are discussed here in a most creative and useful manner with the proper cautions of comparative work stated beforehand.

## *Introduction*

Comparative work in scholarship is at reacherous business; and, as the title of this study suggests, the essay that follows is no exception. We are attempting to bring together here religious materials from West and East, specifically from sixteenth-century Germany and ancient India; the religions themselves, Christianity and Buddhism, are extraordinarily different. As well, there is the formal difficulty of comparing a religious figure—Martin Luther (1483-1546)—with the more disparate materials of a tradition.<sup>1</sup> It might be recognized, however, that Luther himself represents a tradition called Protestantism which is a relatively late development within Christianity and, from the point of view of the Catholic Church, heresy. The tantric tradition, too, is a late development within Indian Buddhism and likewise enjoys the status of unorthodoxy from the point of view of Early Buddhism and the non-tantric Mahāyāna. I see no sure way to compensate for the broader character of the Buddhist materials; and this is due to the fact that trustworthy data are so hard to come by in the young

1. For a short but sensitive account of Luther's life, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1953), chapter 32.

and highly specialized field of tantric studies. Yet I will make some effort to rely upon the writings of a Tibetan religious figure who has commented upon the Indian *tantras*: Mkhas-grub-rje (1385-1438), the chief disciple of the famous Tson-kha-pa (1357-1419) who, like Martin Luther, is credited with an important reform within his religion.<sup>2</sup>

Still, the question remains: Why attempt this particular sort of comparison? The answer lies in part in an experience I had while working on another paper.<sup>3</sup> I was exploring uses of the term "body" in the Buddhist *tantras* and referring at the same time to St. Paul's uses of "body" simply as a hermeneutical aid. But there seemed to me to exist between these two very different religious expressions a surprising parallel, not only in the uses of the term that concerned me but also in the pattern of their uses. I showed the paper in progress to a Catholic priest who said, only partially with tongue in cheek, that there could *not* be a parallel between Christianity and Buddhism. I asked why not: and my friend said, "There is no grace in tantric Buddhism." I considered this opinion on the part of a non-specialist in things Eastern interesting; because it does accord with the general view that in the matter of "grace" there exists a wide gulf between the religious West and the religious East. There are the "religions of grace" and there are the "religions of works", it is sometimes said.<sup>4</sup> Surely, Christianity belongs within the former category even though a Catholic priest might be expected to "cooperate" with what God is doing for him. The Indian religions—and Buddhism among them—would belong to the second category of religions: and *īśvara* or a *deva* might appear at some point in a yoga to help out; but, after all, there are all those yogas. This paper, then, is really a test of the general point of view; and it is a test designed to make it especially difficult to challenge the pre-

2. *Mkhas-grub-rje's "Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras,"* translated by Ferdinand D. Lessing and Alex Wayman (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), p. 11.

3. I refer to my unpublished paper "Body in Tantric Buddhism" delivered at the Faculty Seminar on Oriental Thought and Religion, Columbia University, New York, November 3, 1978.

4. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1963), 2:595. Van der Leeuw is quoting Frick with mixed reactions.



vailing opinion. It is for this reason that I have chosen to compare the materials that follow. Martin Luther is the champion of a religious tradition that relies upon “grace alone” (*sola gratia*); the Buddhist *tantras*, on the other hand, claim to possess superior procedures or “means” (*upāya*) which a yogin can employ to gain quickly his enlightenment.<sup>5</sup>

To anticipate our findings, I think it will prove clear that the general view is generally true; but we shall also see that the issue of “grace” on both sides of our comparison is a complex one and even profoundly ambiguous. I should state that I am no expert in “Luther studies” and must rely with gratitude upon the work of others; indeed, the Luther material here may only be a foil at times to uncover meanings in Buddhist Tantra. While I am perhaps more conversant with the literature of Buddhism, I also find it difficult to claim expertise in “tantric studies” since materials are still relatively scarce and almost always obscure. Nevertheless, I acknowledge particular dependence upon the usefully literal translations and careful analyses of Alex Wayman who is the foremost scholar of tantric Buddhism writing in English.

### *A Jungian Overview*

I think it is helpful to have at the outset a working definition of “grace” and a sense, at least, of some of the issues that surround it. Carl Jung, the twentieth-century Swiss psychologist, can provide this overview; and I would like him to speak to us not as a scholar (there will be enough of that here, and I do not think Jung’s significance for us is “scholarly” in the academic sense) but as a religious man who is concerned about the healing of that split between East and West.<sup>6</sup> I suspect that one of the reasons for the appearance of this present volume, *The Cross and the Lotus*, is a similar concern. In his psychological commentary on Evans-Wentz’s *The Tibetan Book of the Great Lib-*

5. Joseph Lortz, “The Basic Elements of Luther’s Intellectual Style” in *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), p. 19. In his excellent article, this scholar refers to Luther’s three *sola*’s: faith, grace, scripture. An important source for tantric materials is Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977).

6. See my article “The Significance of Jung’s Psychology for the Study of Eastern Religions” in *Jung and Eastern Religions*, ed. George Williams, forthcoming.

eration, Jung writes of the “Difference Between Eastern and Western Thinking”. Jung accepts the general view with regard to “Western grace” and “Eastern works”, and he develops his position—I think it can be said—in three interrelated statements. He states first of all :

The religious point of view always expresses and formulates the essential psychological attitude and its specific prejudices, even in the case of people who have forgotten, or who have never heard of, their own religion.<sup>7</sup>

And he observes :

Even a superficial acquaintance with Eastern thought is sufficient to show that a fundamental difference divides East and West. The East bases itself upon psychic reality, that is, upon the psyche as the main and unique condition of existence. It seems as if this Eastern recognition were a psychological or temperamental fact rather than a result of philosophical reasoning. It is a typically introverted point of view, contrasted with the equally typical extraverted point of view of the West.<sup>8</sup>

It follows that :

The Christian West considers man to be wholly dependent upon the grace of God, or at least upon the Church as the exclusive and divinely sanctioned earthly instrument of man’s redemption. The East, however, insists that man is the sole cause of his higher development, for it believes in “self-liberation.”<sup>9</sup>

“Grace”, Jung implies, is a term for *divine power which exists outside the individual and which comes to the individual to assist him or her toward the attainment of the religious goal*. The Western religious person, we are told, depends upon that grace; the Eastern religious person does not. The difference is rooted in psychology: the Westerner is typologically “extraverted” and values the external object of his perception; the Easterner is “introver-

7. C. G. Jung, “Psychological Commentary on ‘The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation,’” *Psychology and Religion*, CW 11, par. 771.

8. *Ibid.*, par. 770.

9. *Ibid.*

ted” and values his perception and the internal object. As a corollary to this, perhaps even as a consequence: “With us, man is incommensurably small and the grace of God is everything; but in the East, man is God and he redeems himself.”<sup>10</sup>

We are looking at a pair of opposites here; and neither side is complete without the other. The West will have learned something from the East when, Jung says, “we feel capable of evolving out of ourselves with or without divine grace.”<sup>11</sup> The East will have learned something from the West when it is able to acknowledge that “there is a hitch in this proud claim to self-liberation.”<sup>12</sup> Jung goes on to say :

It is a curious thing that Eastern philosophy seems to be almost unaware of this highly important fact. And it is precisely this fact that provides the psychological justification for the Western point of view. It seems as if the Western mind had a most penetrating intuition of man’s fateful dependence upon some dark power which must cooperate if all is to be well.<sup>13</sup>

In making his statements about the East, Jung is referring here specifically but somewhat inaccurately to “Tibetan Buddhism”. Technically, this means the Evans-Wentz variety of Buddhism in Tibet which is a popular native development based upon the classic *tantras* of India; Jung’s comments do come this close, however, to our own focus upon Indian Buddhist Tantra. Martin Luther, of course, is a Western Christian; and elsewhere Jung suggests that Luther is an extravert.<sup>14</sup>

### *Martin Luther*

“Grace” for Martin Luther is something to be experienced and is not merely a religious idea. His own theology—and any valid theology for that matter—Luther called a *sapientia experimentalis, non doctrinalis*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, I think it is appropriate that we turn first of all to Luther’s autobiographical account of his re-

10. *Ibid.*, par. 768.

11. *Ibid.*, par. 773.

12. *Ibid.*, par. 784.

13. *Ibid.*

14. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, CW 6, par. 96-100. Jung turns to typology to account for Luther’s “unevangelical” emphasis upon ceremony in his argument with Zwingli over the Last Supper.

15. Lortz, p. 10.

ligious breakthrough. Bainton suggests that this account should be seen as the third and final crisis of three religious experiences in Luther's young life; and Rupp cautions us against perceiving the event as a sudden conversion in the manner of a later John Wesley.<sup>16</sup> But Luther himself makes much of the experience that occurred sometime between 1513-1517; he says, "There is where I broke through."<sup>17</sup> The following account, then, is a portion of the "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings", translated from the Latin by Lewis Spitz and provided in useful selections by Dillenberger; the scripture reference, of course, is to Paul's Letter to the Romans 1:17:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath?" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had

16. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: New American Library, 1950), pp. 45ff; Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 128.

17. Lortz, p. 10. The comment is from Luther's "Table Talk."

entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word “righteousness of God.” Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.<sup>18</sup>

By any standard, this is a remarkable passage. It is late, written in 1545 and only a year before Luther’s death. The passage reflects, therefore, many of the elements of the mature theology of Luther’s reform. But it also reflects something of the religious passion of one who decades earlier encountered what Otto has called the *numinosum*.<sup>19</sup> For these reasons alone, the account from the “Latin Preface” is rich and difficult to analyze.<sup>20</sup> But we can see that there are really two points of view described here: Luther’s view of reality prior to his religious breakthrough and Luther’s view of reality following his experience of “grace”.

Prior to the breakthrough, Martin Luther was a man caught in a terrible tension—itsself expressed as an opposition of views, external and internal. Outwardly, Luther was a monk and, to all appearances, a good Christian. He performed the acts required of those in his Order which was a particularly strict one: the making of vows and confessions, the prayers and the offerings especially at the Mass, and also the study of books. These human acts Luther would call “works”, “ceremonies”, “rites”; and their purpose, according to Luther, was to render the performer “righteous” or acceptable in the eyes of a God who was himself “righteous”.<sup>21</sup> The achievement was counted as the reli-

18. Martin Luther, “Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther’s Latin Writings” in *Martin Luther*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 11-12.

19. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University, 1958). See chapter 12, “The Numinous in Luther.”

20. For an extensive review of technical problems here, see Rupp, pp. 121-137.

21. See Luther’s language in “Pagan Servitude of the Church,” pp. 249-359.

gious goal; and so it must have come as a sharp disappointment to Luther, the monk “without reproach”, to find that he was also a monk without salvation. Or so he *felt*! Here it is important for us to see that if Martin Luther is an extravert, it is at the same time true that this man took very seriously his own feelings.<sup>22</sup> “I felt I was a sinner”, says Luther; and that made all the difference. Yet it might also be noted that this significant figure in the history of Christianity was forced to attend to his inner life. From an early age, Luther suffered from something he called *anfechtung*. Bainton suggests with merit that this term has no true English equivalent and says: “It may be a trial sent by God to test man, or an assault by the Devil to destroy man. It is all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man.”<sup>23</sup> If we do allow ourselves a dictionary definition of *anfechtung* as “attack, opposition”, we can see really how precisely the term points to Luther’s terrible conflict: religiously, he was a monk desiring desperately to be saved but unable to achieve salvation; psychologically, he was acutely depressed and desiring to be free of that burden yet was not free; physically, he was insomniac and wanted to sleep but could not, was chronically constipated and wanted to relieve himself but could not do even that.<sup>24</sup> Is it any wonder that this man “raged”? Luther’s suffering reminded Luther himself of the sufferings of Jesus; and we are reminded of Gautama and his six years of pain.<sup>25</sup> There was one thing more that Luther felt, and it is here that we may be observing the extraverted character of his feeling. Martin Luther lashed out with “hatred” and “anger” at an alien deity who, the good monk had to assume, was responsible for the state of his creatures.

Luther, of course, had more than assumption to rely upon. We hear that he was pondering the words of scripture which struck

22. See Jung, CW 6, par. 96-100, for the coordination of “sensation and feeling “with Luther’s “extraversion.” See also Edward F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973), p. 57, where Luther’s discovery of “justification by faith” is described as “introverted.” It may be that Luther, the natural extravert, discovers by way of religious experience his “other side,” i.e., his introversion.

23. Bainton, p. 31.

24. Latourette, p. 719.

25. Bainton, p. 47. Compare Matthias Grünewald’s painting, “The Crucifixion,” with “The Fasting Buddha” sculpture from Gāndhāra.

him as particularly “threatening” since, as revelation, they revealed the nature of deity. God was shown as a power external and superior to the human being and, therefore, beyond human control. He was a “male” deity as “righteous judge”; and by his own nature would break out in his “wrath” to punish sinners—especially those who, like Luther, “murmured” against the divine plan. And, finally, we learn that there was something in this that Luther still felt he did not understand; and so he “beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.” This is a bleak portrait of one man’s reality; it is a virtually hopeless religious situation.

It is, then, a miracle that Luther should have revealed to him a completely different view of reality. If we the readers of Luther’s descriptions of what happened should find them theologically untidy and sometimes opposed to the canons of reason, I cannot think it would bother Luther very much.<sup>26</sup> For this man experienced the transforming power of what lies beyond reason; and it is there that Luther stood. The transformation may have happened suddenly (Luther says, “At last”) or it may have occurred more gradually (he says, “I began to understand”), but whatever the speed the change was thorough. Virtually every element of what we have just seen was reversed and found its opposite. First of all, the deity ceased being “wrathful” like a Judge and acted with “mercy” like a Father.<sup>27</sup> As a result, Luther ceased being ignorant about scripture and began really to understand. In this way, scripture ceased being a word of “condemnation” and became a word of “promise” of salvation. Martin Luther no longer felt trapped by his conflict but, instead, “*felt*” that he was “altogether born again”; he ceased hating God, of course, and “loved” him. But there is one final reversal that we need to observe since it bears upon the interests of this essay: Luther stopped trying to work out his own salvation and found that God was graciously working it out for him. God’s activity in our passage is called “mercy”, but the term is equivalent to “grace” in Luther’s writings. He says in the “Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans:” “Grace is the kindness or favour which God

26. The problem of contradiction is discussed by Lortz.

27. Bainton’s version of the “breakthrough” shows Luther attending to the “fatherly, friendly heart” of God, p. 50.

bears towards us of His own choice, and through which He is willing to give us Christ, and to pour the Holy Spirit and His blessings upon us.”<sup>28</sup>

Looking at this experience more closely, we see that Luther wants us to understand that he did nothing at all to achieve salvation. It was entirely an “act of grace” initiated by the deity’s opening Luther’s eyes to the meaning of scripture he did not really understand. That initial event is somewhat disconcerting for a scholar to examine; because Luther himself was a scholar of the Bible with a doctorate, a professor at the University of Wittenberg.<sup>29</sup> Surely, he understood the words of scripture; he had analyzed them in the Latin and in Greek, was familiar with the rough German translations which his own superior translation would soon supersede. But the fact is that what Luther understood was wrong. Bainton seems to miss the point when he says: “Light broke at last through the examination of exact shades of meaning in the Greek language.”<sup>30</sup> Luther is trying to tell us that he could have examined the philology forever and could have suffered miserably forever from his *anfechtungen*.<sup>31</sup> Instead, God intervened and showed this man that the very same words in scripture which Luther interpreted as “death” really signified “new life”. It must be said, however, that Luther can miss his own point at times when he suggests that scripture has the “plainest meaning” and that those who disagree with him simply are “not willing to hear the truth of liberty.”<sup>32</sup>

Luther’s noetic experience was followed immediately by one of feeling; and I am reminded here of something mysterious that occurs in the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* and elsewhere, it is said: “He, verily, who knows the Supreme *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* himself.”<sup>33</sup> Luther comes to know by way of grace that the God revealed by the scripture is a gracious deity;

28. Luther, “Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans,” pp. 22-23.

29. Latourette, p. 706.

30. Bainton, p. 49.

31. Latourette tells us that Luther never was entirely free from *anfechtungen* but that “he had been given a basic insight which kept him from being powerless before them...,” p. 707.

32. Luther, pp. 82, 266.

33. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3:2.9, in *The Principal Upaniṣads*, translated by S. Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 692.



and in knowing that religious fact, Luther experiences more grace, specifically the taking on of divinity. Now, it must be said without hesitation that Luther remains in his own eyes a “sinner” (*simul justus et peccator*); and this is good religious psychology to avoid a dangerous inflation of the ego.<sup>34</sup> But in God’s eyes, Luther does appear to be divine: Luther writes, “Yet grace is sufficient to enable us to be accounted *entirely and completely righteous in God’s sight*, because His grace does not come in portions and pieces, separately, like so many gifts; rather, it takes us up completely into its embrace. . . .”<sup>35</sup> It is certainly true that prior to the breakthrough Luther is a man of little account; but following the breakthrough Luther takes on God’s own *sapientia*, God’s *virtus*, and God’s *justitia*.<sup>36</sup> It may even be that Luther takes on God’s “wrath”. Is that not what we hear in Luther’s voice when he announces that “the pope must be of the devil”, that reason is the “devil’s whore”, that Romanists have invented “crawling maggots of man-made laws and regulations, which by now have eaten into the entire world...so that nothing remains than their God, the belly”?<sup>37</sup> Luther, of course, does not personally acknowledge having taken on the negative side of God’s *justitia*.

This issue of a true Christian’s relationship to divinity has always been difficult for Christian thought; and a Paul or a Bernard would turn to imagery for help.<sup>38</sup> Luther, as we have just heard, turns to the image of “embrace” for which he is indebted in part to his spiritual mentor, Johann von Staupitz (?-1524).<sup>39</sup> Von Staupitz writes that the Christian life “prohibits all lewd thoughts ...and all foul language” and then goes on to say with a marvellous use of sexual language :

34. See Lortz, p. 16. For the psychology of “inflation,” see Edinger, pp. 7-36, 64.

35. Luther, p. 23.

36. The Latin is provided by Gordon Rupp, *Luther’s Progress to the Diet of Worms, 1521* (London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 33.

37. Luther, pp. 9, 34; see also *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Luther, Martin,” by B.A. Gerrish.

38. See Paul’s discussion of “body” in I Corinthians 15; see also Bernard of Clairvaux’s beautiful imagery for the “Fourth Degree of Love” in his *On the Love of God*.

39. Johann von Staupitz, “Eternal Predestination and its Execution in Time” in *Forerunners of the Reformation*, ed. Heiko Oberman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), pp. 125, 175-203.

These things are extremely difficult to carry out: until the beloved puts his hand secretly through the opening and touches the belly of the spouse. At this touch, the soul, suddenly changed, says, "My belly began to tremble, for after extreme weakness it sensed immense strength."<sup>40</sup>

It is Luther who states the following :

Who then can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness.<sup>41</sup>

Elsewhere, Luther tells us that the marriage takes place in "the depths of the heart"; and it is there that the bridegroom speaks first and says, "I am yours" while the bride responds in kind, "I am yours".<sup>42</sup> This response on the part of the human soul is called "faith"; but faith, as the "Latin Preface" states, is also a "gift" of God and a form of "grace".<sup>43</sup>

Our analysis should be pointing to Luther's famous rejection of "works" as a means to salvation. Human acts of will, even so-called religious acts, are merely "external", Luther says; and he means by this two things that overlap unsystematically in his writing.<sup>44</sup> They are literally external since many of them (e.g., pilgrimages) can be performed by the body without regard to the "heart" where the "royal marriage" takes place. And they are symbolically "external" in the Pauline sense since all of them (including prayer) can be performed without the grace of the deity. But, to my mind, the chief reason Luther rejects ritual is that in his personal experience "works" did not work to release him from his torment. Grisar is on the right track in criticizing Luther for erecting the "personal experiences of his own way of suffering into a general norm for all", but even this modern detractor must admit that Luther's religious *experience* "does not

40. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

41. Luther, "Freedom of a Christian," p. 61.

42. Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," p. 89.

43. The ambiguities of "faith" in Luther are visible in his "Preface to Romans," pp. 23-24.

44. See Luther, "Preface to Romans," especially pp. 20, 25; but compare with "Freedom of a Christian," pp. 53-54.

admit of contradiction.”<sup>45</sup> Still, one cannot help but think that for this very same reason Luther goes too far here; it is as if, to use the language of Jung, the “enantiodromia” of Luther’s conversion was so complete that the opposites remain apart. The monk Luther was an extremely willful person—he could boast of mortifying his body more than the rest—and so it is understandable that he should be extremely impressed by the other side of the religious life, by the “grace” of God which is the opposite of human “works”. But Luther sees no clear interrelationship between these two realities; and the result of that is yet another split, namely, the Catholic and Protestant traditions.

But human “works”, it seems, will not be denied. They return quite visibly in Luther’s corpus in ways that Luther intends but, I suggest, in other ways as well. We are told that the state of being “righteous” is like a “tree” that bears spontaneously and of its own nature “fruits”.<sup>46</sup> These fruits include the acts of loving service toward one’s neighbor; they are spontaneous and natural “works” (and we think of Cook Ting’s actions in the *Chuang Tzu*).<sup>47</sup> But there are other “fruits” of a darker tone: the ascetic acts performed for the purpose of “killing outright the sins and passions that remain alive after our justification.”<sup>48</sup> When it comes to the “ceremonies” of the sacraments, however, Luther’s position is less secure. He does reduce their number from seven to three or two; and those sacraments that remain are half “merely outward sign” since the accompanying word of scripture is of greater significance.<sup>49</sup> But Luther feels bound by that same scripture to say that it is a good thing to partake of the elements of the Lord’s Supper and a good thing to receive baptise. With regard to the former sacrament, it often seems that Luther intends its acts to be like “fruits”, i.e., performed only by the righteous so that their “faith may feed and grow strong”.<sup>50</sup> Yet with regard to the sacrament of baptism Luther comes close to saying that its performance evokes the initial act of God’s “grace” :

45. Hartmann Grisar, *Martin Luther* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961), p. 110.

46. Luther, “Freedom of a Christian.”

47. *Ibid.*; see *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University, 1964), pp. 46-47.

48. Luther, “Preface to Romans,” p. 29.

49. Luther, “Pagan Servitude of the Church,” p. 260.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

These considerations show clearly the difference as regards the rite of baptism, between the ministry which man renders, and the initiative which comes from God. For the manager baptizes; and yet does not baptize. He baptizes in as far as he performs the rite: he submerges the candidate. Yet, in one sense, he does not baptize, but only acts on God's behalf, and not on his own responsibility. Hence we ought to understand baptism at human hands just as if Christ Himself nay God Himself, baptized us with His own hands.<sup>51</sup>

This passage is interesting for its description of just how close the officiant of the rite comes to divinity. But what concerns us here is this: If the officiant "acts on God's behalf", do not his actions mean that God is dispensing his "grace" *ex opere operato*? Luther's controversial acceptance of infant baptism would seem to confirm this view of the matter.<sup>52</sup> Besides, Luther is fond of preaching to sinners in order "to make them humble and yearn for help"; because, as he puts it, "When a man believes himself to be utterly lost, light breaks."<sup>53</sup> Luther implies that, at the very least, a sinner can place himself in a situation where the "grace" of God is likely to occur. And, finally, let us recall Luther's words about the breakthrough: "At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night..." There, in those words, "grace" and "works" appear side by side—a union of opposites, Jung would say—but this "royal marriage" does not seem to have received Martin Luther's conscious blessing.

### *Tantric Buddhism*

Turning our attention now to materials of Buddhism, we find ourselves faced with a religion which throughout its history placed highest value upon religious experience—as did Luther—and which, like the Christian reformer, took a dim view of reasoning that was not truly "experimental". Māluṅkyāputta found this out in the early Pāli scriptures when he complained about the "theories which The Blessed One has left unelucidated;" Gautama

51. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 307. It is this sort of ambiguity that leads Jung to say that Luther's "attempts at explanation" are under the "spell" of his natural psychological bias.

53. Edinger, p. 56.

Buddha said he was like a man suffering terribly from an arrow in his chest yet wanting to know how arrows are made.<sup>54</sup> In the matter of “grace”, however, the Buddhist religion has shown variety. King has stated in a useful chapter that Early Buddhism “totally denies the operation of grace in its discipline and... contends that a man is saved sheerly by his own efforts.”<sup>55</sup> This scholar goes on to demonstrate that the issues are a bit more complex than his statement implies; but it remains true that the Pāli tradition, at least, is strongly influenced by Gautama’s last words: “Work out your salvation with diligence.”<sup>56</sup> It would seem to be otherwise with the scriptures of the later non-tantric Mahāyāna form of Buddhism where we learn the following from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, here translated by Edward Conze :

Just so, whatever Dharmas the Jina’s disciples establish,  
 Whatever they teach, whatever adroitly explain—  
 Concerning the work of the holy which leads to the fullness of  
 bliss,  
 And also the fruit of this work—it is the Tathāgata’s doing.<sup>57</sup>

In this passage, a term for “grace” (such as *adhiṣṭhāna*, usually translated “blessing”) does not appear; but I think it can be said that the thing itself, a *religious structure of grace*, is present.<sup>58</sup> The disciples “teach”, and yet it is not their own teaching but that of Another; they may themselves “work” toward the fullness of bliss, yet they really depend upon the “doing” of the Buddha-reality that is ultimately “supramundane” (*lokottara*).<sup>59</sup> And I think it is interesting to see again the image of “fruit”, that spontaneous and natural product of the religious life of which Luther himself speaks in a context of “grace”.

Having its origin in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. in India, tantric Buddhism considers itself to be a superior form of the

54. *Buddhism in Translations*, translated by H. C. Warren (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 117ff.

55. Winston L. King, *Buddhism and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 204.

56. *Buddhism*, p. 109.

57. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary*, translated by Edward Conze (Bollinas: Four Seasons, 1973), p. 9.

58. See Raoul Birnbaum, *The Healing Buddha* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1979) for *adhiṣṭhāna* as “blessing.”

59. For this sort of terminology see *Mkhas-grub-rje’s*, p. 103.

Mahāyāna.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, this late Buddhist tradition is well-known for the attitude of self-reliance and for “works” more likely associated with what the Mahāyānists call the “Hīnayāna.” S.B. Dasgupta tells us in his *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* that the “primary concern” of the Buddhist *tantras* is to “dictate practical methods for the realization of the supreme goal.”<sup>61</sup> Wayman concurs and says that the tantric texts are something like “recipe books” since they are “essentially practical, are concerned with doing things such as rites.”<sup>62</sup> In accordance with this emphasis, the performers of the rites are ranked according to their “faculty” (*indriya*) or capacity for what needs to be done.<sup>63</sup> And the methods also are categorized according to the three aspects of the performer: the “body” performs certain postures called *mudrās*; the “speech” sounds the sacred syllables called *mantras*; and the “mind” achieves profound states called *samādhis*.<sup>64</sup>

A glimpse at what is involved in tantric practice is provided by the native Tibetan commentator Mkhas-grub-rje in his *Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* translated by Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman. He summarizes :

In the three lower Tantras (i.e. Kriyā, Caryā, and Yoga) there are neither the aims (*artha*) nor the terms (*vyavahāra*) of the Steps of Production (*utpatti-krama*) and the Steps of Completion (*niṣpanna-krama*). If one proceeds according to the characteristics of the Steps of Production, it is not sufficient to limit oneself to an intense contemplation (*bhāvanā*) in immediacy conforming to the five perfections of the resultative complete Buddha, for it is also necessary to have the *yoga* of intense contemplation conforming to the three spheres of purification (*sbyaṅ gzi*), namely, birth, death, and the intermediate state...

For the complete characteristics of the Steps of Completion, it does not suffice to have merely the intense contemplation of voidness (*śūnyatā*) of the natural state (*gnas lugs*) of things

60. *Ibid*, pp. 93, 335.

61. S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1974), p. 1.

62. Wayman, *Yoga*, p. 54.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

(*dharma*) and the intense contemplation of the *yoga* of the winds (*vāyu*) but it is also necessary to have three special things, as the case may be: (1) the knowledge of bliss-void (*sukha-śūnya*) which occurs from making the wind(s) enter, stay, and rise for leaving in the central vein (*avadhūtī*); (2) the divine body which occurs from that knowledge; and (3) the *yoga* of piercing the vital centers in the uncommon ‘means’ body (*upāya-deha*) attracted by those two (i.e. the knowledge and the divine body).<sup>65</sup>

These are not “Christian” materials! Esoteric even in the East, tantric statements have a palpably foreign quality to the Western mind and are reflected at best, I would say, in the West’s medieval alchemy.<sup>66</sup> Both kinds of materials are complex due to their technical demands but also due to their inherent obscurity; and both are replete with instructions for what to do. Mkhas-grub-rje is telling us here about the “means” (*upāya*) to the Buddhist religious goal of enlightenment (*bodhi*). It is a fact that this goal is described as having both a noetic character and an affective character, as does Luther’s experience of “grace”. The successful yogin comes to know—with the faculty of “insight” (*prajñā*) often symbolized as a female deity—the nature of ordinary reality as “void” (*śūnya*) of substance or “self-nature” (*svabhāva*); he also experiences the feeling of “bliss” (*sukha*) which accompanies the knowledge. Sometimes this liberating experience is called, as in our passage, the “knowledge of bliss-void”; but elsewhere it is the “union of bliss-void” symbolized by male and female deities in sexual embrace.<sup>67</sup> Luther could say that this image points to some sort of “royal marriage”. But I suppose Luther would also say that the tantric goal “must be of the devil”; whatever its meaning, it is—after all—achieved by human hands.

We might want to point out to a Martin Luther that many of the “works” here are of an internal kind. Buddhism took the position very early that “mental action” is the most critical form of *karma*; and so it is not surprising to find Mkhas-grub-rje speak-

65. *Mkhas-grub-rje's*, p. 157.

66. See C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12.

67. For some data on this see Dasgupta, *Introduction*, pp. 3-4, 137f; Dasgupta’s externalistic interpretation of the “union”, however, is questionable. See my “Problems of Language in Buddhist Tantra,” *History of Religions*, 15, no. 3 (February, 1976), pp. 231-250.

ing of “intense contemplation” as the chief religious act.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the Tibetan commentator is making use of a classic hierarchy of literature within the Buddhist Tantra: the Kriyā, Caryā, and Yoga *tantras* are called the “lower *tantras*” because they have either a lot or a little to do with practices called “outer action” (*bāhya kriyā*)—e.g., washing, circumambulations, the recitation of books; but the Anuttara-yoga division (referred to in the passage as “Steps of Production” and “Steps of Completion”) contains the “highest” practice characterized by “inner yoga” (*adhyātma-yoga*).<sup>69</sup> Again, a Luther could be pleased at the value placed upon things internal here; but he would also say that all acts performed without “grace” are, in the Pauline sense, symbolically “external” and cannot save.

If we turn to the problem of “initiation” in Buddhist Tantra, however, I think we can begin to see some significant ambiguity. For it is a fact that the yogin cannot simply perform the actions described so esoterically by Mkhas-grub-rje; he must be prepared to perform them by way of “initiation” (*abhiṣeka*; *dbaṅ bskur*). The Sanskrit for this term literally means “sprinkling” and reflects the ancient Āryan rite of consecrating the king (Basham calls it “baptism”); but it may also reflect a pre-Āryan concern for ritual purity as suggested by the presence of the so-called “Great Bath” at the archaeological site of Mohenjo-dāro.<sup>70</sup> While it is true that many of the tantric Buddhist initiations employ a “flask” for sprinkling with water, it is most interesting to see that the Tibetan translation for *abhiṣeka* is “conferral of power”.<sup>71</sup> This translation was probably made in the tenth century in Tibet with the aid of an Indian scholar aware of the current use of the term. For this essay, the choice of translation is important; because it implies a structure of grace, namely, the conferral on the practitioner of a “power” (*dbaṅ*) which he does not naturally possess. And it is only with this “other-power” that the yogin is able to perform the esoteric acts of Tantra.

68. I. B. Horner, “Buddhism: the Theravāda” in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths*, ed. R. C. Zaehner (Boston: Beacon, 1959), pp. 291-292.

69. *Mkhas-grub-rje's*, p. 219.

70. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York: Grove Press, 1954), p. 82; D. D. Kosambi, *Ancient India* (New York: World, 1969), pp. 66-68.

71. Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), p. 60.



Of course, an act must be performed to grant the yogin this sort of “grace”; and Wayman provides us with a translation of a short initiation ritual that will show us something of what is involved. This is the “mirror initiation” from the *Guhyasamāja* lineage of the Anuttara-yoga class; its somewhat surprisingly external character corresponds to the fact that it is a kind of “flask” initiation into the Steps of Production which can overlap in some respects the “lower” Yoga class.<sup>72</sup> We witness first of all an “eye-opening” ceremony :

The method of “eye opening” proceeds by reciting and applying (of ointment). (The *guru*) places in a gold or silver vessel the golden eye ointment consisting of butter and honey. While the disciple imagines on his eyes the syllable PRAM, (the *guru*) applies (the eye ointment) with a probe (*śalākā*), reciting OM VAJRANETRA APAHARA PAṬALAM HRĪḤ (“Om. Remove the film that is on the diamond eye! Hrīḥ”). He repeats the verse (of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-tantra*): “Just as the King of Healing (*bhaiṣajya-rāja*) with his probe removed the worldly film, so may the Buddhas dispel your film of ignorance, my son!” While he is so reciting, they imagine that the knowledge eye is opened upon removal of the nescience film.<sup>73</sup>

This is a remarkable account, unusually direct for an esoteric tradition. We are shown a sort of “medical” rite whose purpose—like the first effect of “grace” in Martin Luther—is to remove ignorance and to open the candidate’s eyes to a new view of reality. The rite is strikingly concrete with its ointment application—“merely outward sign”, Luther would say—yet it is performed with a noticeable accompaniment of “word” in the form of sacred syllable and recitation. While the tantric Buddhists, unlike Luther, do not emphasize the acts of speech as the true channel of “grace”, we do know that they can emphasize the acts of mind—here, the act of “imagining” that all has been accomplished. But Luther, too, in moments of treating “faith” as voluntary can say: “There is, therefore, no other worthy self-preparation and no other proper observance of the mass than by faith, the faith by which we *believe* in the mass, i.e., in the divine

72. Wayman, *Yoga*, p. 87.

73. Wayman, *Buddhist Tantras*, p. 69.

promise.”<sup>74</sup> Finally, let us note that the minister of the rite calls upon another power to perform the healing: the *guru* calls upon the “King of Healing”, upon the “Buddhas”. These beings are not “deities” in the ordinary Indian sense of transmigrating *devas*; but they are called *devas*, nonetheless, in the tantric texts. But the critical question is this: Does it work, i.e., does the minister’s calling upon “divine power” evoke an act of “grace”? The answer is in the affirmative, *ex opere operato*. At the very least, as Mkhas-grub-rje explains, “initiation establishes the capacity of producing ‘wisdom-knowledge’ (*vidyā-jñāna*) as the antidote for unwisdom (*avidyā*).”<sup>75</sup>

The second part of the initiation rite is a “mirror” ceremony :

Having had his eye opened in that manner, (the disciple) should look upon all *dharmas* as reflected images. So (the disciple) may accomplish that, he (the *guru*) shows a mirror incanted with an  $\bar{A}\bar{H}$ , and recites :

All *dharmas* are like reflected images,  
clear and pure, without turbulence;  
ungraspable, inexpressible, truly arisen  
from cause and action (*hetu* and *karma*).

Just like Vajrasattva in a mirror that is clear, pure, without turbulence; so also the Buddhas, universal lords, themselves abide in the heart of thee, my son.

Now that you have so understood the *dharmas* as without intrinsic nature and without location, may you perform incomparably the aim of sentient beings, so they may be born as sons of the Protectors!

These verses enjoin (the disciple) to understand in general that all *dharmas* are like a reflected image, and in particular that the Vajrasattva dwelling in one’s heart is like a reflected image in a mirror.

There is less bodily action here and more recitation, but both attempt to express what it is that the successful yogin “sees” mentally—with his “knowledge eye”—when enlightened. We

74. Luther, “Pagan Servitude of the Church,” p. 278.

75. *Mkhas-grub-rje’s*, p. 315.

cannot discuss here the meaning of *dharmas* in Buddhism or the multivalent meaning of “mirror” symbolism in the history of Indian religion, but we do observe here that three realities are implied by the initiation verses.<sup>76</sup> Wayman, with the aid of Tsoṅ-kha-pa’s commentary, informs us that the first verse describes *saṃvṛti* or “conventional” reality properly perceived while the second verse describes *paramārtha* or “absolute” reality.<sup>77</sup> This means that the enlightened one no longer perceives (1) ordinary reality as substantial but knows it to be (2) as insubstantial—as “void of intrinsic nature”—as a “breathy” syllable incanted on a mirror’s surface. But he also knows that there is (3) a substantial extraordinary reality called “Vajrasattva” or “Diamond Being” (equivalent to the “Buddhas”) located within the yogin’s own “heart”. Luther could say with Paul that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”; and so it should not surprise a Luther too much to hear that there is something divine within the tantric Buddhist yogin. But I think Luther would be surprised to learn that what is revealed as an absolute truth is this: the transcendent “King of Healing” evoked in the first part of the rite as if he were outside the yogin is found at last to be within the “heart”. In all fairness to our comparison, we should point out that the Buddhas are said to be “without location” (*apraṭiṣṭhita*). This means, at least, that the divine power found within may be found elsewhere; and it means in particular that divinity can be discovered even in “conventional” reality whose *dharmas*—so says the verse—are also “pure”. This, then, is the secret of final “nondifference” between Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa generally; and it represents a “union of opposites”. It is tempting to say that the Buddhists perceive the folly of separating realities that are not truly separated; and it is tempting to say that this is the meaning of Luther’s inability to keep “works” out of his thoughts about “grace”.

Mkhas-grub-rje writes the following verse of homage at the opening of his *Fundamentals* :

I bow to the feet of the most excellent guide (*guru*)  
Who, possessed of the eye of vastest knowledge,

76. See the very interesting article by Alex Wayman “The Mirror as a Pan-Buddhist Metaphor-Simile,” *History of Religions*, 13, no. 4 (May, 1974), pp. 251-269.

77. Wayman, *Buddhist Tantras*, p. 70.

Envisions all states of the far reaching knowable,  
 Who holds the ocean of the copious well expressed teachings.  
 His Ganges River of well expressed teachings<sup>78</sup>  
 Has poured down upon the land of candidates...

The location and tone of this verse suggest that it is a homage to the Buddha-reality despite the use of the term *guru*; but we begin to see here the close relationship of the minister of the initiatory rite and divinity. The Buddhists tell us :

One should be convinced that among the initiatory deities invited...Locanā and the others hold the flask and actually confer initiation; however, the lifting of the flask is done by the 'preceptor' (*upādhyāya*) and the Hierophant (*ācārya*).<sup>79</sup>

Luther, we recall, states that the priest's hands submerge the candidate at the time of Christian baptism although, actually, it is the deity's own hands which perform the rite. The tantric Buddhists are saying the same thing about their sacrament although, of course, their initiating deities are "female" and not "male".<sup>80</sup> But now we are in a position to see something quite striking: when the *guru* in the "mirror initiation" called upon the deities to send their "healing power", he did not actually do anything at all; in reality, it was the divine calling unto the divine. That human performance was a thoroughly "gracious" act.

Since there is a marked ambiguity in the matter of "grace" within tantric Buddhism, I suppose it should not be disconcerting to learn that there are ritual acts which must be performed whereby the *guru* becomes identified with deity. These are the complex procedures called "self-generation" or the imaginative generation of one's self into an aspect of Buddha-reality. I will not attempt to describe this abstruse procedure here, but Mkhas-grub-rje does present six steps which culminate in the transformation of one's "ordinary pride" or ordinary mind into "divine pride" or the mind of a deity.<sup>81</sup> Without more careful scrutiny, I suspect that there is little of that Western religious psychology that kept

78. *Mkhas-grub-rje's*, p. 17.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 311, 313.

80. It might be noted that Luther is "initiated" by the more feminine side of his male deity, namely, the "fatherly" loving side.

81. *Mkhas-grub-rje's*, pp. 159-172.

Luther from viewing himself as wholly divine. But it must be noted that all the procedures of initiation take place within a *maṇḍala* or “circle” which Jung has said is an image to “protect the unity of consciousness from being burst asunder by the unconscious,” i.e., from becoming identified with the divine forces of the non-ego.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, it would seem protective for the candidate to take initiation from deity “outside” himself even though he will come to know finally that divinity lies within. And yet the candidate *cannot* be initiated unless he or she has “permission” from the Lord; it is this, too, which the *guru* identified with deity can provide. Mkhas-grub-rje puts it strongly :

Furthermore, if the permission (*anujñā*) of the gods has been received, one may enter into Initiation and the other acts of the *maṇḍala* even if the prescribed amount of service is not completed. That very permission substitutes for them easure of service, because that permission is paramount.<sup>83</sup>

As an additional structure of grace there is the “flowertossing” rite which introduces an element of meaningful chance. Tucci tells us :

The disciple, blindfold, is led to the eastern gate of the *maṇḍala* and there receives from the Master a short stick of wood (such as used in India for cleaning the teeth) or a flower which he must throw on to the *maṇḍala*. The section on to which these fall (which is protected by one of the five Buddhas—or their symbols) will indicate the way that is suited to the disciple.<sup>84</sup>

And, finally, prior to initiation there is consultation of the would-be initiate’s dreams. Mkhas-grub-rje writes :

How is a dream interpreted ritually? When in a dream one has a joyful dream of the Three Jewels...one’s own deity (*svadevatā*), the Bodhisattvas and the fourfold congregation...; mountains, elephants, cascades, the obtaining of riches and

82. C. G. Jung, “Commentary on ‘The Secret of the Golden Flower,’” *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13, par. 46-47.

83. *Mkhas-grub-rje’s*, p. 279.

84. Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1969), p. 90; Also, pp. 53, 54 in G. W. Houston, “Mandalas Ritual and Functional”, *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 1, n. 2, pp. 47-57.

clothing, and so on, he should exert himself toward the accomplishment.<sup>85</sup>

This means that should the candidate not have dreams of a propitious order, the initiation ceremony cannot be performed.

The evidence mounts, I think, and what we observe is a tradition of Buddhism quite rightly reputed to be a path of “works” but also a tradition which dramatically undercuts the assumption that a mere human being of his own free will can attain to the highest religious goal. This is perhaps brought to our attention most forcefully by the fact that the candidate—having received beyond his conscious control propitious dreams, having learned the proper path from the toss of a flower, having received permission to be initiated in order merely to attempt to become enlightened—himself is generated imaginatively into deity. It is not even he, the merely human candidate, who will be the recipient of divine power! But, then, it is Martin Luther the Westerner who said approaching his first celebration of the Mass :

Who am I, that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? The angels surround him. At his nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable little pygmy, say ‘I want this, I ask for that’? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin and I am speaking to the living, eternal and the true God.<sup>86</sup>

The tantric Buddhists can sympathize with this Christian’s problem and say: “He who is not deity cannot worship deity” (*nādevo devam arcayet*).<sup>87</sup> And they solve the problem by teaching the candidate to imagine actively that he is actually divine. In doing so, the candidate anticipates the goal: the affiliation of the yogin’s ordinary body, speech, and mind with the extra ordinary Body, Speech, and Mind of the Lord.<sup>88</sup> As strange as this goal sounds, as Eastern as it is, it must be recognized that Luther too experienced “grace” and took upon himself the Strength and Wisdom of God.

85. *Mkhas-grub-rje’s*, p. 203.

86. Bainton, p. 30.

87. Wayman, *Yoga*, p. 68. Note that the Sanskrit for this statement in Mircea Eliade, *Yoga* (Princeton: Bollingen, 1969), p. 208, is inaccurate; as it stands, it says just the reverse.

88. Wayman, *Yoga*, pp. 62-63.

Since Carl Jung provided us at the outset with a point of view and a set of terms, I would like to close with a word from a Jungian analyst, Marie Louise von Franz :

Is it your good deeds which lead to salvation, or is it the grace of God? In my *experience* you can only stay in the contradiction and stick to the paradox.<sup>89</sup>

89. Marie Louise von Franz, *Puer Aeternus* (New York: Spring, 1970), 2.7.





# Francis and Milarepa, Two Saints

by

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Editor's introduction :

Mr. Richard Langdon has presented a brief, but significant essay on two saints. Now we use "saint" as one who has achieved a high level of *recognized* spirituality. Milarepa (Tibetan: *mi la ras pa*, the cotton-clad one) was noted for his expression of love towards both others and an Ultimate Horizon<sup>a</sup> (e.g., a guru's divine principle). Therefore he follows the two commandments necessary to achieve eternal life (Luke 10:27). His beautiful singing, original songs and compassion marked him as a saint, not his dogmatic instruction or esoteric teachings. Francis, on the other hand, not only could kiss a leper but it is said that birds lighted on his head. He too, then, was a gentle saint, not noted for doctrinal exposition. The two men could have prayed together had they met since Milarepa practiced what is called in Sanskrit: *bhakti*, or divine devotion. Milarepa, although a Buddhist did not seek the knowledge path: *prajñā-mārga*, as a means to salvation. This is not to say, however, that he did not increase in wisdom through service to others. This essay, as does the one by Professor Elder, shows that the *tantrics* do, indeed, rely upon the "holy other" (e.g., a guru, human or divine) for salvation and do not become enlightened strictly by self-effort as do the Theravādins. This self-enlightenment is called by the Tibetans *rañ-'grol*, whereas enlightenment by others' help is *gžan-'grol*. This is similar to what the Second Vatican Council calls 'perfect liberation... by one's own efforts (*propriis conatibus*) or by reliance upon help from above (*superiore auxilio, innixi*)'.<sup>b</sup>

"The works of artists and men of letters outlive the deeds of businessmen, soldiers and statesmen. The poets and philos-

a. Following here the term as used by Karl Rahner.

b. See p. 81 of "A Christian Perspective on Buddhist Liberation", Roger Corless as found in *Buddhism and Christianity*, ed. Claude Geffré and Mariasusai Dhavamony (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 74-87.

ophers outrange the historians; while the prophets and saints overtop and outlast them a'l."

Arnold J. Toynbee  
*Civilization on Trial*

As a historian and as a follower of the Dharma, it has been most useful for me to set about doing research concerning the lives of two of the world's greatest saints. The one being Saint Francis of Assisi from the wooded hill area of central Italy known as Umbria. The other being the Jetsün Milarepa, Tibet's yogī saint. One comes from a traditional Western, Catholic background, the other is a Mahāyāna Buddhist of the Kargyütpa tradition. The two saints were near contemporaries, Milarepa having died in 1135 A.D. and Francis having been born in 1182 A.D. Before I discuss the lives of these two saints, I believe that it is important to note two ideas concerning the religious life, as both of these men lived the life of a religious ascetic and hermit.

Questions that seem of importance are: Why is it important to know why we are here on this earth? Why am I here, who am I and what am I to do while in this human form? These are basic questions that Francis and Milarepa both considered. Both seemed to possess a longing to understand the unknown, or God. Both eventually turned to a religious way of life as an attempt to find their answers. Of interest to this writer will be the similarities of the lives of these two saints and also the reasons for their having chosen the spiritual paths that they followed. For example, how much did their culture influence their decisions? A term that Dr. Houston refers to as "culture-lock" is useful here.<sup>1</sup> How much were they locked into their own individual traditions?

At the time of the birth of Milarepa, approximately the middle of the 11th century, "India, like China, was highly civilized at a time when Europe was still in an age of comparative barbarism; and...Tibet...was probably superior in its remarkable philosophical and religious development to the Western World at the

1. Following here a term introduced by G.W. Houston in his class on Comparative Religions taught at Ball State during the year 1979.

same epoch.”<sup>2</sup> Neither Francis nor Milarepa were born into particularly religious families. Francis was born to a wealthy cloth merchant by the name of Pietro Bernardone. Francis had been named John but perhaps was named Francis because of Pietro’s having become rich from his dealings with the French, or maybe because of Francis’ own love of the French Troubadours and of the French ways of life. Although Francis was wealthy in comparison to most, he was not a member of the aristocracy. He received some schooling and was probably somewhat knowledgeable of French and Latin. Chesterton tells us in his book *St. Francis of Assisi*, that Francis’ main ambition was to win fame as a French poet. This to me seems somewhat strange, especially since he was Italian and not French. His second most and perhaps even greater ambition was to win fame as a soldier. It was the time of the Crusades and Francis could feel the call of adventure that came with rescuing the Holy Land from the heathen infidel. Another thought that was certainly in Francis’ mind was that of winning fame in battle; he might become knighted and become an aristocrat himself.

Francis’s first opportunity for fame and glory in war came during a battle between his own city of Assisi and that of neighboring Perugia in the year 1202. The forces of Assisi were quickly destroyed and Francis was taken captive. He remained in prison in Perugia for a year until his release because of a severe illness.<sup>3</sup> After having recovered from his illness, he again set out to be a warrior and once more he became ill. On this particular occasion he encountered a leper walking towards him on the road. It was forbidden for the leper to talk to other people and Francis was more fearful of a leper than of a powerful foe in battle. On this occasion Francis realized that his fears were unwarranted and that even the leper was a child of God. He jumped from his horse, embraced the leper and kissed him. Francis later said that this was the actual moment in which he first achieved freedom.<sup>4</sup> From this period on in his life, Francis no longer pursued the life of a soldier, but followed instead the life of a religious.

2. W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *Tibet’s Great Yogi Milarepa* (Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1969 (1928)), 1.

3. Michael De La Bedoyere, *Francis—A Biography of the Saint of Assisi* (Image Books, Doubleday and Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1962), 38-40.

4. *Ibid*, 23.

Leaving Francis aside for the moment, let us turn to the boyhood of Milarepa. The translator of Rechung's biography of Milarepa writes that he was "...dominated in his youth, like many a great saint of other Faiths, by the lower nature."<sup>5</sup> Milarepa was born into a good family of noble descent. His father died while he was still of a young age and he, along with his mother and sister and all of his father's estate, was placed under the care of his paternal aunt and uncle. In relating his early life to Rechung, Milarepa said that :

we were deprived of all rights over our property, ...compelled in summer to work as field-labourers for mine uncle, and in winter as spinners and carders of wool for mine aunt. The food given us was so coarse that it was fit only for dogs. Our clothing was miserable rags tied to our bodies with a rope for girdle. Compelled to work without respite, our hands and feet became cracked and blistered. The insufficiency and coarseness of our food made us miserably emaciated and haggard. Our hair, once adorned with gold and turquoises, now became hard and stiff, and infested with lice.<sup>6</sup>

This life is much different from the life of Francis as a young man. The parents of Milarepa's wife-to-be, Zesay, used to console him by saying :

As long as men themselves are not turned into property, property is not stable; it is like the dew on the blades of grass. So thou needest not mourn too much the loss of thy wealth.<sup>7</sup>

Milarepa regretted his circumstances and was very loyal to his sister and mother. His mother was very displeased with her current condition and wished only revenge upon the brother of her late husband and his wife who she nicknamed the "Tiger-Demon". She knew that her one chance was through Milarepa. He studied reading and writing with a local lama, and when he was a young man she demanded of him that he should go off to study the Black Arts so as to reap revenge on his uncle's family. She also told him that if he returned and was not able to perform satisfactorily

5. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 3.

6. *Ibid*, 55.

7. *Ibid*, 56.

so as to reap ample revenge, then she would take her own life in his presence. This inspired in him a great determination for accomplishment so as not to have his mother commit suicide before his eyes. On inquiring who was most noted as an adept in the Black Arts of producing death and property damage by hailstones, he was directed to a "famous sorcerer named Lama Yung-tun-Trogyal (Wrathful and Victorious Teacher of Evil), of Nyak."<sup>8</sup> The plan was for Milarepa to learn magic and then to be able to take the lives of his uncle's family and bring destruction upon the villagers' crops for their not having intervened in the matter of his estate in the first place. Although this sounds much different from the life of Francis, we must remember that both young men were in positions which could result in the taking of another's life be it through sorcery or as a soldier. One of the primary differences between the two saints at this time is that Francis relies upon prayer and guidance of God, whereas Milarepa relies upon the knowledge and direction of a guru. However, it must be pointed out that this guru is seen as a divine figure. He personifies a particular deity.

Milarepa studied with Lama Trogyal for one year and was told that his knowledge was complete. At this time he told the lama that he believed he needed further teaching and did not feel that his lama had taught him all that he might have been able to teach. The lama, his guru, said to him: "I withheld the Art from thee in the beginning, because I feared that thou mightest use it stupidly, without having sufficient cause for its exercise."<sup>9</sup> The guru will not communicate to his disciple the core teachings until he feels that the disciple is ready to receive them fully. Being satisfied with Milarepa's sincerity, the lama then teaches him the arts he desires. Upon learning this teaching, Milarepa sat down to meditate upon the destruction of his uncle's family. There was a marriage festival being held at the uncle's home and through a freak accident the house collapsed and thirty-five persons are said to have been killed. All died except the uncle and aunt, who were spared so as to be aware of the revenge that had been directed towards them. When Milarepa returned to his home his mother told him that the village people were threatening her and her

8. *Ibid*, 65.

9. *Ibid*, 68.

family and that he must destroy the crops with hail. He did this and the anger of the village people was so great that he dared not to return even to visit his mother. On thinking over these events he wished that he were able to leave his guru and to go study the Right Path of the Dharma. His guru had himself decided to change his ways and encouraged Milarepa to find another guru and to make amends.

Therefore, at a certain point in both lives the two, Francis and Milarepa, chose the religious path. Neither knew where the path would lead them. The main distinctions in their methods were that Milarepa again set out to find a qualified guru and Francis prayed before a crucifix in the neglected, run down, old shrine of St. Damian near Assisi. One day while praying there, Francis "Is said to have heard a voice say, 'Francis, seest thou not that my house is in ruins? Go and restore it for me.'"<sup>10</sup> Francis took the voice literally and set about the actual repair of the chapel of St. Damian. He also repaired the church of San Pietro della Spina and the Church of St. Mary of the Angels at the Portiuncula. The first thing which he did was to sell his horse and also several bales of his father's cloth (his father was a wealthy merchant) so as to have the money for the necessary repairs. His father thought he was insane and when he finally caught Francis, he placed Francis in a locked room. His mother released him and Francis hid in a cave for over a month until he came to trial before a local bishop. The bishop told him to return the money for the cloth to his father. It was a public trial on the steps of a public plaza and Francis not only returned the money, but also disrobed and returned to his father the clothes on his back that had been given him also. Francis stated that Pietro was his father but that he was now a child of God. Upon this he left the village of Assisi to enter upon the spiritual path, naked and poor as on the day he was born. He returned to St. Damians and began to repair the church there. "This period of conversion and manual work covered two or three years—a substantial portion of Francis' twenty-three years or so as a man of religion."<sup>11</sup> Chesterton states that he "became a new sort of beggar—asking for stones

10. G.K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (Image Books, Doubleday and Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1957 (1924)), 54.

11. De La Bedoyere, *op. cit.*, 79.

instead of bread". Francis is said to have learned how to build strong walls through helping to fortify the town of Assisi for war. There are several interesting aspects of this period of Francis' life. It is most probable that the voice instructing Francis to repair his house was referring to the Mystical Body of Christ as being a living Church and residing in the hearts of men. Francis at this time seemed to take it more literally and began the actual physical repair of the churches himself. He was soon to be joined by others who were impressed by his faith and his style of life. Perhaps at this early time he realized the importance of having the churches repaired in order to house his future followers? Of primary interest is that Milarepa spent a similar period of time laying stones to construct not churches but houses for his new guru, Marpa the Translator. Milarepa had been sent to Marpa by a lama of the Nīngma Sect who told him, "Between thee and him there is a karmic connexion, which cometh from past lives. To him thou must go."<sup>12</sup> Marpa was a disciple of the great Indian Saint Naropa and had obtained supernatural knowledge in some basic Tantric Doctrines.

On being introduced to Marpa, Milarepa bowed and touched his feet with his forehead. He then said as way of introduction and as to his mission: "I, O Precious Guru, am a great sinner from the West Highlands, and I have come here to offer body, speech, and mind to thee. I pray thee to provide me with food, clothing, and spiritual instruction, and enable me to obtain Liberation in this very lifetime."<sup>13</sup> The first thing Marpa required of Milarepa was that he build a stone house for his son. When the house was partially completed, he ordered it to be torn down and the stones replaced where they had been before. The same thing happened two more times on different locations and finally Milarepa was ordered to build a stone house of ten stories that would be completed and not destroyed. At the time of its completion, Marpa was to impart to Milarepa some secret Tantric teachings. It was nowhere stated as to how long Milarepa worked at building the houses, but it must have been for nearly as long as the three years that Francis spent repairing the churches. Milarepa

12. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 87.

13. *Ibid*, 91.

had help from no one. There were times during this trial period that Milarepa became very discouraged. He said :

About this time, I began seriously to make up my mind to go and seek another Guru. But, pondering the matter over again, I came to the conclusion that as regardeth the Doctrine whereby I might obtain perfect Emancipation in this very lifetime, my present Guru was the only one possessing it. I saw, too, that unless I obtained Emancipation in this lifetime, the evil deeds which I had committed would be enough to cast me into one of the Hells.<sup>14</sup>

Thus he continued to stack stones and mix mud. The main difference in the two religious paths at this point was that Milarepa had a guru that would direct him in all matters. Francis was relying upon faith and prayer, having little training or direction in this field except for dreams, voices he may have heard and his own intuition.

In the years to come, as both saints developed in their religious lives a common question arose in the minds of each of them. Francis asked: "Shall I spend my life in prayer, or shall I go about preaching?"<sup>15</sup> Francis had trouble deciding on the matter and his friend Clare told him that he was meant "to preach the Gospel and to work for the good of souls".<sup>16</sup> In the years directly after leaving his guru Marpa, Milarepa also wondered about whether it would be best to meditate or to go about preaching. He chose the life of meditation and was to remain in mountain caves for the remainder of his life. However, he did teach many disciples. Both Francis and Milarepa loved the open air country. Francis, the hills of Assisi; Milarepa, the majestic Himalayas. Both men were known for their love of nature and of animals. It is said of St. Francis that "His tenderness toward animals was an expression of his dedication to Christ and of his practical compassion for all Creation."<sup>17</sup> Milarepa was said to have chosen, at one time, a place for meditation on the border between Nepal and Tibet "where one could always hear the cries of wild animals and watch vultures hovering above...where deer and antelopes played...

14. *Ibid*, 108.

15. De La Bedoyere, *op. cit.*, 144.

16. *Ibid*, 145.

17. Edward A. Armstrong, *St. Francis, Nature Mystic* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973), 7.



(and where) lived many monkeys, peacocks, turkeys, and other beautiful birds".<sup>18</sup> Both men are said to have preached the Gospel or the Dharma to animals on various occasions. Francis is most remembered for his sermon to the birds in which he exhorts them to praise their Creator for giving them wings to fly and food to eat. Francis believed the Spirit of the Creator to be in the birds and animals as well as within man. Milarepa also on several occasions preached the Dharma to animals and truly believed to be directing their lives to a higher future environment.

Besides preaching to animals, both men placed a certain amount of importance on dreams. Both men dreamed concerning the future destiny of their own lives and the spread of their work while on this earth. When Francis first visited Pope Innocent III to ask for his blessings for the brothers, it is said that the Pope had a dream where Francis was actually holding up the temple of St. John Lateran and kept it from falling. This was interpreted to mean that Francis and his followers would perhaps be the ones to give the Church the religious guidance it needed at the time. Milarepa had a dream translated by his guru Marpa saying that he would be Marpa's successor and the main individual to develop the Kargyütpa sect. Although Milarepa often translated dreams himself, he also stated on several occasions that they were not important as such and were merely illusions.

A similarity more important even than dreams of these two great saints was perhaps their having to deal with the question of whether to spend their lives in contemplation and meditation or to be active and preach and do service to people in that way. We have already mentioned where Clare related to Francis that she believed he was to preach the Gospel. Francis himself liked nothing better than solitary prayer. His main concern was "that he had not suffered enough to be worthy even to be a distant follower of his suffering God".<sup>19</sup> Milarepa, it is said, thought he could efficiently help sentient beings if he liked and had decided to do just that. In exception to this he said: "I had a direct command from my Tutelary Deity to go on devoting my whole life to meditation, as my Guru had commanded. By that alone I

18. Garma C. C. Chang, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (Harper Colophon Books, N.Y., 1962), 142.

19. G. K. Chesterton, *op. cit.*, 213.

should serve the Cause of the Buddhistic Faith; and, also, in serving all sentient beings thereby, I could do no better".<sup>20</sup> In doing this he felt he would be an example to all people now and in the present to encourage them to give up worldly aims and devote their lives to meditation. Although it seems that both men were different in this respect, Francis continued to spend much time alone in prayer and Milarepa would give "sermons" upon many different occasions. One idea of interest is that Francis thought himself not worthy of God because he himself had not suffered enough.

Both Francis and Milarepa were very humble persons. Both rejected completely all money and property, and both carried this to the extent that it meant not even to wear clothes. Francis is said to have stated that we: "should follow naked the naked Christ, who possessed no property or books".<sup>21</sup> Both saints lived a life that was very simple and practiced a religion that could be called simple in its essential truths. The disciple of Milarepa, Rechung, said to the saint, "Lord, by thy having attained the final goal of Dharma and exhausted (its Treasures), we, thy humble disciples, enjoy the benefit thereof, for thou impartest the Doctrine to us in such an easy and impressive manner that we can, with very little effort, grasp the true meaning, and attain firmness in our belief without any fear of misconception".<sup>22</sup>

These were not highly educated men and yet they knew the highest truths of the universe. Perhaps part of the trouble in the religious world today is that religion has been made something to study and read about and we have strayed away from the simple practice and the simple life. The Christ, the Buddha, Francis and Milarepa were simple people and yet all were great in any sense of the word. St. Francis once said that, "If we have money, we shall also have armed men to guard it".<sup>23</sup> He also felt that by having money it would alienate him and his followers from the poor. He was trying as much as possible to follow the same sort of life that Jesus had lived while on this earth.

Neither Francis nor Milarepa seemed to have a great respect for books or education. On the occasion of Milarepa leaving his

20. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 213.

21. De La Bedoyere, *op. cit.*, 151.

22. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 236.

23. De La Bedoyere, *op. cit.*, 60.

guru, Marpa is said to have given him some holy texts. However, whether he used them or not remains an open question. He probably memorized what he learned. St. Francis is said to have :

found all he needed in a few texts of the Gospel, in the book of the hearts of men as he saw them around him, and in Tennysonian “sermons in stone”. Learning for him was only another sort of possession, driving man into himself and separating man from man.<sup>24</sup>

In “driving man into himself” it is possible that he means one misses the present environment, the things around you. This would account for the idea of separation developing between men and nature, as well as other men. Some people do not think of learning as being a possession in the usual sense of the word. It is generally believed that learning develops the higher faculties. This would therefore lead to a better life not only for that individual who learns, but also for those who this learned person will influence. Perhaps what Francis was saying of learning was indeed true wisdom and should be taken to heart. Francis felt that :

Books only told what great, good and brave men achieved, and substituted for the good life the false satisfaction of supposing that to know about sanctity, religion and heroism was much the same as living these.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that this is much more true today than in Francis’ time. As for Milarepa’s feelings towards formal education, he is quoted by Rechung as follows :

I have never valued or studied the mere sophistry of word-knowledge, set down in books in conventionalized form of question and answers to be committed to memory (and fired off at one’s opponent); these lead but to mental confusion and not to such practice as bringeth actual realization of Truth. Of such word-knowledge I am ignorant; and if ever I did know it, I have forgotten it long ago.<sup>26</sup>

It is evident that Milarepa had little place for years of study in

24. *Ibid*, 151.

25. *Ibid*, 151.

26. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 245.

his life. His was a life of actual practice, meditation and experience of Truth.

As far as knowing what practice one should follow to find true wisdom, Milarepa had this to say :

If ye find a certain practice increaseth your evil passions and tendeth to selfishness, abandon it, though it may appear virtuous; and if any line of action tends to counteract the Five Evil Passions, and to benefit sentient beings, know that to be true and holy Dharma, and continue it, even though it should appear to be sinful (to those bound to worldly conventionalities).<sup>27</sup>

In addressing some logicians of his own time, Milarepa said :

I consider that the Ultimate Truth is no other than the realization of one's own mind, but you scholars have no faith in this.<sup>28</sup>

It is said of both Milarepa and Francis that people were amazed at their wisdom and with their eloquence of speech.

Near to the time of Milarepa's departure from this earth, his disciples asked where they should direct their prayers to him.

Jetsün replied to them, 'As to the place or direction whither ye should address your prayers, (I command you to) direct them according to your own beliefs and faith. In whatever place ye pray with sincerity and earnestness, there will I be in front of each of you, and I will fulfil your wishes. Therefore, pray earnestly and with firm faith.'<sup>29</sup>

The important meaning of this statement is not that the Jetsün Milarepa will be in front of them when they pray, but rather that one should pray according to one's own beliefs whatever they be and that all prayers will be answered if they be sincere and earnest and if the individual has faith. What Milarepa has to say concerning prayer could be directed towards a Christian as well as a Buddhist or to a person of any faith.

Prayer, in the lives of these two saints, is generally associated

27. *Ibid*, 261.

28. Chang, *op. cit.*, 171.

29. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 269.

with fasting. In his life Milarepa went for many periods on little or no food, and it was often at these times that he would seem to advance more spiritually. Francis also spent periods of his life fasting. Probably the most remarkable event in the life of Saint Francis occurred at the end of a forty day fast. Francis had been given a mountain called Alverno of the Apennines by a wealthy aristocrat. It evidently was a very beautiful mountain and Francis had a favorite spot where he liked to spend time in prayer and contemplation. It was on Mount Alverno at the time of the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross that Francis had fasted and was praying. It is said that he prayed for two things.

The first was that before he died, he should feel in his body, as far as might be possible, the actual sufferings of Christ's Passion; and the second was that he might feel the very love which had caused Christ to undergo this sacrifice for mankind.<sup>30</sup>

It was on this occasion that Saint Francis experienced the stigmata. It is said that at the end of the prayer,

a seraph with six flaming wings flew down towards him, and as it approached, the image of a man hanging on a cross appeared between the pairs of wings. It was the figure of Christ Himself, and, as it rested in front of the Saint, darts of flame imprinted on Francis's body the wounds of the crucified Christ. His hands and his feet were pierced with the nails, and on his right side was the wound of the lance.<sup>31</sup>

This event happened towards the end of Francis' life. He had the wounds the remainder of his life and blood was said to sometimes flow from them. It was also after this event in his life that Francis began to go blind. On writing concerning the mystical element of the event of the stigmata, Chesterton writes that

this element of the supernatural did not separate him from the natural; for it was the whole point of his position that it united him more perfectly to the natural.<sup>32</sup>

It is often that we as ordinary people speak of the supernatural or the miraculous when in the eyes of God as in the eyes of

30. De La Bedoyere, *op. cit.*, 236.

31. *Ibid*, 237.

32. Chesterton, *op. cit.*, 144.

Francis or Milarepa this could be called “natural”, not commonplace but in harmony with their inner natures.

In reading about the lives of these two great saints of the Middle Ages, we should attempt to understand what they have to teach us for our own time. If their lives and teachings have no real meaning for us today, then the writings about these two men are merely exciting stories to be read along with such others as perhaps the Arabian Nights. Both men stressed the importance of prayer, contemplation or meditation, and faith. Neither placed much importance upon formal education. It seems that the main aspect of both these men’s lives and teachings was not to be attached to this world. It is said of Saint Francis that, after his death,

the dominate detail was the interpretation of the vow of poverty, or the refusal of all possessions.<sup>33</sup>

Milarepa stated :

Be lowly and meek. Clothe yourselves in rags. Be resigned to hardships with respect to food and dress. Renounce all thought of acquiring worldly renown. Endure bodily penance and mental burdens. Thus gain knowledge from experience. That your study and penance be directed towards the right path, it is necessary to hold these injunctions in your heart.<sup>34</sup>

Milarepa said that the most profound teaching in Buddhism was to practice. Both saints would agree that religion is to be practiced. They taught us to practice our faith and to live our lives in search for Truth. And, both men placed much importance upon the spiritual life being a very natural life. Milarepa said :

Do not bestir yourself and think too much, but putting your mind at ease in a state of naturalness, make no effort whatsoever.<sup>35</sup>

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“To have but few desires and satisfaction with simple things is the sign of a superior man.”

Precepts of the Gurus

33. *Ibid*, 148.

34. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, 271.

35. Chang, *op. cit.*, 231.

# Rudolf Otto and the Mystical Vision in Buddhism and Christianity

by  
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Editor's introduction :

Professor Mitchell offers a most original essay concerning the “ground” of multiplicity. Or, should we say the apparent multiplicity or things of this world being grounded into a Unity? Being, then, is the source of all things whether we are speaking of Buddhism or Christianity. As Eckhart says, as interpreted by Otto, “God is his being,” changes into “God is Being”, or the other way around. And, we are told that *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* become one in this “ground” once we stop discrimination. This is so close to certain unknown Tibetan parallels that I must offer two here. Long-chen-pa tells us : “...the existential presence of the ‘Ground’, the presence of reality (or “facticity”, Tib. *gzhi-dngos-po*), which is conceptually (*chos thams-cad*) both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*...First of all, in order to be liberated from the phenomenal sphere of existence (*spyod-yul*) which consists of mentation (*rtog-pa*) and the mind-as-such (*de-nyid-blo*) one must qualify (*bral-ba*) and adduce (*mtshon-pa*) by means of language (*tshig*). The existential presence of the ‘Ground’ is like that. Because of concepts and meaning (*chos thams-cad*), such as ‘escaping from *samsāra* into the expanse of birthlessness’, (i.e., this is just one concept or notion used as an example) one may remain not a Buddha. Although there is a great expanse (*klong-chen*), the ‘staying in or escaping from’ *samsāra* is contained in the great expanse of mind-as-such. The entire physical world (*lus-kun*) is the world of concepts and meanings (*chos-rnams*, i.e., definitions).”<sup>a</sup>

a. Long chen-pa, the omniscient Tibetan lama, lived from 1308 to 1364 A.D. The work here quoted is an as of yet untranslated Tibetan text which exists in two volumes. The title in (my) translation is: *A Precious Treasury Concerning the Origin and Growth of Buddhism; The Sunshine which Elucidates the Doctrine of Buddha*. This work has ten sections and this quote is from section one: “Existential presence (*gnas-lugs*), a methodological inquiry into the

What Long-chen-pa, a great Mahāyāna teacher, is saying agrees with the conclusions of Dr. Mitchell. The 'Ground' is the same whether a Buddhist or Christian is experiencing it and it is beyond, or should we say behind, mental discrimination. But, the essential difficulty in speaking of this experience of Being is "words, or language". We must think in conceptual mental formations. While we are here, let me offer another unknown passage from the Chinese Mahāyāna teacher named *Ha-shang Mahāyāna*, an early teacher in Tibet who taught a form of *ch'an*, better known as *zen*. He said: "Everything caused by the mind of discrimination (*sems kyi rnam par rtog pa*) is pleasant or unpleasant in consequence. One experiences the fruit of hells and heavens, you turn in *saṃsāra*. Whoever does not think anything, or does not do anything will become completely liberated from *saṃsāra*. So, do not think anything...For those of acute senses (and) previously cleansed minds, when one is obscured by the two: sin, or virtue, it is like the sun which is equally obscured by white or dark clouds. Therefore, do not think anything. Do not reflect on anything. Do not examine anything. Those who do not imagine (and) enter instantaneously (i.e., into enlightenment) are equal to those who have obtained the tenth *bhūmi*."<sup>b</sup> It is not hard to see Eckhart in agreement here. This is his "stillness". The point made in this essay is that one must get beyond, or rid of the ego, to find that stillness.

In Christianity there are many types of mystical visions. These graced insights may be of such realities as the nature of man and his destiny or God and his activity. One important vision to which all Christian mystics give a high value is the vision of the nature of God as the Ground of all Being. Recently Christian scholars

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presence of reality (*gzhi dngos-pa*) of the 'Ground'." I am presently under contract to translate both volumes for Dharma Press. See also *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*, Herbert B. Guenther (California: Dharma Publishing, 1975, 1976, 1976) for a highly technical and difficult discussion concerning 'Ground' as seen from the perspective of Long chen-pa.

b. See G.W. Houston, "Sources for a History of the Bsam Yas Debate", doctoral dissertation (Indiana University, 1976), p. 45. This is available under the same title from Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. It is slated to appear this year (1980) in the series: *Monumenta Tibetica Historica* (VGH Wissenschaftsverlag—St. Augustin, West Germany) address: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag GmgH, D-5205 St. Augustin 2, Postfach 2135.



working in the Christian-Buddhist dialogue have related this vision to the central Buddhist experience of Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup>

It is of interest to me that at the beginning of this century, Rudolf Otto in his pioneer work in the phenomenology of religion saw clearly the value of this relationship. Otto may have been one of the first persons to do so. Yet for me Otto's comparative work is not just of historical interest. I feel that it can help us clarify what has become a very important comparative issue in the present day dialogue between Christians and Buddhists.

Otto compares the Christian mystical vision of God and Buddhist Enlightenment in his *Mysticism East and West*.<sup>2</sup> In this work he discusses the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western types of mystical experience. Because there are many varieties of mystical experience and because of Otto's own inability to treat them all adequately, he chose to limit his discussion to two principal types: the Western mysticism of Meister Eckhart and the Indian mysticism of Śaṅkara. However, Otto does make a number of references to Buddhism. What I will try to do is to note these references and expand on them in order to attain a fuller perspective.

## I. The Mystical Vision

Upon reading *Mysticism East and West* it is immediately apparent that the mystical ontology being considered is centered on an intuition of a "hidden" unity that underlies the "evident" multiplicity of ordinary experience. The symbolic concept used by Otto for this unity is "Being". Being is the "source" of all beings. This is however not a temporal causal relation but an ontological relation grounding the present moment.<sup>3</sup> The symbol "source" stems from a mystical vision where all beings in the present moment are seen "in their origin". For Otto this means "in God".

Otto shows how Eckhart develops this symbol of the Sacred

1. See H.M. Enomiya Lassalle, *Zen Meditation for Christians* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974) and Heinrich Dumoulin, *Christianity Meets Buddhism* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974).

2. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1932). This book is based on the Haskell Lectures given at Oberlin College in 1923 to 1924.

3. Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, p. 21.

by reversing the scholastic phrase “God is his being” (*Deus est suum esse*) to “Being is God” (*Esse est Deus*). Eckhart implies that one cannot predicate anything of the Sacred. The Sacred “becomes therefore a Not-God, a Not-Spirit, a pure silence, a soundless void, yea, a sheer ‘Nothing’.”<sup>4</sup> Beyond the personal God (*Deus*) lies a supra-personal Godhead (*Deitas*) which can only be symbolized as the “Void” (*Wüste*). This symbol indicates the highest expression, in Otto’s mind, of the numinous as “wholly other”.<sup>5</sup> It is Void in the sense of being de-void of predicates, it is Nothing in the sense of being no-thing. That is, it is not a particular thing among other things but the foundation or “Ground” of all things. Therefore while the mystic through this vision is certain of the existence of the Sacred, he is just as certain of its incomprehensibility, mystery and thereby its inexpressability. Thus Otto says that Eckhart’s language is full of such symbols as “abyss,” “desert,” “barrenness,” “stillness,” “silence” and “nothingness”.

These symbols of the mystical vision refer, according to Otto, to the Sacred where personality “submerges” into the numinous. That which is “present” in the mystical environment is only a “presence”. Concepts such as person, thing, being, thou or he all seem “repugnant to the very import of the experience”.<sup>6</sup> For Otto, any personalization of the “presence” is a later anthropomorphic development.

The Sacred as a supra-personal Being or Void is called “God” or “Godhead” by Eckhart in order to give it highest value—a numinous value.<sup>7</sup> Further, the Sacred as Void is infinitely rich. While it is de-void of distinctions it is the fullness of Being, the fullness of infinite creative possibilities. In Sanskrit, the term for emptiness, so important in Mahāyāna Buddhism, is *śūnyatā* from the root *śū* which positively means “to swell” with reference to “the womb and its fruits,” and even to “strength and (creative) growth in general”.<sup>8</sup>

4. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

6. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 198.

7. Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, p. 45.

8. Charles Rockwell Lanman, *A Sanskrit Reader* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1884), pp. 259-260.

After defining the mystical vision of the Sacred as an intuition of the Ground of Being, Otto phenomenologically describes the process by which one gains such an understanding. He feels that there are three main “stages”. First, is the “*coincidentia oppositorum*”. Here, multiplicity dissolves into an organic whole. All opposition disappears and we see “all in its identity”.<sup>9</sup> Even the opposition between perceiver and perceived disappears. While each individual is one with the whole, the whole is manifested in each individual. There is both an interfusion of all things into the whole and an interpenetration of all things into each individual—it is a unity in multiplicity. This type of vision Otto calls the ability “to see yourself and all else in one, and all as in yourself”.<sup>10</sup>

The next stage, according to Otto, is where one senses Being, or the One, as “prior to” the many and as its ground and source. The many is seen as the changing modes of the primordial One. It is this Ground of existence that Eckhart calls the “Godhead”, and refers to as the Void. D.T. Suzuki in his own study of Eckhart goes on to equate Eckhart’s Godhead with the Buddhist *sūnyatā*, and even “the vast emptiness of the Absolute Tao”.<sup>11</sup>

Otto’s phenomenology covers in some depth the first and second stages by giving examples from Eckhart’s thought. In terms of the first stage, Eckhart refers to the perception that “all is in all” as a perception of the “kingdom of Heaven”. It is here that all blades of grass, wood and stone are spoken of as being parts of a higher Unity. Even the angels “in their original purity” are part of this Unity.<sup>12</sup> At this stage there is no word of Deity, just the “is-ness,” the “unity in diversity,” or what Suzuki has identified with the Buddhist “suchness” (*tathatā*) of things in their original nature.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of the second stage, Eckhart introduces the concept of God :

out of multiplicity, I lead them in myself to be one in Unity, and lead them back again to the Oneness from which they have

9. Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, pp. 65-66.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

11. D.T. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 20.

12. Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, p. 80.

13. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, pp. 13-14.

fallen away in their sensual-space-time separation. And in doing that I lead them back again into God!<sup>14</sup>

For Eckhart “Oneness and God are sacred, interchangeable terms...”<sup>15</sup> God, or more properly the Godhead, carries all things “hidden” within Himself. Here the things are not “this and that”, but are one in unity. The beings of the world which interpenetrate on the first level merge, according to Eckhart, into the “hiddenness”, or Void, of the Godhead, on the second level.

In the third of Otto’s stages, the vision is such that the One now appears as *the Real* “in contrast and opposition to the many”.<sup>16</sup> The first stage was an identification of the many; the second stage was this identity grounded in the One; and now the many disappears or is transcended to the ultimate Oneness of Being. It is at this third level of mystical understanding that Otto proposes a major difference between the Western Eckhart and the Eastern Śaṅkara. Otto claims that for Śaṅkara, Brahman as realized in this highest insight is a “static” Being. It is “quietly immobile”, unalterable, absolute, and completely at rest.<sup>17</sup> It is the complete opposite of the constantly changing world. On the other hand, Otto gives numerous metaphors drawn from Eckhart referring to the Godhead as a dynamic process, and “not [as] a static Being”:

- (1) a stream of glowing vitality.
- (2) a mighty inward *movement*, of an eternal process.
- (3) the wheel rolling out of itself...
- (4) Out of undifferentiated unity He enters into the Multiplicity of personal life and persons...
- (5) Out of this He returns, back into the eternal original unity.<sup>18</sup>

Otto concludes that because of this dynamic and creative movement, the Godhead of Eckhart is in much more of a positive relation to the world than the Brahman of Śaṅkara. Eckhart’s vision is not a mystical quietism and a stilling of all action. Rather Eckhart proposes what Otto calls, “an identity of the deepest

14. Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, pp. 84-85.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-189.

unity and the most vivid multiplicity, and therefore of the most profound quiet and the most vital motion.”<sup>19</sup> While with Śaṅkara, says Otto, the One relegates the many to illusion (*māyā*), Eckhart claims that the many are real and creative manifestations or displayings of the One; they are the many “real” forms taken by the formless One.

Elsewhere Otto mentions that Mahāyāna Buddhism may be closer to Eckhart than Śaṅkara is on this point: “In some ways, this [Eckhart’s] intuition reminds one of the paradoxical Mahāyāna doctrine: ‘Nirvāṇa is saṃsāra’.”<sup>20</sup> Again concerning Eckhart, Otto concludes that “For him saṃsāra is already nirvāṇa, and both become one...”<sup>21</sup> Otto only mentions this comparison between Eckhart and Mahāyāna in passing and does not develop it. However I believe he is correct. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, reality and appearance are not two separate realms (cf. Long-chen-pa’s discussion given in the editor’s introduction). Rather reality (*nirvāṇa*) is appearance (*saṃsāra*). The emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of Being is identified with the particular forms (*rūpa*) of beings. They both refer to the same world and are only distinguished epistemologically. Through ordinary experience (*viññāna*) we behold the world of multiplicity. Through mystical experience (*prajñā*) we see a “higher harmony” or a “deep abiding unity” in the midst of that same world. The difference is found in one’s own mind. From one point of view we see multiplicity, from another, unity. Ultimately Mahāyāna Buddhism teaches that these are not separate. The things of the world are the forms of the Formless, the Unity is a higher harmony that embraces the many. To paraphrase a Buddhist metaphor, with our phenomenal eye we see multiplicity, with our wisdom eye we see unity, with our Buddha eye we see the identity of unity and multiplicity, of the “ten thousand things” and Emptiness.

Otto also notes in passing that the Chinese understanding of the Tao is similar to the positions of Eckhart and Mahāyāna Buddhism: “Tao has a much greater affinity to the mysterious śūnyatā of Mahāyāna...”<sup>22</sup> Again Otto does not elaborate on this point but it does seem to me that he is correct if we consider the striking simi-

19. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

larity between the Chinese understanding of the Tao and the way in which Eckhart “establishes a polar identity between rest and motion within the Godhead itself: the eternally resting Godhead is also the wheel rolling out of itself; it is stillness and flux at the same time.”<sup>23</sup> In a like manner the Tao is said to be both static and dynamic. Further, the dynamic aspect of Eckhart’s Godhead is said to be both an “outgoing” and an “incoming”.<sup>24</sup> The movement of the Tao is also said to be both “sympathy” (incoming) and “creativity” (outgoing). Finally, while the static aspect of Eckhart’s Godhead “is a unified stillness”, it is out of this immobility that all things are put into motion and receive life.<sup>25</sup> It seems to me that this is very close to the Taoist concept of *wu-wei* or “non-action” where the Tao never acts and yet through it nothing is undone. Otto says of Eckhart: “To speak in a paradox: his quietism *is* active creativity.”<sup>26</sup> So Eckhart’s understanding of the Sacred allows him, unlike Śaṅkara, but like the Mahāyāna Buddhist and the Taoist, to affirm life as a real creative manifestation of the Godhead. He is able to return to the suchness of everyday things (*bhūtatathatā*) with freedom and imagination and a sense of wonder and awe. So theoretically for Eckhart, Mahāyāna and Taoism, an important soteriological effect of this mystical vision is this freedom to live fully in the present with a profound affirmation of life. In all three cases the vision of a higher Unity is not an end in itself but a means to further and actualize this in daily life. Given this conclusion I would add a fourth state to Otto’s analysis of the process of mystical experience; namely, a return to daily life in the ordinary world with this new sense of freedom and spontaneity.

Finally then, by expanding Otto’s analysis we can now see that the Christian mystical vision of Eckhart and the Enlightenment of Mahāyāna Buddhism both affirm an awareness of a higher Unity of Being that is not apparent from the things of daily life but gives them a grounding wherein they actualize the numinous value of that Ground in unique and beautiful ways. Again this does not mean an escape *from* the world. Rather, to experience this Ground transforms one’s being *in* the world in a positive and

23. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

fulfilling manner. The question now becomes, how does one cultivate an environment so that this type of mystical vision can arise?

## II. Cultivation of the Mystical Vision

In the above section I spoke of the mystical vision of a Unity grounding multiplicity. This vision is often cultivated by what Otto calls the “inner way”.<sup>27</sup> This “way” stresses introspective practice where there develops an intuition of what is referred to as one’s “real self”. This real self is at that moment seen as ultimately in unity with the Godhead or Void. However, it must be made clear that the numinous concept of the Self is in “sharp conflict with that which we are accustomed to set up as self, as ego...”<sup>28</sup> The self as possessor, as ego, actually stands in the way of the numinous experience. Therefore, the cultivation of the mystical vision usually begins with the “emptying” of the ego and “freeing” of oneself from ego-attachments. As Eckhart puts it: one “must renounce all ‘me and mine’ and enter into complete ‘poverty’...in order to attain the selfhood of the soul”.<sup>29</sup>

The Being that is the ground of our own being is hidden in the depth of the soul. Hidden, that is, by the ego which must be emptied of its attachments in order to reach the real self. For Eckhart the highest virtue in approaching the Sacred is “absolute detachment (*abegescheidenheit*). Suzuki relates this to the “non-attachment”, “non-clinging”, and “non-grasping” of Buddhism where one simply lets things be as they are—“unmolested.”<sup>30</sup>

However this emptying is not something negative. For Eckhart the emptying of the self results in a “pure nothing” (*bloss nicht*), where one is absolutely “free and empty” and it is such freedom in a positive sense that bears the most sacred fruit. It is Eckhart’s belief that such freedom only comes “in God”. God is the positive freedom itself in which one lives and moves and has his being without the encumbrances of ego-projection and clinging attachment.

To explain such a radical and positive freedom gained by emptying the ego, Eckhart developed an idea of “poverty” in five stages. First is a negative state called “devilish poverty” which

27. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, pp. 18-19.

is simply the lacking of what one wants. Second is “golden poverty” as a state of non-attachment or non-clinging to any good of the world. Third is “willing poverty” as the overt and willful renunciation of all goods and honors. Fourth is “spiritual poverty” where one is “absolutely empty” beyond all distinctions and discriminations. Here lies “absolute freedom” where the Godhead works creatively through him. He is one with the Godhead. This extreme spiritual poverty deepens into the fifth stage which Eckhart calls “divine poverty”:

Man’s last and highest parting occurs when, for God’s sake, he takes leave of God. St. Paul took leave of God for God’s sake and gave up all that he might get from God, as well as all he might give—together with every idea of God. In parting with these, he parted with God for God’s sake and yet God remained to him as God in his own nature—not as he is conceived by anyone to be—nor yet as something yet to be achieved—but more as an ‘is-ness’, as God really is. Then he neither gave to God nor received anything from him, for he and God were a unit, that is, pure unity.<sup>31</sup>

Here in Eckhart, one can see the emptying of the ego carried to its radical numinous conclusion in perhaps one of the deepest of mystical visions of the “is-ness” of God as the Ground of the “is-ness” of the self.

It is also the case that in Mahāyāna Buddhism one finds a similar emptying practice which in turn leads to a state of non-attachment. Here the emptying begins with the “discriminating mind”.<sup>32</sup> However this emptying does not mean a “blanking” of one’s mental faculties or a non-involvement in everyday life. Rather it means the opposite; a greater mental clarity and a greater involvement in daily life with the sense of freedom and spontaneity described by Eckhart. Perhaps the following example from the Zen tradition will show how this is the case. If one’s mind is filled (Buddhists would say “defiled”) with thoughts that take one’s mind away from the present moment, his mind is attached in such a way that he loses his full involvement in the present moment.

31. Raymond Bernard Blakney, *Meister Eckhart* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), p. 204.

32. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, p. 21.



For Zen the present moment is life: "Spring is the flowers blooming." Thus one loses his "life" through attachment and gains it through non-attachment. Non-attachment in this sense implies not getting "stuck" in mental constructions (*vikalpa*) so that one is free to spontaneously live life. Through "non-attachment-knowing" (*asaṅgajñāna*) one is said to awaken to real life.

Further, while such an "empty" mind is free from attachment to thoughts it is not a "dull blank". Rather, to use another Zen metaphor, it is like a bright mirror which free from dust (attachment) can reflect things as they are in their suchness (*tathatā*). Zenkei Shibayama comments that :

The mirror is thoroughly egoless and mindless. If a flower comes it reflects a flower, if a bird comes it reflects a bird. It shows a beautiful object as beautiful, an ugly object as ugly. Everything is revealed as it is. There is no discriminating mind or self-consciousness on the part of the mirror. If something comes, the mirror reflects; if it disappears the mirror just lets it disappear...no traces of anything are left behind. Such non-attachment, the state of no-mind, or the truly free working of a mirror is compared here to the pure and lucid wisdom of Buddha.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the non-attachment in the Buddhist practice of emptying is not a detachment *from* life but an affirmation of and involvement *in* life. This mode of being in the world helps one to intuit one's original or true nature (indeed the true nature of all things) as a form of a formless Unity that unites the multiplicity of life in a higher harmony. Mahāyāna has always taught that only through the bringing of attachment to an end can such a vision of the true nature of life be attained.

In his own study of Eckhart, Suzuki also found support for this Buddhist mode of cultivation in Eckhart's teaching that "thy unknowing is not a defect but the chief perfection...still thy faculties if thou wouldst realize this birth in thee".<sup>34</sup> Eckhart, like Mahāyāna Buddhism, sees the working of conceptual reason as inadequate to reach a mystical vision of God. He says that one should

33. Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968) p. 6.

34. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, p. 20.

cultivate non-attachment and “Purify till thou nor art nor hast, not either this nor that, *then* thou art omnipresent, and being neither this nor that thou art all things.”<sup>35</sup> Here one finds Eckhart again saying something close to the Mahāyāna idea that one’s true self (one’s Buddha-nature) is shared by all sentient beings in the Unity of the Great Body of Truth (the *Dharmakāya*).

I think it should now be clear that in both Christianity and Buddhism an important “way” of cultivating a mystical vision of the Unity behind multiplicity is through a type of non-attachment referred to by Eckhart as “poverty” and by Mahāyāna as “Emptiness”. The awareness of this Unity attained by such cultivation does not take one away from the world or “backward” into some transcendental origin of the universe. Rather it is a liberating experience that moves one “forward” into the world with vitality, creativity and freedom. By seeing this hidden pattern and design that unifies life, one’s own life is enriched and deepened. Christian and Buddhist traditions have developed concrete soteriological methods whereby one is aided in this pilgrimage. Such practices as asceticism, prayer, meditation, contemplation, yoga, ritual, chanting, the use of koans, art, music, calligraphy and rock gardens lessen ego-attachment and open the person to an awareness of one’s true self in the Unity of Being.

### III. Some Reflections on the Mystical Vision

One of the perennial problems that has faced man whether he has lived in the East or the West is the question concerning the relation of the finite to the infinite, the flesh to the spirit or the secular to the sacred. However one states it, it is a nagging question as to how our concrete human existence on the one hand is related to the divine on the other. Today in the light of scientific and technological secularization this distinction is more and more problematic. It seems to me that the mystical vision we have been discussing has something important to tell us about this distinction. Let me present a story to explain how this is so.

During a talk by the late Yasutani Roshi, he covered his hand so that only his fingers were showing. He then made the point that if one sees himself as an independent ego separated from other sentient beings, then his problem will be how to transcend

35. *Ibid.*

his separate ego into a sense of “communion”, or “belonging together” with the world about him. He then revealed his whole hand and pointed out that the Zen answer to this problem is that one is already in communion with others insofar as all sentient beings participate in unseen ground of unity. This does not deny the uniqueness of each individual. Each finger is a concrete entity. But each shares life from this common Ground. Thus Zen claims that insofar as one looks only at the finite and is not aware of the infinite unity, he objectifies and circumscribes his finite ego in such a way that he separates himself from his fellow man, from nature, and from the basis of his true personhood. He then tries to bridge this gap by reaching out from his finite self-limitedness to the world in a manner which often brings suffering to himself and others. However if he can discover his Ground as the infinite unity of life he can reconcile the finite-infinite distinction and achieve a deep sense of meaningful “belonging together” in the world.

As we have seen in our above analysis, this is certainly similar to the mystical Christian notion that we live and move and have our being in the unity of God, that we are all part of one Mystical Body, that “there are no gaps. Reality is an integral whole, a seamless robe. Gap-thinking misconstrues reality...”<sup>36</sup> Given this vision, the “gap” between our human finitude and the divine infinite is then not what it seems. True we are unique individuals but we are also in unity with others insofar as we all participate in an unseen infinity that is ultimately divine. Of course there are certain differences between the ways in which that participation and divinity is described in the different traditions. But I believe that this theoretical similarity between these mystical visions of Christianity and Buddhism is certainly striking.

Given this similarity in their understanding of the unity of life, both traditions, as we have seen, go on to say that the attainment of this understanding greatly transforms man’s being in the world. Through the cultivation of the non-attachment of poverty or emptiness discussed above, one would cease to compartmentalize the Sacred off from daily life. He would affirm it as the unifying foundation of all life and thereby appreciate the sanctity of all dimensions of life. Thomas Merton wrote that the contemplative traditions of both East and West:

36. David Steindl-Rast, *Christian Confrontation with Buddhism and Hinduism* (Mount Savior Monastery), p. 9.

agree in thinking that by spiritual disciplines a man can radically change his life and attain to a deeper meaning, a more perfect integration, a more complete fulfillment, a more total liberty of spirit...<sup>37</sup>

Thus in terms of the relation between contemplation and action, this type of contemplative vision does not oppose action but is both a foundation and a springboard for fuller, more free and integrated activity. This is important, for much of the activism of today, secular as well as religious, is an almost desperate and heavily burdened attempt to "take care of" problems, rather than a sanctifying and humble "caring for" people. This latter quality of action comes from an awareness of the unity of life that moves one to act in accord with that unity. In this context one finds a more meaningful relation to the different dimensions of his life, a relation that is one of communion rather than alienation. In this regard the mystical vision is not opposed to the prophetic call but gives it a divine grounding that enhances the quality of its work lest that work be reduced to just technical problem solving. It is also in this regard that the non-attachment stressed in the mystical life should be distinguished from a life-denying *via negativa*:

detachment liberates the wings of our heart so that we can rise to the grateful enjoyment of life in all its fullness. We must open our hand and let loose what we hold before we can receive the new gifts which every moment offers us. Detachment... [is] really the means; the goal is joy.<sup>38</sup>

To conclude, I hope that this analysis of Otto's work has clarified to some degree the similarities between the Christian mystical vision of God as the Ground of Being and the Buddhist mystical vision of Enlightenment. I believe that these similarities point toward a common good. This good is found in the transformation of man's being in the world that is ultimately a *via affirmativa*. It is a good that offers the contemporary Christian and Buddhist a life which affirms the multiplicity, particularity and beauty of nature on the one hand and appreciates a communal sensitivity

37. Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1961), p. viii.

38. David Steindl-Rast, *A Deep Bow* (Mount Savior Monastery), p. 8.

toward one's fellow men on the other. The quality of this affirmation and appreciation is a love (*agape/karunā*) that springs from an awareness of the divine Ground of life. In the end then it is by no means a negation of life, but a negation of an ego-manipulation, aggression and exploitation of life that obscures its unity and creates barriers to such a loving mode of being in the world.



# The Dialogue of Silence

A Comparison of Buddhist and Christian Monasticism  
with a Practical Suggestion

by

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Homage to the Bodhisattvas and Tathāgatas of the Three Times  
and the Ten Directions.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Editor's introduction:

Professor Corless quite correctly points out that, at least, on the level of *doing* religion many differences dissolve. It is primarily our many doctrinal differences that we choose to argue about with one another. This causes many difficulties. And, this is what monasticism is all about: doing religion. One recent book (Tibetan text with a German introduction) devotes an entire section of eighty-seven pages on how monks *do* religion.<sup>a</sup> And, even Zen, generally conceived of as done in a monastic setting, is seen as a discipline and not a philosophy as D.T. Suzuki reminds us.<sup>b</sup> Nor should monastics be seen as parasites as many secular and church people view them in the west. The analogy of the "bee, honey, and the beehive" or the eschatological "waiting" that Corless speaks of as a Christian witness can give us a new perspective on both Buddhist and Christian monastic communities. In Tibet, at least, the entire political and cultural history was dependent upon the monasteries.<sup>c</sup> Monasticism has an importance, not only his-

a. Geshe G. Lodrö, *Geschichte der Kloster-Universität Drepung: 1. Teil: Tibetischer Text* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1974). This work is presently being reviewed by me (i.e., G.W.H.) for the *Indo-Iranian Journal*. It is most unfortunate that Geshe Lodrö recently died since this work is a real scholarly achievement and was slated to appear in German translation.

b. D.T. Suzuki, *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* (New York: University Books, 1965), p. xxiii.

c. Giuseppe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), translated from the German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel, p. 110.

torically for preserving much art and literature, but still serves our vital interests today. This essay points out the “be-here-now” attitude of monastics and what we may all learn from them about momentary existence, living in the moment.

#### A. *Introduction: Aims and Methods:*

There was once a meeting between Christians and Muslims to discuss their religious ideas. The debate went nowhere but down. Then someone said, ‘What Names do you use when you call upon God?’, and as they recited these, both Muslims and Christians were caught up into the ecstasy of the Divine Presence.

The point of the story is that nothing readily comes from talking to each other *about* our religious views, but everything comes from *doing* our religions vis à vis each other. I have noted more than once that Christian and Buddhist practitioners, without having a single doctrine in common, seem to understand each other at a deep level. Thomas Merton (Fr. Louis, O.C.S.O.) remarked that he felt more in tune with D.T. Suzuki than with the average Catholic Mass-goer. At a conference of Cistercian Superiors in Vina, California, during the Summer of 1978, Maezumi Rōshi (of the Zen Center of Los Angeles) seemed quite at home standing in Choir. Speaking to the Abbots and Abbesses later that day he said ‘You have a beautiful practice here. Why should there be any difficulties between us?’ His emotions overcame him and it was some time before he could go on. I felt I should have replied, ‘If Christians and Buddhists could weep together rather than argue with each other, perhaps our world could be saved.’ But I was being a Professor, and said nothing.

The specialists of Buddhist and Christian practice are the monks and nuns. The similarities between Christian and Buddhist monasticism are remarkable, and to my mind far outweigh their differences. A major study of the two would be in order, but here I can only sketch and suggest. I shall concentrate upon a comparison of a ‘typical’ Buddhist monastery based upon the *Vinaya* (and especially the *Pāṭimokkha*), and a ‘typical’ Christian monastery based upon the *Regula Monachorum* (‘Rule of or for Monks’) of Benedict of Nursia (d. 480 A.D.). I will pay very little attention to ‘actual’ monasteries of various lineages. In conclusion, I shall



propose the establishment of a double Christian-Buddhist monastery as a tool for continuing, living dialogue in the profundity of that silence which is a feature of both religions and an apophatic characteristic of both Emptiness and God. I shall not propose the merging of the two religions, and I shall give a comparative chart of the *Regula Monachorum* and the *Pāṭimokkha*, re-arranged to show their similarities in a common sequence, such that a single Rule for a Buddhist-Christian monastery might be considered.

## B. Theory :

### 1. Why Monasticism?

On the face of it, it is not only pretty silly to give up material goods and sex to become a monk or nun, it is also heretical for both Buddhists and Christians. It appears to be dualistic and world-denying. But Buddhism is neither dualistic nor monistic nor both nor neither, and Christianity cannot deny the flesh which its Saviour assumed. There is no question that dualism and world-denial have been features of Christian and Buddhist monasticism, but they have been regarded as errors and subjected to reform. The word *saṃgha* does not only refer to the monks. It is divisible into four classes, two monastic and two lay (*bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, *upāsaka*, *upāsikā*) or into two classes in respect of holiness without regard to institutional status (*āryapudgala*, *prthagjana*). Simply at the practical level, there must be a monk-lay symbiosis, or the monks will starve physically while the layfolk starve spiritually. The Christian monk has never been dominant in the Church, and for many centuries his vocation was regarded (as it is now again being regarded) as distinct from that of the priest. Vatican II has called the religious 'an eschatological sign', that is, a living reminder that what we see (the physical) is by no means all that there is. The religious lives in symbiosis with the layperson (cf. I Cor. 9:11).

Sociologists of Religion have termed the monastery *ecclessiola in ecclesia*, a mini-church within the Church. Shortly put, I would say that monks and nuns are the eyes of the Church and the *Samgha*. They see and we follow. Sometimes laypeople see as much or more than monks, but because they are professionally involved in looking (*contemplatio*, *vipaśyanā*), monks are more

likely to see. It is, then, the monks who should lead us in the dialogue of silence.

What has fascinated me over the years is the astonishing similarity of *structure* between all forms of monasticism. It is to this structure that I would like briefly to advert, so as to suggest that Buddhist and Christian monks can be co-contemplatives, moving towards Whatever in similar ways, without making a simplistic and unhelpful equation of God and Śūnyatā.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *The Bounds of the Monastery:*

The earliest forms of monastic buildings were hardly worthy of the name. The Buddhist *vihāra* was a colony of huts for shelter during the rains. Christian monks at first lived in caves and huts in the desert. Gradually, more order was introduced and permanent buildings were erected, though often retaining features of the prototype, so that the Indian Buddhist Cave Temples were artificially constructed to resemble wooden dwellings, and the idea of the desert hut is preserved in the rather comfortable modern apartments of the Carthusians and Camaldolese.

As Le Corbusier said that a house is a machine for living in, so a monastery is a machine for 'seeking' in. It has a sacred centre, a sanctuary, on which the other rooms or buildings depend. This is its *raison d'être*, its doorway to God and Śūnyatā. Developed monasteries resemble small cities, sufficient unto themselves with dormitories, kitchens, kitchen gardens, storehouses, and so forth.<sup>2</sup> The whole affair is walled off from the outside world and firmly gated.<sup>3</sup> The City of God, the City of Nirvāṇa. Some Buddhist

1. It makes sense to me to say that monasticism is 'practical mysticism', and to suggest, without producing here any evidence, that religions are unified in the structure of the 'mystical path' and divided by their goals, or at least by the cataphatic descriptions of their goals. This appears to be the point of the chart on page 32 (Anchor Books edition, 1970) of Agehananda Bharati's *The Tantric Tradition*. Unfortunately, I find the chart incomprehensible.

2. The kitchen garden is effectively forbidden in the *Pāṭimokkha*, *Pācittiya* 10 ('If a bhikkhu dig the ground or cause the ground to be dug, [it is an offence requiring] repentance'—*yo pana bhikkhu paṭhavim khaṇeyya vā khaṇāpeyya vā, pācittiyam*) but the precept is largely ignored in Mahāyāna. As a general rule, Mahāyāna monasteries more closely resemble Christian monasteries than do Theravādin monasteries. On this, see further, below.

3. See the magnificent volume of J. Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* (London and Copenhagen, 1937; reprinted, Hong Kong, 1967) for many

monasteries are explicitly *maṇḍalas*, and the Christian monastery is often regarded as the New Jerusalem which, according to Revelation 21:16, is a mandalic cube. Benedict desires that his monks never leave the enclosure (Reg. Mon. 66), and when the *bhikkhu* emerges for his begging round, he carries with him an invisible portable enclosure in the shape of seventy-five rules for recollected public deportment.

Physically bounded by walls, the monk's life is mentally bounded by restrictive precepts, the *Vinaya* and the Rule. These are intensified forms of the general Buddhist and Christian moral regulations. The *Vinaya* and *Pāṭimokkha*<sup>4</sup> expand upon the *Pañca Śīla* (against killing, stealing, sexual licence, lying, and drinking alcohol) and the Rule expands upon the Ten Commandments. Their extraordinary similarity, given their apparent total independence of each other, is demonstrated in the chart given as an Appendix.<sup>5</sup>

The total effect is one of *concentration*: things and people are concentrated into a certain architectural space, people's minds are concentrated into their bodies, and a concentrated be-here-

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examples. The ideal Christian monastery is that designed as the Abbey of St. Gall, which was however not erected according to the blueprint. Its features and historical significance are treated in detail by Walter Horn and Ernest Born in their awesome work *The Plan of St. Gall*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, 3 vols. Less spectacularly displayed layouts are to be found in Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962) and David Knowles and J.K.S. St. Joseph, *Monastic Sites from the Air* (Cambridge University Press, 1952).

4. The *Pāṭimokkha* is not officially part of the *Vinaya* Corpus, but it is normally treated as an essential summary of it.

5. For texts and translations see: *The Pāṭimokkha* with an introduction by Phra Sāsana Sobhana and translation by Ven. Nāṇamoli Thera (Bangkok, 1966: The Social Science Association Press of Thailand for the Maha Makut Academy) and *The Rule of Saint Benedict in Latin and English*, ed. and trans. by Abbot Justin McCann (Westminster MD: Newman Press, 1952). A useful modern commentary on the *Vinaya* is *The Entrance to the Vinaya* by Somdet Phra Mahā Samaṇa Chao Krom Phrayā Vajiraṇaṇavarorasa, Tenth Saṅgharāja of the Ratanakosin Era of Siam (Bangkok: Maha Makut Academy, 1969) in 2 vols: a third volume is planned. The standard commentary on the Benedictine Rule is *The Rule of Saint Benedict: a commentary by the Rt. Rev. Dom Paul Delatte, Abbot of Solesmes and Superior-General of the Congregation of Benedictines of France*, trans. by Dom Justin McCann (London: Burns and Oates, 1921).

now-ness results. There is really nothing 'superior' about this arrangement (although spiritual pride is a failing of monks and is specifically legislated against—*Pārājika* 4; Reg. Mon. 4)—it is merely a workshop (Benedict uses the word *officina* in chapter 4) wherein contemplation can have priority.

### 3. *Personnel*:

Being celibate, a monastic community can only grow by recruitment. This recruitment is subject to strict safeguards. The aspirant in Buddhism must be a male human being, free from debt and the military, at least twenty years old, and have his parent's permission.<sup>6</sup> Similar provisions are either expressed by Benedict in chapter 58, or in fact found in actual Benedictine practice. Benedict orders aspirants to be turned away at first: they must 'persevere in knocking at the door for four or five days' (chap. 58). A Zen aspirant must remain bowed upon the entrance steps for two days.<sup>7</sup> Both the Benedictine and Zen aspirants must early demonstrate their earnestness in the face of trials. Buddhist initiation includes the application of lighted joss sticks to the shaved head and inner forearms.

The initiation ceremony itself is called *professio* in Christianity and *pravrajyā* in Buddhism. Both words more or less mean 'going forth'. One does not so much 'leave the world' as advance into a new state. The trappings are very clearly those of a rite de passage, a symbolic death and resurrection. In Christianity, the initiate at one stage lies under a funeral pall. In both religions, the hair is cut off, and the old (biological) name and clothing are lost and replaced by the Dharma Name or Name in Religion, and by the monastic habit. A *bhikkhu* is a Son of Buddha, a monk is a Son of Benedict. The initiate attains seniority in the monastery with respect to his Age in Religion or Dharma Age, which begins from the date of his admission, without regard to his biological age.

6. An account of an admission ceremony is given in Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (Harvard University Press, 1896; reprint by Atheneum, 1947 and subsequently), selection 81. The essence of the Benedictine ceremony is given in Reg. Mon. 58.

7. The most attractive, and humorously realistic, account of a Zen novice is *Unsui: a diary of Zen monastic life* by Giei Satō and Eshin Nishimura (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1973).

Early Buddhist and Christian monasteries were democratic, but each developed the rigid and elaborate system of officers and administrators necessary for large institutions. Obedience to one's superiors is emphasized. In Tibetan Buddhism, one's spiritual director or *bLa.ma* is the personal embodiment of the *Triratna*, and in Christianity the Abbot (from Aramaic *abba*, 'father') is a representative of Christ.

The monastery is, in Victor Turner's sense, *communitas*, and punishment is by relegation to liminality (not being spoken to, not eating with the others, etc.) or by expulsion.

Laypersons are, as the institutions develop, brought in to assist with the work. Christianity and Theravāda have always kept a distinction between the celibate monk and the (at least potentially) married administrative assistant or servant. Mahāyāna has not found the distinction quite so necessary, and many so-called monks are actually married.

Theravādin monasteries exist in direct symbiosis with the laity, whereas Benedictine monasteries, ideally, are indirectly symbiotic with the laity. This feature has caused S.J. Tambiah to write that, while the *Pāṭimokkha* and the Rule are often similar, 'it is the differences that are dramatic.'<sup>8</sup> But I wish to maintain that the point is more complex than Tambiah would have it. Monasticism is central to Buddhism, but it is peripheral to Christianity, considering them as institutions.

The Christian problem is an ontological one. Because of the Fall, human beings are not any longer human. They are restored by the Being of God who manifests as Christ and perdures as the ontologically transfiguring sacraments. The sacraments are administered by the bishops and their deputies, and the sinfulness of an officiant in no way destroys the efficacy of the sacrament. Christian monks are dedicated to the experiential investigation of the *meaning* of this sacramental transformation, but are themselves dependent upon the official distributors. A Christian monk may be a priest, but a priest need not be a monk. That is to say, the priest is *ideally* involved in the search for holiness (the transformation in Christ) but not *necessarily* so. A robot, indeed, could dispense the Holy Eucharist, and sometimes I feel that this is exactly what is happening!

8. S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults of North-east Thailand*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 88.

The Buddhist problem is epistemological. Beginningless ignorance must be dispersed by Wisdom. Robots cannot dispense wisdom. Only wise people can do so. Therefore, if the Dharma is to be preserved and transmitted, its guardians *must* be involved in the search for holiness.<sup>9</sup>

Christianity could therefore afford to make a sharp distinction between an administrative hierarchy (bishops) and a charismatic hierarchy (monks). The distinction has led to an imbalance, to a Christianity that is split between islands of meditation specialists lost in an ocean of legalistic minimalists, but it has not yet destroyed Christianity as such (although it may have been the real underlying cause of the Reformation). Buddhism could allow the distinction for practical purposes, but could not allow it to become fixed in the tradition. A succession of libidinous Popes is embarrassing. A line of unspiritual *Sangharājas* would be devastating.

Therefore, I submit that the relative isolation of the Christian monasteries (an ideal which has seldom actually been achieved) and the involvement of the Buddhist monasteries (some of which are in fact quite isolated) is an accidental reflex of the Weltanschauungen, and not nearly as 'dramatic' as Tambiah supposes.

Monastic personnel are thus screened and fitted for their task of the transfiguration of consciousness. The Benedictine image of the monastery as a beehive illustrates it well: the bees gather the nectar from flowers and store it as honey. The monks are not giving us something we do not already have but, once again, they are *concentrating* in the midst of general entropic dispersal.

#### 4. *Function:*

How, then, do the monks gather this nectar: It is at this point that the similarities are, to me, the most remarkable.

Buddhist practice is the *Trīśikṣā*, 'triple training', i.e., *śīla*, *samādhi*, *prajñā*. Benedictine practice is a threefold affair of *opus manuum*, *opus dei* and *lectio divina*.<sup>10</sup>

9. Or at least some of them must. Tibeto-Mongol monasteries may be distinguished as Dharma or Saṃgha oriented, i.e., wisdom-dispensing or ritual-performing monasteries. Robert James Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, Asiatische Forschungen 2, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959, pp. 20-23.

10. Tambiah's arguments on the *differences* again seem to me tangential.

*Śīla* is more than morality, it is one's whole everyday attitude towards human and non-human life (e.g., deities and insects), and to apparently lifeless objects. The *Śikṣāsamuccāya* regards walls and books as having consciousness: spitting on a monastery wall leads to rebirth as a wall, wiping one's snot on a *Sutra* brings rebirth as a book. Zen novices may spend a year or more learning how to open and close a door properly. The reverence for life and non-life is expressed in Benedictinism as *opus manuum*, 'manual work', and takes its most obvious form in labour and farming. Actual farmwork, however, is not strictly necessary, and the prohibition against it in the *Pāṭimokkha*, already mentioned, is not evidence of a deep split between Buddhist and Christian attitudes towards the physical world. 'Let him [the Cellarer] regard all the property of the monastery as the holy vessels of the altar', says Benedict (*omnia vasa monasterii cunctamque substantiam ac si altaris vasa sacrata conspiciat*—ch. 31; cf. ch. 32). The bhikkhu must keep his almsbowl, though cracked, until it is actually broken and useless ('*ayante bhikkhu patto, yāva bhedanāya dhāretabbo*' *ti*—*Nissaggiya Pācittiya* 22). The precept of Po-chang, 'No work to-day, no food to-day' (i-jih pu-tso, i-jih pu-ch'ih) is not really an innovation.

*Samādhi* is literally 'concentration' and refers to the one-pointedness of the mind in meditation or worship (*pūjā*). In Benedictinism it is paralleled by *opus dei*, 'the work of God', which is the daily round of liturgical services consisting of eight Offices (the Sacrifice of Praise, based on the Psalter) and the Mass (the Sacrifice of the Altar), all of which must be performed with due attention for they are addressed to God in the presence of the angels (Reg. Mon. 19,20) and they culminate in contemplative silence (Reg. Mon. 52).

Buddhist *pūjā* typically occurs at least three times a day—at dawn, noon and dusk. In Zen monasteries it is often a simple matter of chanting *Sūtras*, whereas Tantric monasteries may give themselves over to a major *pūjā* for hours or days on end, with elaborate liturgical paraphernalia. The daily timetable in both religions is similar: one rises well before dawn to symbolize the constant wakefulness of the Buddha-state and the alert readiness of the Christian for the Second Coming, which could occur at any time. In both traditions, a good indication of the spiritual health of a monastery is its time of rising: the later, usually, the laxer.

*Prajñā* begins as study of the *Sūtras* and *Śāstras*, and ends with wisdom when their teachings have been incorporated. *Lectio divina* is 'spiritual reading', the unhurried and attentive listening to the Word of God in Scripture and the Fathers. Bernard of Clairvaux compares the monk to a cow who chews the cud of the Word and gives forth the milk of spiritual counsel. For him, 'rumination' is no empty symbol.

All three parts of both praxes are necessary for each other and must be developed together.

Tibeto-Mongol monasteries were in the habit of staging sacred drama. Mediaeval Christian monasteries presented their so-called Miracle Plays, to similar effect. Now that Western theatre has liberated itself from the proscenium arch and even from the physical building, one might ask whether the time be not now ripe for a revival of these practices.

### C. *Practice* :

If you have followed my necessarily spare argument so far (a sort of preliminary cartoon for the Sistine Chapel murals), you may agree that Buddhist and Christian monks live lives similar enough to allow them to adapt to each others' presence in close association.

I propose the establishment of a monastery having three main architectural wings. One wing would be a self-contained Christian monastery and the opposite wing a self-contained Buddhist monastery. In the middle there would be a *Zendō*. For most of the time, Christians and Buddhists would carry out the separate activities of their several Triple Praxes, without regard for the existence of the other. Occasionally, perhaps not more than once a week, all would meet in the *Zendō* for silent meditation. Like a sound wave, the double monastery would have a node of silence in between two antinodes of audible sound. No 'conclusions' or 'revelations' would be anticipated during the silent sitting. There would just be sitting.

Many Christians, apparently mostly Catholics, have taken up the practice of *zazen*. But it seems they are doing it *as Christians*. As a *Rōshi* once said to Fr. William Johnston, 'Just sit in the presence of God until there is only Johnston-san and no God.' 'I thought', replied Fr. Johnston, 'there might be only God and no



Johnston-san.' 'That's just what I said!' exclaimed the *Rōshi*. I propose, however, that the Christians should sit as Buddhists and the Buddhists should sit as Christians.

This does not imply relativism and indifferentism, which is against the teachings of both religions. I have elsewhere argued that Christianity and Buddhism already exhibit ontological, epistemological and chronological models for their mutual containment. I then proposed that all that remained was for some of us existentially to realize this co-inherence in meditation.<sup>11</sup>

Such a co-inherence takes place in what I might call Superconsciousness. It is emphatically not a new religion, nor a settling of doubts as to how Buddha and God relate to each other, if indeed they relate at all (and it seems to me that they do not). If God exists, the continuing religious plurality cannot be a problem for him. It is our problem, in our limited human thinking, and within human thinking it will not cease to be a problem. If all-there-is is Emptiness, then there is neither one true religion, nor many true religions, nor both, nor neither. Only in *vikalpa* is this a question.

The Venerable Ānanda, say the Zennists, attained to wordlessness through words, but the Venerable Mahākāśyapa attained to wordlessness through wordlessness. So Christians and Buddhists may severally attain to God and Emptiness through the Gospel and the Dharma, but when they meet in silence, the questions they have about each other will be of the form 'Does God have Buddha-nature?' And the answer will be 'MU!'

I am proposing, then, a living *kōan* to be the eyes of all of us as we strive to transcend our millennia-old disputes.

## APPENDIX

### COMPARATIVE ANALYTICAL CHART OF THE REGULA MONACHORUM AND THE PĀṬIMOKKHA

The form and expression of each rule is different, and they cannot be readily compared without they be first broken apart into

11. 'The Mutual Fulfilment of Christianity and Buddhism'. Paper delivered at the conference 'Buddhist-Christian Renewal and the Future of Humanity', Honolulu, June 16-27, 1980.

contextless precepts and then re-combined according to a common scheme. In this chart, the precepts have been arranged under the headings of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. These are the three Vows of modern Catholic Religious Orders. They are not found explicitly in either rule but they form a convenient neutral one in which they can begin to meet. Each prescription has been summarized, and cast in a generally apodeictic form. For detailed comparison, the original wording should always be consulted. The numbers in the charts refer to the chapters of the Reg. Mon. and the sections of the *Pāṭimokkha* (regarding *Pārājika* as section 1 and *Adhikaraṇasamatha* as section 8) followed by the numbered subsection. Benedict's *Prologus* and the *Pāṭimokkha Nidāna* are so mentioned by name.

It will be noticed that Reg. Mon. often reads like a summary of the minute details in the *Pāṭimokkha*. It is said that the Buddha allowed his monks to dispense with minor regulations after his *parinirvāṇa*, but unfortunately they forgot to ask which were the minor regulations, so that all had to be retained together.

Reg. Mon.

Pāṭimokkha

*INTRODUCTION :*

Prologus

Nidāna

*POVERTY :*

(i) *Private Property :*

4.	Not to steal.	1, 2.	Not to steal.
	Not to covet.	4, 1.	Not to possess two habits.
7.	To be content with the worst.	4, 10.	Not to make too great an effort to obtain a habit.
33.	Not to possess personal property.	4, 14.	Not to obtain a new mat prematurely.
54.	Not to complain about the habit.	4, 21.	Not to keep two bowls.
	Not to possess more than two habits.	4, 22.	Not to obtain a new bowl prematurely.
	Not to hide private property in the mattress.	4, 24.	Not to prepare clothing for the rains prematurely.
		4, 28.	Not to keep a prematurely

58. To donate private property to the poor or to the monastery.      donated habit beyond the official day.
- 5, 40. Not to eat what has not been given.
- 5, 47. Not to accept lay sponsorship for more than four months.
- 5, 84. Not to appropriate a jewel.
- 7, 33. To beg without partiality.
- (ii) *Common Property:*
31. (The character of the Cellarer)      5, 14. To replace mats, etc. after use.
32. To care for common property.      5, 15. To replace a bed after use.
34. Distribution as required.
46. To confess breakages and losses.
- (iii) *Money and Trade:*
57. Not to be proud because of craftsmanship.      4, 18. Not to receive money.
- 4, 19. Not to engage in trade involving money.
- 4, 20. Not to buy or sell.
- 4, 30. Not to embezzle.
- 5, 82. Not to convert common property into individual property.
- (iv) *Food and Drink:*
4. To love fasting.      5, 33. Not to pick at one's food.
- Not to become drunk.
- Not to be gluttonous.      5, 34. Not to eat too many delicacies.
39. Not to eat more than two meals.
- Not to eat meat unless sick.      5, 35. Not to resume eating, having once finished.
- 5, 37. Not to eat after noon.
40. Not to become drunk.      5, 51. Not to drink alcohol.

41. (The times of meals.) 7, 29. To eat curry and rice in the proper proportions.  
 To fast on Wed. and 7, 30. Receiving almsfood 'equally heaped-up.'  
 Fri. until the ninth hour.  
 Not to eat after dark.
- 7, 34. To eat curry and rice in the proper proportions.  
 7, 35. Not to pick at one's food.  
 7, 36. Not to disguise the flavour by means of the rice.  
 7, 37. Not requesting curry or rice.  
 7, 38. Not to envy another's food.  
 7, 47. Not to shake rice on the ground.  
 7, 48. Not to scatter rice.
- (v) *Luxuries:*
4. To chastize the body. 2, 6. Not to build a large cell.  
 Not to seek soft living. 2, 7. Not to build a large dormitory.
7. To control the body. 4, 3. Not to omit to have a habit fitted promptly.
22. To sleep in separate beds in a common dormitory. 4, 6. Not to request an additional habit in alms.
36. To bathe seldom.
- 4, 7. Not to request too much cloth for a habit.  
 4, 8. Not to request an elaborate habit.  
 4, 9. Not to request a large habit.  
 4, 11. Not to possess a silk mat.  
 4, 13. Not to possess a mat made of uncanonical textiles.  
 4, 12. Not to possess a goathair mat.  
 4, 15. Not to use an undisfigured mat.

- 4, 16. Not to carry goathair too far.
- 4, 23. Not to keep delicacies too long.
- 4, 26. Not to arrange for the weaving of habit cloth.
- 4, 27. Not to oversee such arrangements.
- 5, 19. Not to build a luxurious dormitory.
- 5, 39. Not to request delicacies unless sick.
- 5, 56. Not to light a fire without due cause.
- 5, 57. Not to bathe frequently.
- 5, 58. Not to wear an undisfigured habit.
- 5, 86. Not to possess a luxurious needle-case.
- 5, 87. Not to build a high bed.
- 5, 88. Not to build a padded bedstead or chair.
- 5, 89. Not to make a large mat.
- 5, 90. Not to make a needed poultice too large.
- 5, 92. Not to make a monsoon garment too large.
- 5, 92. Not to make a habit too large.

(vi) *Outside the Enclosure :*

4. To avoid worldly contact.
51. Not to eat outside unless absent for over a day.
66. (That all necessaries should be within the Enclosures.)
67. (Prayers relating to
- 5, 31. Not to eat more than one meal at a hospice.
- 5, 66. Not to travel with brigands.
- 5, 85. Not to enter a village after noon without due reason.

journeys.)

Not to talk about a journey.

Not to leave the Enclosure without permission.

- (vii) *Spiritual Poverty*: (Spiritual poverty is lacking in explicit terms but implied throughout.)
4. To deny oneself. To bear persecution. Not to be proud. Not to be somnolent. Not to be slothful. To attribute to God one's good points. To attribute to oneself one's bad points. To remember the presence of God. To deal promptly with evil thoughts. Not to indulge in evil talk. To hate one's own will. To shun vainglory.
  7. Not to do one's own will. To be patient under provocation.
  8. To believe oneself the worst of all.
  48. Not to be idle.

### *CHASTITY AND CHARITY:*

(i) *Chastity* :

4. Not to commit adultery. Not to fulfil the desires
- 1, 1. Not to have sexual intercourse with any human or animal.

- of the flesh.                   2, 1. Not to emit semen intentionally.
- To love chastity.               2, 2. Not to have passionate contact with a woman.
- 2, 3. Not to have passionate conversation with a woman.
- 2, 4. Not to seduce by appealing to its religious value.
- 2, 5. Not to procure.
- 3, 1. Not to sit near a woman in a place suitable for sexual intercourse.
- 3, 2. Not to sit near a woman in a place suitable for passionate conversation.
- 4, 4. Not to have a habit washed by a nun who is not a relative.
- 4, 5. Not to accept a habit from a nun who is not a relative.
- 4, 17. Not to have goatswool prepared by a nun who is not a relative.
- 5, 6. Not to sleep near a woman.
- 5, 7. Not to preach at length to a woman.
- 5, 21. Not to exhort nuns when not so appointed.
- 5, 22. Not to exhort nuns after dark.
- 5, 23. Not to go to a convent except to visit a sick nun.
- 5, 24. Not to slander monks who exhort nuns.
- 5, 25. Not to give a habit to a nun who is not a relative.
- 5, 26. Not to prepare a habit for a nun who is not a relative.

- 5, 27. Not to travel with a nun, except along a dangerous route.
- 5, 28. Not purposely to board the same boat as a nun, except for ferrying to the other bank.
- 5, 29. Not to eat food obtained by a nun.
- 5, 30. Not to sit alone with a nun in a secret place.
- 5, 44. Not to sit with a woman secretly in a concealed place.
- 5, 45. Not to sit secretly and alone with a woman.
- 5, 67. Not to travel with a woman.
- 6, 1. Not to accept food from a nun who is not a relative.
- 6, 2. Not to fail to rebuke a nun who attempts to oversee a monk's meal.

(ii) *Charity towards the Brethren especially :*

- |  |        |  |
|--|--------|--|
| 4. To love one's neighbour.<br>Not to kill.<br>Not to bear false witness.<br>To honour all men.<br>Not to do to another what one would not have done to oneself.<br>To visit the sick. | 1, 3.  | 3. Not to murder, incite to murder or suicide.           |
|  | 2, 8.  | 8. Not to accuse a monk groundlessly of a grave offense. |
|  | 2, 9.  | 9. Not to do so on false grounds.                        |
|  | 4, 25. | 25. Not to rescind a gift of robes.                      |
|  | 5, 1.  | 1. Not to lie deliberately.                              |
|  | 5, 2.  | 2. Not to use abusive language.                          |
|  | 5, 3.  | 3. Not to slander a monk.                                |



- To bury the dead. 5, 9. Not to tell a novice about a monk's faults.
- To help the afflicted. 5, 16. Not to appropriate another's sleeping area.
- To console the sorrowing.
- Not to yield to anger. 5, 17. Not to expell a monk from anger.
- Not to nurse a grudge. 5, 18. Not to be careless with a bed on the upper storey.
- Not to hold guile in one's heart. 5, 36. Not to tempt a monk successfully to resume eating.
- Not to make a feigned peace.
- Not to forsake charity. 5, 38. Not to eat stored food.
- To utter truth. 5, 42. Not to dismiss a brother during the begging round, merely so as to be alone.
- Not to render evil for evil.
- To do no wrong to anyone.
- To love one's enemies. 5, 46. Not to omit to report an invitation to a meal.
- Not to render cursing for cursing. 5, 52. Not to poke someone.
- Not to detract. 5, 55. Not to frighten a monk.
- To hate no man. 5, 59. Not to use a habit once given away.
- Not to be jealous.
- Not to be envious. 5, 60. Not to hide the personal effects of another monk.
- Not to love contention.
- To pray for one's enemies. 5, 64. Not to conceal the grave offense of another monk.
- To make peace with one's adversary before sundown. 5, 74. Not to strike a monk in anger.
35. To serve in the kitchen, by rote. 5, 75. Not to threaten a monk by a gesture.
- 36/37. (The care of the sick, the young and the old.) 5, 76. Not groundlessly to accuse a monk of a grave offense.
69. Not to cultivate favourites.
- 5, 77. Not intentionally to arouse scruples in a brother.

5, 78. Not to listen to an argument between monks.

(iii) *Charity towards Outsiders especially:*

4. To relieve the poor. 5, 32. (That four or more monks must not seek alms at one house.)  
 To clothe the naked.
53. To receive guests as Christ. 5, 43. Not to intrude on a meal.
56. (That the Abbot eat with guests.) 5, 83. Not to enter a Royal Chamber improperly.
- 6, 3. Not to accept food from a household which donates its proceeds to the Community as a whole.
- 6, 4. Not to accept food when living in an insecure hermitage without giving prior warning of the danger.

(iv) *Charity towards Non-Human Life:*

- (Lacking. A general respect for non-human life is observable in practice.) 5, 10. Not to dig the ground.
- 5, 11. Not to destroy a plant.
- 5, 20. Not to sprinkle water containing living creatures.
- 5, 61. Not to kill a creature deliberately.
- 5, 62. Not deliberately to drink water containing creatures.

**OBEDIENCE : A. WITH RESPECT TO THE ULTIMATE  
 END (God; Dharma):**

(i) *Attitudes :*

4. To love God. 5, 73. To realize the Scriptural basis of the Rule.  
 To prefer nothing to the love of Christ. 5, 72. Not to claim that the Rule

To put one's hope in God.

hinders spiritual advancement.

To fear the Day of Judgement.

To dread hell.

To desire eternal life.

To keep death daily before one's eyes.

Not to despair of God's mercy.

58. To vow stability, conversion of life and obedience.

72. To cultivate zeal for God.

(ii) *Practices:*

To listen gladly to holy reading.

1, 4. Not to claim holiness prematurely.

5, 4. Not to catechize a novice incorrectly.

To pray frequently.

To confess sin daily to God.

5, 8. Not to boast to a novice of superior holiness.

To amend one's sins.

Not to claim holiness prematurely.

5, 41. Not to give food to heretics.

7, 57. Not to preach to a person holding a parasol,

To fulfil God's commandments daily.

7, 58. or to one holding a staff,

8-19. (The structure of the Office)

7, 59. or to one holding a sword,

7, 60. or to one holding a weapon,

20. To pray briefly and reverently.

7, 61. or to one wearing slippers,

7, 62. or to one wearing sandals,

45. Not to make an error in the chanting.

7, 63. or to one seated on a cart,

7, 64. or to one lying on a couch,

47. (The signal for the Office)

7, 65. or to one lolling,

7, 66. or to one wearing a turban,

49. To cultivate holiness more fervently during Lent. 7, 67. or to one wearing a hat. 7, 68. Not to sit on the ground while preaching to one on a chair.
50. Not to neglect the Office while travelling. 7, 69. Not to sit on a low seat while preaching to one on a high seat.
52. To use the Oratory for prayer only. 7, 70. Not to stand while preaching to a seated person. 7, 71. Not to walk behind a person while preaching to him. 7, 72. Not to walk beside a person while preaching to him.

*OBEDIENCE : B. WITH RESPECT TO THE IMMEDIATE END (The Community):*

(i) The Object of Authority :

1. (The kinds of monks) 8, 1-7 (Chapter Meetings)
2. (The character of the Abbot)
3. (Calling a Council)
21. (Deans)
27. (Care of the excommunicated)
38. (The Lector)
44. (Penance for faults)
58. (Admission of candidates) (Admission of candidates is dealt with in Khandhaka I of Mahāvagga.)
59. (Admission of children)
61. (Reception of visiting monks).
62. (Candidates for ordination)
64. (Election of the Abbot)
65. (Appointment of the Prior)
66. (Appointment of the Porter)

To read the Rule often (Conclusion): To recite the Rule  
to the Community. once a fortnight.

(ii) *The Subject of Authority:*

- |     |  |   |  |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 4.  | Not to grumble.<br>To obey the Abbot.<br>To reverence the seniors.<br>To love the juniors.   | 2, 10.<br>2, 11.                              | Not to incite a schism,<br>after three warnings.<br>Not to support a schism,<br>after three warnings.  |
| 5.  | To obey instantly.<br>Not to murmur against<br>a command.  | 2, 12.<br>2, 13.                              | To listen to advice.<br>To depart after scandaliz-<br>ing the laity.   |
| 7.  | To be subject to the<br>Superior.<br><br>To reveal secret thou-<br>ghts to the Abbot.<br>Not to do what is not<br>commanded.<br>Not to speak unless<br>questioned. | 5, 5.<br>5, 12.<br>5, 13.<br>5, 54.<br>5, 63. | Not to sleep near a novice<br>for more than three<br>nights.<br>Not to cause an annoy-<br>ance during Chapter.<br>To respect the officials.<br>To respect warnings.<br>Not to re-open a settled<br>question. |
| 23. | (Excommunication after<br>three warnings)  | 5, 65.  | Not to admit a novice in-<br>to full vows before age<br>twenty.  |
| 24. | (Excommunication from<br>Table for lesser faults)  | 5, 68.  | To admit that faults are<br>harmful even to the holy.  |
| 25. | (Excommunication from<br>all common functions<br>for grave faults)   | 5, 69.<br>5, 70.                              | Not to associate with one<br>who does not so admit.<br>Not to support a novice<br>who does not so admit.   |
| 26. | Not to associate with<br>the excommunicated.   | 5, 71.  | To accept the warning of<br>the Chapter.   |
| 28. | (Re-admission up to<br>three times only)   | 5, 79.<br>5, 80.                              | Not to murmur against<br>the Chapter.<br>Not to leave during Chap-<br>ter without voting in fa-<br>vour.   |
| 30. | (Corporal punishment<br>for boys)  | 5, 81.  | Not to murmur about<br>partiality after giving away<br>a habit.  |
| 43. | To attend promptly at<br>Church and Table.   |   |  |
| 60. | (That priests and clerics  |   |  |

observe the same rules  
as laymen)

63. To keep one's chronological seniority.  
To love one's juniors  
and honour one's seniors.
68. To receive difficult commands with docility.
70. Not to punish at random.
71. To be obedient to one another.

### *DEPARTMENT :*

(This section has been added on account of its great prominence in the Pāṭimokkha. Much of it is implied in Reg. Mon. and is observed in Benedictine practice, but little of it is explicit.)

#### (i) *The Whole Body :*

- |    |  |        |   |
|----|--|--------|---|
| 4. | To keep constant guard over the actions of one's life. | 5, 53. | Not to sport in water.                      |
|    |  | 7, 13. | To walk quietly in public.                  |
|    |  | 7, 14. | To sit quietly in public.                   |
|    |  | 7, 15. | To walk in public without swaying the body. |
|    |  | 7, 16. | To sit in public without swaying the body.  |
|    |  | 7, 17. | To walk in public without swaying the arms. |
|    |  | 7, 18. | To sit in public without swaying the arms.  |
|    |  | 7, 19. | To walk in public without swaying the head. |
|    |  | 7, 20. | To sit in public without swaying the head.  |
|    |  | 7, 21. | Not to walk in public with the arms akimbo. |
|    |  | 7, 22. | Not to sit in public with the arms akimbo.  |
|    |  | 7, 23. | To walk in public with the head uncovered.  |

- 7, 24. To sit in public with the head uncovered.
- 7, 25. Not to walk on heels or toes in public.
- 7, 26. To sit upright in public.
- 7, 73. Not to ease oneself while standing.
- 7, 74. Not to spit or ease oneself onto grass.
- 7, 75. Not to spit or ease oneself into water.
- 7, 11. To walk in public without ribaldry.
- 7, 12. To sit in public without ribaldry.

(ii) *The Tongue :*

- 4. Not to swear.  
Not to love speaking.  
Not to talk idly.  
Not to love ribaldry.
- 6. To speak seldom.  
Not to love ribaldry.
- 7. Not to love buffoonery.  
To speak little.
- 38. Not to talk during meals.
- 42. Not to speak after Compline.
- 53. Not to talk to a guest without permission.

(iii) *The Eyes:*

- 7. To walk with downcast eyes. 5, 48. Not to observe an army.
- 5, 49. Not to stay long with an army.
- 5, 50. Not to visit parades while staying with an army.
- 7, 7. To walk in public with downcast eyes.

(iv) *Eating:*

38. To maintain recollection whilst eating. 7, 27. To receive food with mind alert.  
 7, 28. To attend to the bowl when receiving food.  
 7, 31. To eat food attentively.  
 7, 32. To attend to the bowl while eating.  
 7, 39. Not to take large mouthfuls.  
 7, 40. To take convenient mouthfuls.  
 7, 41. Not to open the mouth too soon.  
 7, 42. Not to put the whole hand in the mouth.  
 7, 43. Not to talk with the mouth full.  
 7, 44. Not to toss food into the mouth.  
 7, 45. Not to nibble at the food.  
 7, 46. Not to stuff the cheeks.  
 7, 49. Not to put out the tongue while eating.  
 7, 50. Not to chomp food (making the sound *capu-capu*).  
 7, 51. Not to slurp food (making the sound *suru-suru*).  
 7, 52. Not to lick the fingers.  
 7, 53. Not to lick the bowl.  
 7, 54. Not to lick the lips.  
 7, 55. Not to touch the water-jar with a hand soiled by food.  
 7, 56. Not to throw leavings into the courtyard.

(v) *Clothing and General Appearance:*

55. To wear a habit of superior quality outside the 4, 2. To wear the habit.  
 4, 29. To wear the habit after



- |  |    |    |   |
|--|----|----|---|
| Enclosure.   |    |    | at least six days in an insecure hermitage.         |
| (That the Abbot ensure that habits fit the monks.) | 7, | 1. | To wear the undergarment properly.                  |
|  | 7, | 2. | To wear the habit correctly.                        |
|  | 7, | 3. | To wear the habit whilst walking in public.         |
|  | 7, | 4. | To wear the habit whilst sitting in public.         |
|  | 7, | 5. | To wash properly before appearing in public.        |
|  | 7, | 6. | (the same)  |
|  | 7, | 9. | To walk in public with the habit properly adjusted. |
|  | 7, | 9. | To sit in public with the habit properly adjusted.  |

*CONCLUSION:*

73. (That the regulations are minimal and elementary.) (That the Rules are scriptural and should be observed by all.)



# **Contemplation on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue:**

One Student's Perspective

by

Patrick Black

Ball State University

## Editor's introduction:

Mr. Black was an undergraduate student attending a seminar of East-West dialogue conducted at Ball State University in 1979 by the editor of this volume. This class was, at first, highly resistant to the notion that "Christians" had anything to teach or learn from other religions. Mr. Black overcame this resistance, as this paper shows, and points out some of the background and problems in this area in an especially fresh approach. Mr. Black is not a "professional" scholar, as are most of the other contributors, but this in no way hinders the fact that he has insights to offer us. One area of interest in this paper is "who is talking to whom, about what?"; and, "how does all of this look to someone attending a local Christian congregation of some type?". Mr. Black is, in my opinion, living proof that "dialogue" has and does take place.

The contents of this essay are the result of a limited, yet fascinating search into the communication (and the lack thereof) between two of today's major religions, namely Buddhism and Christianity. One article that prompted my further search into the issue of "dialogue" was entitled "Dialogue Between Buddhism and Christianity" by Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita.<sup>1</sup> This pinned down some of the issues in this area of interest and pointed out to me some of the reasons why dialogue has not been more prevalent in the past. To understand the factors inhibiting dialogue, and the possibilities for the positive use of it, one must first understand what, in fact, dialogue really is.

Dialogue, according to Dr. G.W. Houston, is the process by

1. Michael Rodrigo, "Buddhist-Christian Dialogue In Sri Lanka", Claude Geffré and Mariasusai Dhavamony, eds., *Buddhism and Christianity*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 99-106. This book is hereafter abbreviated as *B & C*.

which “communication is taking from the inside (of one’s self), and placing this outside to people—the placing of ideas that you *feel* (within yourself) that echo within them. Dialogue is a type of sustained communication where one gains some insight into each other’s faith structures.”<sup>2</sup> Michael Rodrigo describes dialogue as “...talking and listening alternately, not together; nor is it the summation of two monologues in a quantitative increase of volume.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Houston furthers his definition by stating that there must be four essential parts for fruitful dialogue to occur:

1. The communicating parties must first understand themselves.
2. The communicating parties must understand what each other means.
3. These ideas must be clear and the language understandable.
4. Each must teach and learn from each other.<sup>4</sup>

When studying the communication between Buddhism and Christianity (which is sorely lacking in the true sense of modern dialogue except rarely) one quickly observes that the two religions are extremely dogmatic at times, and either one can stop real dialogue with their attitudes. The “placing of ideas” mentioned above is often attempted, but whether one thereby always gains new insight is an open question. Much of the time dialogue seems to become “the summation of two monologues”.

Dialogue will require, then, that Buddhism and Christianity both use a high degree of open-ness and rid themselves of much dogmatism. This, however, has proved not to be (as a general rule) observed in the past because of many wide-ranged obstacles. For meaningful dialogue to occur, as Houston and Rodrigo envision, new forms of open-ness will need occur. As we stated above, two monologues going on at the same time is not dialogue. When people confront something that is alien and new to them they tend at first to regard it with a considerable amount of distrust, or suspicion. It almost seems as if suspicion has been one of man’s most undesirable traits that he has passed genetically from one generation to another since the beginning of recorded history. This may be one of the real reasons why Buddhist-Chris-

2. G. W. Houston, (class notes, Ball State University, Dec. 18, 1979).

3. Rodrigo, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

4. Houston, *op. cit.*

tian dialogue is not as frequent and as meaningful as it should be today in this small, modern world.

Harvey Cox, author of *Turning East* (and a prominent Christian theologian teaching at Harvard) was initially, and perhaps even so in his search for knowledge of Eastern religions, suspicious of the people and religions of East and their possible effect upon Christianity, especially the young people of today. He is also distrustful of “easy” Christianity when he writes:

This personal history made me very suspicious, at least initially, of the neo-Oriental wave, and I knew that, no matter how hard I tried to maintain scholarly objectivity, my inner distrust for all “opiates of the people,” East or West, might continue to influence me, if mainly on the unconscious level.<sup>5</sup>

Cox stated further that “...I spent some preliminary weeks along with my students scouting the turf, we screwed up our collective courage and plunged into our field...”<sup>6</sup> Here, although Cox was making a positive move in overcoming suspicion, and working toward a clear understanding of some Eastern religions, it seems as if he should have simply approached his new field without having to “screw up any collective courage.” But his suspicion continues on throughout his entire book. And, Sangharakshita says concerning this: “...suspicion and prejudice enter only too easily into any human heart, and one may at times be deficient in honesty, in patience, in charity, and even in common courtesy.”<sup>7</sup>

A second obstruction to modern-day fruitful dialogue, besides suspicion, is the tendency for both Buddhism and Christianity to consider themselves as “religious absolutes”. Sangharakshita observes: “Because they developed in mutual isolation, and because they moreover met with no decisive spiritual challenge from any other universal religion, both Buddhism and Christianity tended to see themselves as religious absolutes.”<sup>8</sup>

Related to the Christian notion of being a religious absolute,

5. Harvey Cox, *Turning East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), p. 12.

6. *ibid.*

7. Maha Sthavira, “Dialogue Between Buddhism and Christianity”, *B & C*, p. 58.

8. *ibid.*, p. 57.

there generally seems to be a tendency for the Christian *East-turner* to quickly accept some aspects of Buddhism, and just as quickly to reject others. The process is selective and often simplistic. Early on in his quest to understand some Eastern religions, Harvey Cox states that "...I rejected nearly all the Buddhists have attached to meditation..."<sup>9</sup> Could he give precise reasons for rejecting meditation aside from some of its non-Christian looking "trappings"? This does not seem to be well thought out.

Even when Cox discovered, heaven forbid, that he was actually interested in Buddhism, he writes: "I discovered that when someone is studying beehives up close, regardless of how much inner distance is retained, there is still a distinct possibility that the investigator can be stung."<sup>10</sup> Could Cox have not used a better analogy than being "stung" when investigating another thought-system? In the words that he used, Cox has demonstrated some of the basic distrust felt when the average church-going Christian investigates Buddhist teachings. Why is such a prominent Christian theologian afraid of Buddhism? Fruitful dialogue will have occurred when Cox studies the beehive, reaches in, and can taste the sweet nectar that the bees have made for him, without any worry of being stung (losing his "religion"?).

Rather simplistically Cox writes concerning Tibetan Buddhist forms that "the two central tenets of this form of Buddhist teaching—something it shares with several other varieties of Buddhism—are the ideas of detachment and egolessness."<sup>11</sup> Is this not also a part of Christian spirituality? Perhaps one should understand some of the basics of Buddhism before seeking for Nirvāṇa. Cox adds: "As a society...we want to set our feet unswervingly toward enlightenment, but to keep a firm toehold on the securities of whatever privileges we have been able to garner."<sup>12</sup> Note the "fear" demonstrated in this last statement.

Related to the notion of Buddhism being a religious absolute, many Easterners are reluctant to turn to the West either to learn or to "save us". Harvey Cox notes:

9. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
10. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
11. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
12. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

...few Easterners ever claim to be able to save the West (a Christian attitude?). Frequently they deny having any interest in doing so even if they could. They rarely send missionaries here and they accept Western novices with reluctance.<sup>13</sup>

One could note in this context the dogmatic stance demonstrated by Gunapala Dharmasiri's book *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God* (Sri Lanka, Lake House Investments Ltd., 1974) where again the old arguments for the "proof" of God are brought forth. It is suggested that one read the response by G.W. Houston on this.<sup>14</sup>

A need for "discipline" is, however, one observation that was concluded more strongly by Cox after his adventure into Eastern thought-forms. He notes that "the failure of most churches to actually teach people to pray" has resulted in "a generation of Protestants who live with no spiritual discipline at all."<sup>15</sup> And the discipline even required for these same Protestants to attend weekly Sunday school has declined, resulting in a rise in memberships to the Hare Krishna Movement.<sup>16</sup> Discipline notions could be gleaned in more detail from dialogue with the East where yoga, for example, has been practised for five-thousand years. And, Zen demonstrates techniques that one could adopt (one thinks here of the books of William Johnston), but Cox shows that this is not always so easy: "It (i.e., Zen) is often boring and frustrating—and—in what our society deems useful—undeniably a total waste of time."<sup>17</sup> Cox soon realized that, to execute meditational techniques at Naropa, a Tibetan Buddhist school in Colorado, he would have to cease his "do-it-yourself" style that he had adopted, which probably required less discipline, and use real Buddhist instruction.<sup>18</sup>

Another difficulty with dialogue is the whole problem of langu-

13. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

14. G. W. Houston, "A Christian Response to Dharmasiri", in the *Journal of International Buddhist Studies*, (forthcoming). In connection with this one should note that Harvey Cox's book under constant quotation is reviewed by G. W. Houston in *The Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* (Sewanee, TN) vol. 23, n. 4, pp. 296-297 (Sept. 1980).

15. Cox *op. cit.*, p. 64.

16. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

17. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

18. cf. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

age. I cannot imagine a Christian attaining the true meaning of the Bodhisattva ideal, however this may be done in certain cases. This ideal is defined as "one does not accept the fullness of human liberation oneself until all sentient creatures share it."<sup>19</sup> One view that comes clearly to mind is that of a Christian attaining enlightenment (or Nirvāṇa) and enjoying its bliss without any regard for the knowledge being shared with his fellow man. Why? Because of the often selfish notion of a Christian obsession of making heaven at any cost. In a like manner, what would the crucifixion mean to the average Buddhist? Or, what would Jesus' method of teaching "enlightenment" mean? If a Christian is "saved" he generally rests content. Therefore, a term like Bodhisattva would cause difficulty to many Christians and the crucifixion would be nonsense to many Buddhists. After all, did not Buddha live to a ripe old age after teaching many disciples? What happens, at times, is that the language is not only not understood, but ignored. There comes only a superficial attempt at understanding. Cox states further: "People who claimed to be immersed in Hindu practices often seemed amazingly unfamiliar with the Hindu scriptures. Enthusiastic Zen disciples sometimes seemed to know very little about Buddhist philosophy."<sup>20</sup> Of course, this problem occurs in Christianity as well.

Conflicting basic ideals can also alter, or even inhibit Buddhist-Christian dialogue. One of these is the example of meditation. Saṅgharakshita writes concerning this:

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of the part played by meditations and contemplation in spiritual development, whereas Christianity insists on the indispensability of the sacraments for the living of the Christian life.<sup>21</sup>

Here then are two polar notions: meditation versus sacrament as a means of salvation. But, does the Christian understand meditation? Cox notes:

Both religions reject the idea of meditation merely as an inquiry into the self: Buddhism because it sees selfhood as an artificial construct, and Christianity because it sees the self only in

19. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

20. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

21. Saṅgharakshita, *op. cit.* p. 56.



relation to other selves, to God, and to a world abounding in death-dealing and life-giving powers.<sup>22</sup>

Meditation then is not for the curious only. Both Christianity and Buddhism “recognize the validity for a direct encounter with the real stuff of life,” however their respective beliefs concerning the obstruction to finding this reality differ. Buddhism attributes our alienation from reality to ignorance, wishful thinking, abstracting, and concept-pandering, whereas Christianity attributes the alienation to fear and lovelessness: the need to dominate the people who we come into direct contact with.<sup>23</sup>

Also, related to the above mentioned problem of language, some further observations could be drawn (excuse the aside on “conflicting ideals” for a moment). We simply have no “unified” language by which we can carry on dialogue between religions. According to Lester A. Lefton, author of *Psychology* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979):

...much of our intellectual capabilities are expressed through what we say and how we say it. The ability to communicate has opened new worlds; the vehicle for this communication is language.<sup>24</sup>

This is generally accepted that the intellect expresses itself through language. Therefore, is it naive to add, that in order for the people of generally different cultures to understand each other there is more required than a basic introduction to the grammar and everyday vocabulary used on the streets. In fact, some state that no one outside of a given sub-culture or religious community can understand the technical vocabulary:

...language is understandable...only to the members of the spiritual community within which it arose and who habitually use it as their means of communication with one another.<sup>25</sup>

Sangharakshita furthers his statement by saying that if some new neutral language were present, communication, if achieved at all, “could hardly be regarded as a communication between

22. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

23. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

24. cf. p. 238 and *passim*.

25. Sangharakshita, *op. cit.* p. 58.

Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Hugo Enomiya-Lasalle, writing on Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Japan states: “The exactly corresponding words often do not exist in European languages and there is always a risk that the original terms may be placed in categories in the European language in question that do not exist in Japanese.”<sup>27</sup> It can thus be concluded that *true* communication must exist for any fruitful dialogue to occur, and that this is no simple matter. Does anyone ever understand anyone else?

Another, perhaps obvious, but saddening reason for little religious dialogue today is that there is a wide gap, intellectually, between college trained religious leaders and their particular flocks. This is apparent in the local congregations because they are “closed” in order to enforce the “flock system”.

There may be difficulties arising out of the special nature of one’s vocation, whether as a parish priest, meditation master, or social worker. Moreover, the members of one’s flock, or one’s religious superiors, may not approve of contact between the followers of the two religions.<sup>28</sup>

Certainly if the individual members of either a Buddhist or Christian flock impress upon their respective leaders to halt dialogue, and hence to remain “orthodox” then they will have not only negated an attempt at positive cultural exchange of knowledge, but they will also impede whatever amount of dialogue is really taking place today. This also will weaken the “trust” that the religious leader has between them. It is unfortunate that this type of frightened attitude is so prevalent in our Christian culture today.

Another obvious obstacle to religious dialogue between Buddhists and Christians is that neither is a “unified” religion. Neither Christians nor Buddhists are going to easily find the “spokesman” to talk to the other religion. It is highly questionable whether the Theravāda Buddhist, for example, even understands Mahāyāna forms, not to mention that Protestants and Catholics hardly know what the other is talking about. Not only is Christianity diversified, but each little “group” thinks to convert the other in

26. *ibid.*

27. Hugo Enomiya-Lasalle, “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Japan”, *B & C*, p. 116.

28. Sangharakshita, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

time. Needless to say, when confronted by a Buddhist that many Christian groups would unite to convert him. Roger Corless writes that “when confronted by a non-Christian, a Christian has tended to convert first and try to understand later.”<sup>29</sup> Buddhists, on the other hand, do not so much attempt to convert. They draw back, smug with their knowledge of “metaphysics” and rest content. They seem to often consider themselves obviously superior to Christians.

Commercialization is another less obvious feature of some things that affects religious dialogue. Following Harvey Cox’s contact with dozens of Eastern gurus and masters, he concluded that “...it is urgent that Christianity break off its debilitating alliance with the spirit of profit, the demon which must be exorcised before it destroys us all.”<sup>30</sup> The “accumulation-minded” form of Christianity, or western culture is easily apparent to those who look around. What is, perhaps, not so obvious is that the Buddhist gurus who come West do the same thing—accumulate. Cox notes, “the consumer mentality can rot the fragile fruits of Eastern spirituality as soon as they are unpacked.”<sup>31</sup> Cox, for one, sees this as a problem for dialogue when he writes:

...the cultural barrier which a commodity culture erects against the possibility of genuine interreligious exchange is thus a formidable one. It raises the question of whether we in the West can ever hear the voice of the East, can ever learn about the Buddhist or Hindu paths without corrupting them in the process.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, as long as the turn East is a commercial one, there can be no serious dialogue of ideas—or religious values. It becomes just another novelty, or gadget—a distorted communication that offers no true solution to the problems facing modern man today in both Western and Eastern cultures. And, we should realize how much of mysterious images of the East are forged by this commercialization. “They arise from deep needs in the Western psyche and are then polished and distributed by writers, film-

29. Roger Corless, “A Christian Perspective on Buddhist Liberation,” *B & C*, p. 74.

30. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

31. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

32. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

makers and inventors of advertising copy.”<sup>33</sup> And, to continue: “Reversing the alchemist’s course, it (i.e., commercialization) transforms rubies and emeralds into plastic, the sacred into the silly, the holy into the hokey.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, the masses can now buy whatever “spiritual values” they wish to purchase. Cox states, “It is possible that the current turn East, what was once a hankering among artists and intellectuals has not reached the ‘popular level’.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, for the “common person” at least to engage in dialogue he must filter out much junk whether he be a Buddhist with his notion of “the superior white man’s culture” or a misled western college youth with his “ideal of a yogi sitting serenely upon the mountain”. It seems that instead of working for something—we try to buy it.

Why then should a Christian attempt dialogue with a Buddhist at all—one could ask? Perhaps the reasons are all selfish, but here are some of them. First of all, for “friendship”.<sup>36</sup> And, we can then re-learn our own roots by looking on it from another culture, or religion.

If we are going to have a spirituality for our time, then we cannot borrow it from the East or resuscitate it from the past.

We will have to force it ourselves with the materials at hand.<sup>37</sup>

And, Christians can learn more about “authority”, “tradition”, “spiritual discipline”, “conservation of natural resources”, and so on. The list could go on. With all of this, it seems only natural that serious Christian theologians are now beginning to look at their theologies from a more critical, cross-cultural posture. They have moved out, and then back with a new understanding. One serious thinker writes :

schools, religious men and women, institutes, centres...would have to sustain their efforts at dialogue and steadily encourage newcomers in dialogue. In this process, moves toward the solution of the problems of language...including beliefs, customs, culture are necessary...and (that is) dialogue not only in word but in action, as a natural process in a Third world

33. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

34. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

35. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

36. cf. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

37. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

country. This is the dialogue with all men of good will, a dialogue in action.<sup>38</sup>

So, dialogue is just beginning between Buddhism and Christianity. It is exciting. It has problems, but it *will* go on. And, we will all benefit from the experience.

Just as repentance must precede entrance into the Kingdom, so the willingness to alter the very basis of our common life must precede our ability to hear, really to hear, what the East has to teach us. We will not hear until we change.<sup>39</sup>

What Cox does not add is that the East can also learn from us. They can learn to affirm the world, which we see as good and as God's creation—instead of denying it. They can learn that life is good even if the world is crowded. And, they can leave the cool regions of metaphysics and become warm in their notion of religion. We can all learn from each other.

38. Rodrigo, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

39. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 145.



# A Tibetan Buddhist Looks at Christianity

by

Lama Anagarika Govinda

*Great religious and deep-rooted philosophical attitudes are not individual creations, though they may have been given their first impetus by great individuals. They grow from the germs of creative ideas, great experiences and profound visions. They grow through many generations according to their own inherent law, just like a tree or any other living organism. They are what we might call 'natural events of the spirit'.*

Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*

Editor's introduction:

Lama Govinda is a rare person. He combines erudite scholarship and a strong spiritual sensitivity. This article, then, is an uncommon one. Govinda points out how religious pluralism is not seen as a "problem" for the Tibetan religious mind, but is, instead, a unique opportunity for all to learn from each other. The notion of exclusiveness, or only one truth, is not known to the Tibetan Buddhist. This is the real reason that Christian missionaries failed ever to make a foothold in Tibet. They brought man-made dogmas instead of universal love and they failed to convert the non-white barbarians. We are most fortunate to be able to include this short essay and it is reprinted with the kind permission of both the writer (personal letter) and is: Reprinted by permission from Crystal Mirror IV, Copyright 1975 by Dharma Publishing, Berkeley, California USA.

To understand a Tibetan Buddhist's attitude towards Christianity we must first of all know what religion means to him. The nearest Tibetan equivalent for 'religion' is *chö* (Sanskrit, *dharma*), which signifies the spiritual and universal law, the principle that supports (*dhar*) all that exists. To live in harmony with this law is the highest aspiration of man and means to dwell in a state of truth and virtue.

To a Tibetan, therefore, religion is not so much the adherence

to a certain creed or dogma, but a natural expression of faith in the higher destiny of man, i.e., in his capacity to free himself from the bondage of delusion and the narrowness of egohood in order to realize the universality of his true nature in the Enlightened Mind.

There are as many ways and methods to achieve this as there are types of human beings, and, therefore, the Tibetan regards the diversity of religions not as a calamity or a reason for quarreling and mutual enmity, but as something that is natural and necessary for the spiritual growth of humanity.

The Tibetan, who is highly individualistic, therefore recognizes and respects innumerable forms of religious practice and devotion, and, in fact, there are many different schools of Buddhism in Tibet—as different from each other as the various Christian Churches and sects—but there is no enmity or sense of competition between them. They live peacefully side by side and recognize each other's validity. By accepting a teacher from one school one does not exclude those of other schools. Indeed, very often the teachings or methods of different schools complement and help each other in the most effective way.

The individualistic attitude in religious matters is expressed in a well-known Tibetan proverb:

*Lung-pa ré-ré kā-lug ré,*

*Lama ré-ré chō-lug ré.*

Every district has its own dialect,

Every Lama his own doctrine.

According to this principle, people are free to accept or to reject beliefs or practices according to their conviction and to express their opinions freely and fearlessly. Religious discussions are always welcomed, and people who can give convincing expression to their ideas are highly respected. The art of public discussion was particularly fostered by the big monastic universities, like Ganden, Drepung and Sera.

At the same time the Tibetan is not so naive as to believe that religious truths can be proved by mere logic or settled by arguments.

Tibetan teachers always stress the fact that ultimate truth cannot be expressed in words, but only realized within ourselves. It is therefore not important what we believe, but what we experience and practice, and how it affects us and our surrounding. What-



ever leads to a state of greater peace and harmony leads us on the right path.

In Tibet a saint is regarded to be higher than a king, a man who is able to renounce worldly possessions, higher than a rich man, and a man who can sacrifice his own life out of love and compassion for his fellow-beings is honored more than a world conqueror.

Up to the present day the stories of the self-sacrificing career of the Buddha during innumerable previous lives on earth as a Bodhisattva are recounted at camp-fires, at religious and secular festivals, in homes and in hermitages, on lonely caravan-trails, and in crowded marketplaces—and they never fail to stir the emotions of even the toughest mule-driver or the most sophisticated townsman, because these stories are not merely matters of a nebulous past, but have their counterparts in the lives of many Tibetan saints who have inspired past and present generations.

Under such circumstances it will be easy to understand that the story of Christ and his suffering on the cross for the sake of humanity is something that appeals deeply to the religious feelings of the average Tibetan. But if somebody would tell him: "Now you must abandon all other saints and saviors and only worship this one," he would be surprised and shocked at such a demand. Because to him the proof of enlightened religious leaders and saints has appeared, who brought the message of love and compassion and re-established the knowledge of that ultimate Reality, which Christians identify with God, Hindus with Brahman, and Buddhists with the state of Enlightenment, beyond words and definitions.

If Christianity could not make headway in Tibet, in spite of the warm reception which was accorded to early missionaries, then this had its reason not in a rejection of Christ or of his essential teachings but, on the contrary, in the fact that the teachings of Christ coincide with and are amply borne out by the Bodhisattva ideal and have been practiced in Tibet more than anywhere in Europe.

The second reason, however, was that those who tried to convey the teachings of Christ to Tibet were unwilling to recognize the great thoughts and saints of that country, and were more concerned with their own parochial outlook and man-made dogmas than with the universal message of Christ.

Nothing could illustrate better the Tibetan attitude towards Christianity than the following historical instances which amply bear out my contention.

The first Christian missionary to reach Tibet was the Portuguese Padre Antonio de Andrade, who in the year 1625 was received with great hospitality at Tsaparang by the King of Guge in Western Tibet. The King paid him high honor and, in the true spirit of Buddhist tolerance, allowed him to preach his religion! To him, a man who had travelled around half the world for the sake of his faith was certainly worth hearing and deserved the greatest respect.

He was convinced that truth cannot harm truth, and that, therefore, whatever was true in the religion of the stranger, could only enhance, amplify, and bear out the teachings of Tibetan saints and of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Was it not possible that in the countries of the West many a Bodhisattva had arisen, of whom the people of the East had not yet heard? So, out of the goodness of his heart, the King of Guge wrote the following letter to Padre Antonio de Andrade in the year 1625 :

We the King of the Kingdoms of Potente, rejoicing at the arrival in our lands of Padre Antonio Franguim (as the Portuguese were called in India) to teach us a holy law, take him for our Chief Lama and give him full authority to teach the holy law to our people. We shall not allow that anyone molest him in this, and we shall issue orders that he be given a site and all the help needed to build a house of prayer.

And the King gave even his own garden to the stranger, a gift which under the conditions of Tibet, where gardens are scarce and a rare luxury, was more than a mere polite gesture.

But, alas, the King in his unsuspecting goodness did not know that the stranger had come not merely to exchange true and beautiful thoughts with those who were striving after similar ideals, but to repudiate the teachings of Buddhism, in order to replace them by what he regarded as the sole truth. The conflict was inevitable: discontent spread in the country, and the political opponents of the King rose against him.

While Padre Andrade, encouraged by his success in Tsaparang, proceeded to Lhasa in order to extend his activities over the whole of Tibet, a revolt broke out in Western Tibet, the King was over-

thrown, and with him the Guge dynasty and the glory of Tsaparang came to an end.

About a century later, in 1716, the Jesuit Padre Desideri arrived in Lhasa. He was given a beautiful house, provided with all the comfort of an honored guest, and was allowed to propagate his religion by preaching as well as through writing. In fact, he wrote a book in order to refute certain Buddhist teachings which created much interest. This is how Desideri recorded the event: "My house suddenly became the scene of incessant comings and goings by all sorts of people, chiefly learned men and professors, who came from the monasteries and universities, especially those of Sera and Drepung, the principal ones, to apply for permission to read the book."

Tibet in those days was certainly more civilized than contemporary Europe, where heretics and their books were burned and persecuted. One can imagine what would have happened in Rome if a stranger had tried to refute publicly the tenets of Christianity!

No wonder, therefore, that the representatives of Christianity were not able to appreciate the spirit of tolerance and to take advantage of the door that was opened to them by reciprocating in the same spirit. Thus, the great opportunity was lost!

Yet, we may hope that when the followers of Christ and those of the Buddha meet again on the ground of mutual goodwill and understanding, there will come a day when the love, which both Buddha and Christ preached so eloquently, will unite the world in the common effort to save humanity from destruction by leading it towards the Light in which we all believe.



# **Contributions to the Methodological Clarification of Interfaith Dialogue Among Buddhists and Christians**

by

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Editor's introduction :

Professor Gómez states that he is working here primarily as a “buddhologist” and not so much as a “comparativist” and this may be so, but here he also demonstrates expertise in several other areas—not the least of which is as a philosopher of religion. One short example of this: “the main objective (of dialogue) is to increase our *understanding of the specific human experience* that constitutes the traditions that are engaged in dialogue.” And, therefore, Gómez demonstrates, in this article, the beginning of an existential anthropology that should prove valuable to any thoughtful reader. In this same vein, he stresses the importance of “context” and tells us that it is only too easy to misapply a western theological term to a Buddhist category. One current example of this is “soteriology” being loosely nudged over into Buddhist notions. Gómez feels that the “differences” between religions are as important as the “parallels” because these differences allow us to better understand both our own system, as well as that of the opposite party, the potential enemy or friend. Regarding this, he states: “Because the understanding that each one has of his own tradition is always imperfect, there is obviously room for communication and mutual enrichment at all times.”

What is used as a working model for getting at the heart of the matter is an analytical, not historical, analysis by the use of “matrices”. These are developed in the following three categories :

1. the human condition
2. expected response to the human condition
3. sacred institutions.

These matrices are useful and original and should not be misconstrued as a systematic theology, which is clearly not the pur-

pose here. But, by comparing these matrices the reader will learn to appreciate how disparate are the two systems, namely: Buddhism and Christianity.

One working in this area of religious dialogue must be, as Gómez warns, prepared “to sacrifice the pride of the conviction of truth”, but this does not imply that we should reduce everything to a religious relativism. *Truth* can become a strange term to the Christian, for example, who finds that Buddhism has something that does not exist in his categories of reflected experience. I refer here to the “levels of truth” or different kinds of truth and/or value. Reductionist western thought, especially post-logical positivism wants to treat “only truth”, or “the one truth”, or “what can be proven”. All this leads to schizophrenia if not allowed to go out in religious investigation. It is not really truth that a religious thinker seeks, but salvation. And, for the ordinary person, whoever he may be, engaged in dialogue—doctrine may be fuzzy anyway. And, this tension between professional and ordinary, many-held and incomplete, doctrines existing within the one religion is seen as creative by Gómez. Out of this tension one grows in religious understanding.

Briefly, allow me one thought: Gómez leaves with us two principles of interfaith dialogue that I want to affirm. These are:

1. meaning is conveyed only contextually
2. correspondences in context are valuable even if they demonstrate different solutions.

This erudite article is a pioneer one. I pray that it is not the last thing to come from Gómez’ pen on this subject.

“Water, when it is agitated is not clear and cannot take the image of nearby objects; but if it is calm, it becomes like the glass in a mirror. It takes, without changing them, all the images of diverse objects, and keeps none of these to itself. It is the same with the pure and quiet soul.” A passage from a Buddhist text? Not so, as it becomes obvious as one reads on: “God imprints His image on it, as well as the image of all the objects that He wants to imprint on it. Everything is imprinted on it and everything is erased from it. This soul does not have a form of its own,

yet it will have in the same way all the forms that Grace will give it..."<sup>1</sup>

This is one of so many passages in Christian literature that reminds the reader of Buddhism; the kind of statement that has tempted some to come to facile conclusions about the common ground of Buddhism and Christianity.

Striking similarities exist not only in matters of doctrine but also in religious behavior. A seventeenth century biography of Saint John of the Cross describes the demeanour of Carmelite novices on their way to the monastic college at Alcalá de Henares thusly: "it was a marvellous sight...for their eyes were so fixed on the ground before them, that they would only see of it what was to be tread upon by the one foot they had raised."<sup>2</sup> This is indeed reminiscent of the common Buddhist monastic rule of walking with lowered eyes.<sup>3</sup>

However, only the careless reader will be misled by these obvious similarities. One only needs to be superficially familiar with the history of both traditions to realize that this close meeting is the exception. What is more, the meeting has occurred only in the minds of the arm-chair mystics that we are. We have no way of knowing how the participants in the spiritual milieus from which the above quotations are derived would perceive what we consider to be "Buddhist parallels." This is not to say that these are not close parallels—which I believe they are—but to warn the reader of the danger of taking an isolated example as the solution to interfaith dialogue or "rapprochement."

It would be a serious mistake to embrace isolated moments in the history of a religion as the quintessential teaching of that tradition. One would have to consider carefully the position of Fenelon in the history of Catholic Christianity. Then, as a less obvious step, one would have to examine the role of the contemplatives within the total system (or systems) of Christian doctrine.

1. Fénelon, *Explication des Maximes des Saints sur la vie intérieure*, Art. 30 vrai., translated from the quotation of P. Demiéville in "Le miroir spirituelle," *Sinologica* I. 2 (1947), p. 136.

2. José de Jesús María, *Historia de la vida y virtudes del Venerable P. Fr. Juan de la Cruz*,... I. 1, chap. 19, translated from the quotation in note 34, p. 89 of Crisógono de Jesús, *Vida y obras de San Juan de la Cruz*, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1972.

3. For instance, in what is probably its oldest formulation, in the Prātimokṣa, śaikṣa-dharma section.

Does the contemplative life mean the same thing in different contexts?

A few years ago there was great enthusiasm for any theory that tried to bring religions together—or, as often was the case, erase differences between religions—by appealing to the universality of the mystic experience. This is no longer fashionable, fortunately, and a recent collection of essays edited by Steven T. Katz has brought to the attention of scholars the serious objections that may be raised against such a simplistic position.<sup>4</sup> It is not that there are no common grounds (and in this respect I find the position taken by Katz in his own paper somewhat extreme), but rather that in choosing a cover or subordinate term to describe the members of two separate sets, the comparativist can easily generate an independent, third category which does not necessarily encompass all of the elements of the two sets he intended to compare. This is especially dangerous when this category (“mysticism”, in the case in question) is a presupposition and not the result of the careful analysis of the phenomena and their contexts. As a result of this, the “evidence” gathered to bolster the theory has to be fragmentary. Particular phenomena, symbols, or doctrinal statements have to be taken in isolation from the systems in which they grow and thrive. Distinctive features have to be explained away, instead of being explained, accounted for, and understood.

Religious dialogue should seek similarities without having to erase differences. It is to be hoped that we have transcended the stage of the quest for the *philosophia perennis*. But this quest still dominates the minds of many, especially among those in the West who are attracted to “Eastern” philosophies and religions. It is therefore appropriate that scholars in that field should try to emphasize the importance of understanding differences as an important step in mutual understanding.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, emphasis on differences in the pages that follow should be interpreted as the weeding that should precede the planting, and not as a declaration of the impossibility of dialogue. There was, a few years ago, on the American religious scene, a *rush* of synthetic or syncretic studies and movements, which has

4. *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, N.Y.: Oxford, 1978.

5. A recent contribution in this direction is the paper “Mysticism and Meditation” by Robert M. Gimello, in pp. 170-99 of Katz’s anthology.



now fortunately abated. But we are faced today with the other extreme, an atmosphere of mistrust that is especially strong in interfaith encounters involving Christians and American followers of "Eastern" religions. This is due in part to the justified fears of the "cults", and to confusion in the minds of many as to which of the "new" religions are to be considered "cults". I do not wish to go into this complex problem here, but I do want to state strongly my desire that this paper contribute to a fruitful dialogue based on mutual recognition and respect for differences. Perhaps we are not entering the age in which speaking about differences will promote dialogue, but I cannot see how true understanding and tolerance can arise from the effacement of what is distinctive in our beliefs and those of others, or from the reduction of the beliefs of others to our own.

Although there can be no question that the conditions for a dialogue among religions have improved considerably since the later part of the last century, at least in Western Europe and North America, it is also true that the conditions for a total lack of communication and intolerance exist throughout the world today, and manifest themselves in very destructive and obvious forms in more than one region of the world. It is also true that the most important conditions for dialogue cannot be brought about by mere intellectual discussion since these are basically a matter of good will, a good will that perhaps must precede all attempts at understanding, and which often require the sacrifice of an important element of the believer's emotional investment in his belief: the pride of the conviction of truth. However, one must recognize the fact that intellectual discussion of conceptual obstacles to communication among religions can be fruitful and worthwhile.

Of course, the consideration of these doctrinal or intellectual stumbling blocks cannot be totally separated from the deeper human obstacles. Doctrines and symbols are after all the medium in which religion's particular experience takes shape. Moreover, this expression or manifestation is probably more than the simple symbolization of a pre-symbolic experience. In a certain sense it is the experience itself, or at least one of the most important pre-conditions for that experience. It so happens, then, that the specific symbolic forms in which experience takes place in any particular religion also make that experience inaccessible to persons

who are used to a different vehicle or symbolic form of religious experience. Although this may seem like a trap, one of the worse forms of the fearsome hermeneutic circle, it is in fact an avenue for progress, for, only if religious experiences were totally *independent* of the vehicle in which they are communicated would dialogue be impossible. It is therefore my conviction that the comparative investigation of the symbology and terminology of diverse religious traditions can contribute to understanding, notwithstanding legitimate disagreement among members of different traditions or divergent currents of one tradition. What is more, this investigation can eventually be of fruit even for those whose disagreement or incapacity to understand is rooted in a more fundamental and rather arbitrary animosity toward all exotic or "heretical" symbols. In other words, even in those cases in which one's incapacity to understand is rooted in a gut feeling or irrational impulse to reject what is not one's own, once a person opens him or herself to the rational investigation of symbolic forms, with the passing of time and a persistent practice, the fruits of this effort can and will trickle down and make their way to the deeper level from which true communication must arise.

The specifics of this type of investigation, however, are extremely complex and we cannot expect to unravel them in a paper of this length. It is more of the nature of an unending continuous task. However, one can outline in the limited space at our disposal some of the symbological stumbling blocks and common grounds which must be defined and clarified as a precondition for an effective dialogue between Buddhists and Christians.

Traditionally, those who were engaged in the comparison of religions with the purpose of proving one or the other system to be the true religion would choose a set of features, a doctrine, or a particular claim to "truth" as the point of contrast or the element that was lacking in one or the other religion, proving it better or worse. In the same manner, those who sought to bring religions closer together followed a similar procedure, choosing equivalents, as it were, from the religions being compared. This approach was not fundamentally different from that of apologetics. The idea was still that there were isolated elements in religions that constituted their "essence" or "truth."

Still speaking in a rather general way, we can say that in more recent years those who attempt to practice a more objective com-

parison try to find a third term, a superordinate term, a category that will bridge the gap between the two symbols being compared. The danger with this approach is that one may end up reducing the terms of both religions to a third set, that of a particular theory of religions, before testing to see if there is any correlation between the two terms that the theoretical structure claims to explain. This does not leave us in a better position than when we reduced the terms of one religion to that of another. However, there is no question that some process similar to these must be carried out if we are to reach some sort of middle ground from which dialogue can be initiated.

I will explore here briefly some of the problems involved in the comparison of doctrines that seem to be unavoidable in any encounter between religions. In this essay, however, the emphasis will be on understanding the methodological problems and pre-conditions for a specific case of comparison, a process which I feel is at the heart of dialogue. I will work more as a Buddhologist than as a comparativist, my main goal being to offer to others who are more experienced in the field of the history of religions what I believe to be a neglected segment of the raw materials of their discipline. I am referring not to isolated religious phenomena, but to the linking of phenomena and symbols into integral structures. I have chosen, therefore, for this paper two sets of terms which are important from the internal point of view of each of the two religions. We will then see how each set compares to the other.

This approach differs from the more common practice of trying to find corresponding phenomena, a terminology or schemas, no matter what their role may be in each of the two religions. It is not that this practice is always followed uncritically or randomly; in many cases it has been used very effectively and rigorously. The point is that when the question is dialogue, and not mere dry scholarship (*érudition pure*), we are speaking of integral systems and not of isolated phenomena; we are speaking of matrices of meaning, not of isolated symbols. An isolated phenomenon out of context may or may not speak about an "original" or "universal" meaning; that is a moot point; but taken outside of its context, apart from the particular function it has within a given religious system, it is impossible to judge its meaning for the followers of that system. Now, what we are proposing then

is a matrix, a list of doctrines that are obviously central to the given religion.

Given our present limitations of space, I have worked with a simple list of related concepts, from which I have been forced to omit for the most part sectarian differences, historical change and religious behavior. The elements of this set of concepts are arranged to form a matrix of related terms that can be analysed to the following broad categories: the human condition (“original” relationship to the “holy”; that is, the present condition); expected response to the human condition (divine or human); sacred institutions. In the appendix to this paper the reader will find the original matrices with which I began this paper. By comparing these among themselves and with the actual order in which these topics are treated herein, the reader will be able to appreciate how disparate the two systems are. Clearly, even the broad outlines of the elements that constitute each matrix differ.

The outlines in the appendix are partly clarified in the body of the paper, though they are for the most part self-explanatory. The sources on which I based them are listed in the notes. The Buddhist list alone needs a special word of caution: it is three-fold. The differences between Mahāyāna and pre-Mahāyāna are significant enough to justify drawing at least two different matrices. In fact, one of the points I expect to make in this paper is that, in spite of the continuities that exist within Buddhism from an internal point of view, diverse sectarian traditions have to be distinguished sharply. This is especially true when dealing with doctrines that develop in very disparate social and historical milieus (e.g., the Pure Land of the Sūtras and that of Shinran, or the *bodhicitta vis à vis* the strict karmic theory of the Pāli texts.)

Another aspect of the matrices and their use in this paper may surprise the reader. I have emphasized and used as my primary reference point only one of the lists, the matrix for Christian doctrine. The reader may wonder why I have proceeded to make comparisons apparently without considering the possibility that working from the opposite direction could produce different results. I did in fact consider at first using a Buddhist matrix as the unmoving reference point. However, two problems became apparent at once. (1) If the Christian matrix is far from not being controversial, the Buddhist is almost impossible to construct unless one assumes the most limited sectarian perspective or the

point of view of a purely theoretical historical reconstruction of a “basic teaching” common to several groups.<sup>6</sup> (2) Even after I managed to build some kind of Buddhist matrix or matrices, it became obvious that, given the disproportionate importance of the philosophical analysis in traditional Buddhist systems,<sup>7</sup> treating them as integral systems, presupposed a very detailed and extensive analysis of abstruse philosophical issues. I have tried to avoid this in this paper, but the reader should keep in mind that such an effort is not necessary in the case of Christianity; this disparity may point to important distinctive features of the two systems.

We should have in these lists presumably a good set of contrasts (with a few, perhaps important, similarities) as to symbol and relationships among symbols (the matrix). In these sets we do want to find at the same time bridging concepts, and this we will have to do by generating some suprasegmental terminology, the detailed discussion of which I rather bracket, for the time being, without omitting it totally from our discussion. The idea is not to compile a list of important unrelated dogmas, but rather to draw the symbolic matrix of a religion. This is very much the function of doctrines when they operate, as they often do, as part of the symbolic system of a religion. They form a whole framework which is the context for each separate concept or practice.

Perhaps two examples may help clarify this. The doctrine of the Trinity is itself already a matrix, and not a single isolated statement about divine reality; all of its elements are equally inseparable from other key Christian doctrines such as the incarnation and the resurrection. In the same way the Buddhist doctrine of *Trikāya* forms one whole, inseparable from the doctrine of *nirvāṇa*, the theory of enlightenment, the twofold truth, etc. Only when we see these elements as part of a whole are we spared

6. Witness the difficulties faced by Christmas Humphreys in presenting his “Twelve Points” to the hierarchs of the Nishi Honganji, which he naively believed to have overcome. See his Prologue to Beatrice Lane Suzuki, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948.

7. The Pure Land Sects form a notable exception to this; but, on the other hand, because of their unique position in the history of Buddhist doctrine and their putative similarity to Christianity, I have chosen to treat them only in passing.

from the facile, meaningless comparisons suggested by the notion of a threefold manifestation of the sacred.<sup>8</sup>

Of course there may be, and there are, variations. When we speak of a matrix we speak synchronically, from the historic point of view of one instant within the evolution of a sectarian system. However, historic or sectarian variation does not mean that concepts are easily detachable from each other; on the contrary, the holistic sense of the religious mind is what often makes change so traumatic. Variations in one element of the matrix entail changes in the whole system of a religious community and, often, change in the behavior of its members.

Unfortunately for the scholar, although not for the believer, the conceptual grid or matrix is very seldom a finished product; it is in a constant process of growth, and it is very seldom found as a complete system. Only in the case of the great *summas* or the declarations of great councils do we find attempts at formulating more or less complete systems. Even in those exceptional cases it would be a mistake to assume that there is such a thing as a finished, closed grid.<sup>9</sup>

8. On this problem, see below, notes 56-63, 132 and the corresponding text of the paper.

9. I trust the reader has well understood that the concept of a "system" or, better, a "matrix," is not synonymous with that of a systematic theology or a consolidated system of dogmatics. Only a very small elite within the religious community is concerned with the latter. In fact, very few founders of religions are "founders" in the sense of being the creators of the conceptual system we usually identify with the religion. (Cf., Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind*, New York: New American Library (Mentor), 1964, p. 97.) A concept that may help us understand variation (both as change, divergence, and convergence) is Ninian Smart's metaphor of interweaving strands which give doctrinal schemes their characteristic and essential lack of precision. (Cf. his *Reasons and Faiths: An Investigation of Religious Discourse, Christian and Non-Christian*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, especially Chapter III.)

The analysis of religions as systems has another important, and highly problematic, limitation: It would seem to exclude anti-systematic, iconoclastic movements, or those definitions of religion that distinguish "true" religion from "formal" or "institutional" religion. This tendency appears in many forms in most universal religions. It is a strong strand in Zen Buddhism, appears in the early Tantric movement represented by the caryāpādas, and manifests itself repeatedly in devotional Hinduism. In Christianity this phenomenon also takes many forms, including the identification of the term "religion" or

Therefore, in establishing the matrix of a given religious system we are faced with a rather complex problem. One may speak, correctly, about the basic assumptions of a religion, but it is not easy to discover what these are. In the case of some religions there is the belief that there is an official position, yet there are many religions in which there is no official position or no central authority to determine what this may be. Even in those in which there is a putative authority and official position—such as in the Catholic Church—the official position is not necessarily the only voice in search for dialogue. Or perhaps it can only be ascertained in the case of controversial issues that have been debated before. There are many aspects of the belief, possibilities of interpretation, that have not been examined in this way before. To further complicate matters, whether a religious community has an official position or not, the beliefs and practices of the ordinary believer cannot be ignored, and must be taken into account in any objective treatment of the religious tenets of a religious system. Still at a third, equally complex level, one must consider the speculations of the theologians or experts, among whom, even in systems which are supposed to be closed—such as the Catholic dogma or the oral tradition of some of the Buddhist sects—there is great discrepancy as to what is the official doctrine or orthodoxy.

This leads us back to the initial statement of this paper regarding the basic assumptions that must guide dialogue among religions if it is to be fruitful. There is no such thing as a religion without “problems”: discrepancies, contradictions, inconsisten-

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“religions” with the institutionalized faith that the critic wants to distinguish from his “pure” faith (as in Bonhoeffer: It is nothing else than bondage to Jesus Christ alone, completely breaking through every program, every set of laws...)—*The Cost of Discipleship*, New York, 1959, p. 49). Just recently, a new “street preacher” has appeared in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who states: “Jesus Christ is not a system of beliefs.” (*The Ann Arbor News*, Saturday, October 25, 1980, p. A-5; Booth News Service.) This represents, indeed, one of the most important issues in religion, and the type of rhetoric or dialectic in which it is usually expressed presents serious problems to the scholar attempting to understand this phenomenon intellectually. However, anti-intellectual, anti-institutional or anti-systematic religious positions also have a context and a matrix within which they acquire and develop their meaning. A matrix of meaning does not have to be an internally consistent or externally closed system; what is more, its existential meaningfulness derives from the fact that this is seldom the case.

cies and complex levels of doctrine and practice. To assume that there is a religious system that is free of these complexities is perhaps all right for the devout preacher or missionary, but can only lead to serious oversights and misunderstandings in the dialogue among religions. As a matter of fact, I would have to emphasize that it is my conviction that the problems that arise in the formulation of religious doctrine within any system are often more productive and creative than are the attempts to solve or eliminate the inconsistencies, because many of these problems are inherent in the religious experience itself, insofar as it reflects the human condition *vis à vis* the sacred, a relationship which is one of tension.

The above considerations lead to another threat to the meaningfulness of comparisons: the fact that one sets out to compare a given religion with another may predetermine our perception of either or both of the two religions. Admittedly, it is difficult to form one of these matrices without regard to what is already in the other. But I have endeavored to work on both in the light of what seemed to me crucial in the teachings of each religion, independent of the other. Perhaps the fact that one finds it difficult to draw any profound parallels even in terms of the broad outlines of the two lists is the best proof that the one is independent of the other. But, of course, the truth of the matter is that a religion's dogmatic systems are formed to a great extent under the influence of its apologetics. That is, religions often define themselves in terms of their difference from other religions. In a certain sense, then, a religious dogma is the shadow of another religion. But it would be simplistic to assume that religions are nothing but never-ending images reflected in mirrors that face each other. Moreover, in choosing Christianity and Buddhism, we tread solid ground in this respect, for the two religions have been isolated from each other and have been under the influence of a variety of outside forces for long enough to make it rather difficult for them to be simple inverted images of each other.

The above suggests of course that there are certain relations of interdependence that make it difficult for the scholar to separate issues or doctrinal strands from a given historical or polemic frame of reference. Of course, there is, in a certain sense a dialectic relationship between the frames of reference, and the separate elements that interact within them. This is also true of the parti-



cular doctrines or religious forms of action with respect to the system in which they develop. The latter of course is not a simple case of change, for this is obviously another case of the hermeneutical circle, insofar as there is nothing like a separate system apart from the interpretation and value of the separate elements, and these are meaningless apart from the total system.

In a very illuminating paper C. Regamey has tried to outline the basic conditions for East-West comparative philosophy, and in passing opened up the question of the relationship of terms to systems.<sup>10</sup> Much of what he said there could be applied to the comparison of religions, although I must take issue with some of his basic assumptions. In that paper he discusses—unfortunately in a very general way—three “methodological principles” for comparative philosophy: (1) to compare details rather than systems, (2) to avoid comparing systems that are totally disparate, and (3) to mistrust verbal similarities. I find myself forced to take exception with the first of these, precisely because it overlooks the fact of the importance of the totality of the system, a fact which Regamey himself recognizes in his third principle, and uses throughout the rest of his paper in the form of Northrop’s axiom that similar terms used within divergent systems indicate fundamentally different concepts.<sup>11</sup>

But perhaps Regamey’s first principles say more about the way the word “system” has been used sometimes in philosophical textbooks to refer to simplistic code-words such as “idealism,” “monism,” etc., than it says about systems in the sense of grids

10. Constantin Regamey, “Tendances et méthodes de la philosophie indienne, comparées à celles de la philosophie occidentale”, in *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*, 3ème Série, Tome I. 4, 1951, pp. 245-69.

11. Op. cit., pp. 249-50. F. S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry Concerning World Understanding*, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1952; “The Complementary Emphases of Oriental Intuitive and Western Scientific Philosophy”, in *Philosophy East and West*, ed. C. Moore, Princeton, 1944, pp. 168-204; and “The Relation Between Eastern and Western Philosophy”, in *S. Radhakrishnan. Comparative Studies in Philosophy*, London, 1951. Both Regamey and Northrop held in varying forms and intensities the view, common in intellectual circles even today, that the East could be characterized as intuitive and mystic, while the West was rationalistic and scientific. There is a grain (minute grain) of truth in this, but it is one of those generalizations that do not take us very far towards understanding others, yet do much to cloud our perception of important distinctions.

or matrices of interrelated concepts. If we understand this term in the latter sense, then our first principle of comparison should be to compare individual terms as a function within a system, and not as an isolated detail.

Once we have changed the first principle to read in this fashion, we can propose that the analysis of the separate elements that form a set is the basis for dialogue or understanding only when these elements are understood as functions of a system, that is a matrix of meanings. The present paper is meant as a preliminary step in that direction in the context of a Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

The task required of us by dialogue is similar to what Paul Ricoeur has outlined as the task of philosophical hermeneutics. His approach and the goals of his study are somewhat different from those that motivate the search for understanding in inter-faith dialogue, but there are significant similarities. The person seeking to communicate with members of a different faith has to transform the circle of hermeneutics into a wager, in a manner quite similar to the philosopher. The latter is looking for “a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings” by following “the indication of symbolic thought.”<sup>12</sup> The symbols become the starting point, “a means of detecting and deciphering human reality.”<sup>13</sup> But this is precisely the only realm in which dialogue could have meaning.

Dialogue perhaps can take us one step further, for, by reflecting dispassionately on the way symbols of diverging traditions are set up in contrasting patterns, the way they may overlap or represent different interpretations of a given human situation, one may discover—as it were, in the *intervals* between symbols—not only a better understanding of man, but also a better understanding of the experiences embodied in each specific tradition.

In other words, although dialogue among religions should enrich the storehouse of humanistic knowledge and add an important dimension to philosophical hermeneutics by providing the philosopher with diverging symbological traditions,<sup>14</sup> this is not

12. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Religious Perspective Series, XVII), Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, p. 355.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Ricoeur, like most Western philosophers, has chosen to ignore the significance of the fact that religious symbols are culture-specific. This is a

the main goal of the type of comparison that leads to communication among religions.

This dialogue may contribute to humanistic learning, and probably should affect significantly one's perception of his own religious tradition, but the main objective is to increase our *understanding of the specific human experiences* that constitute the traditions that are engaged in dialogue. Understanding of *differences*, appreciation and respect for differences is an important safeguard against reductionism and facile comparisons, but it is also (and this is, from the point of view of human relations, much more important) the true sign of communication.

It is interesting, and in some ways ironic, that differences are usually effaced not when one studies systems as integrated wholes, but when one picks a detail or term and treats it in isolation (to paraphrase our inversion of Regamey's first principle). By taking concepts in isolation one has already excluded the possibility of understanding their meaning within the religious tradition in which they function, that is, the only context of their signification, and, therefore, all of their meaning. One has only to bring to mind, as an example, the ease with which the words "salvation" and "soteriology" have gained currency in Western talk about Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> To some it may seem that these terms are extremely useful rubrics, by means of which one can indicate that which is common to a certain type of religious theory or experience. There are indeed important features shared by the so-called religions of salvation, *vis à vis* other religions and other cultural phenomena.<sup>16</sup> But it is not clear that the terms can or do lose their specifically Christian denotation when used as superordinate concepts. Used

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problematic area where dialogue, as an intellectual endeavor, and the History of Religions have much to teach Western Philosophy of Religion. One wonders whether one can realistically expect to see the day when Western philosophical treatments of theism (or atheism, for that matter) will take into account the forms that these phenomena take in other cultures (witness for instance, Scheler's phenomenology).

15. See, for instance, W.L. King, *Introduction to Religion: A Phenomenological Approach*, New York: Harper and Row, rev. ed., 1968, pp. 250-51; also, C. Regamey in his article on the Hīnayāna in F. König, *Religionswissenschaftliches Wörterbuch*, Freiburg: Herder, 1959.

16. See, e.g., J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion*. New York: Macmillan—London: Collier Macmillan, 1970, pp. 139-143.

as generic terms they tend to simplify what is otherwise a very complex situation.

The specific context of Buddhism is particularly complex in this regard. If we accept, for the time being, Ninian Smart's three types ("strands") of religious experience—the mystical, the numinous, and the incarnational—I believe we would understand him correctly if we said that these three strands criss-cross throughout the history of Buddhism.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Gautama Buddha is, in some traditions, a "savior" only in the most general, and perhaps inaccurate, use of the word. His achievements have made him almost more than human, a being so extraordinary that a man equal to him will arise only once in millions of years; yet he is still nothing more than a paradigm and a teacher. Granted, to the believer he is *the* paradigm, *the* teacher, so much so that it is often said that liberation is impossible unless one meets a Buddha—his teaching is not enough, his personal presence is indispensable.<sup>18</sup> Yet he is not the God-Man, not the redeemer.

17. This is not stated in so many words in *op. cit.*, but is clearly one of the obvious implications of the study. See especially p. 116, n. 2.

18. Variations on this doctrine are particularly interesting. On the one hand there is the declaration attributed to the Buddha: "He who sees me, sees the Dharma. He who sees the Dharma sees me" (*Samyutta Nikāya* III. 120). This statement probably represents the earlier tradition, dominant in the Pali canon. On the other hand, being reborn at a time when there is a Buddha in the world is considered a great fortune, since, explicitly or implicitly, it is believed that such circumstances are particularly favorable to spiritual progress, or the only circumstances under which enlightenment is possible. See, for instance, the doctrine of the eight unfavorable junctures (*akṣaṇa/akkhaṇa*) in *Āṅguttara Nikāya* IV. 255-6; then, Asita's lament at the fact that he will not meet the Buddha, first construed as regret at missing his teachings (*Suttanipāta* 694), then as the sorrow of not being able to reverently contemplate (*darshan*) the Buddha (*Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu* versions); in the *Nidāna* to the *Jātakas* it is said that the vision of a living Buddha is included (together with being a male and a monk) among necessary conditions for attaining Buddhahood. A text from the *Samyutta Nikāya* (I. 218-220) seems to bring together two diverging strands of this doctrine: on the one hand, meditation on the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha allays all fears because the objects of the meditation are numinous; on the other hand, their power seems to derive indirectly from their value as "fields" in which the meditator's own merit is to be planted.

The Buddhists also seem to have hesitated with regard to the importance they wanted to give to the "salvific role" of the historical Buddha as a unique individual. The debate on the question in Nāgārjuna's (rather, the Pseudo-

In contrast to the above, there are segments of Mahāyāna that can hardly be called anything else but doctrines of salvation in the strict sense of the term. Joachim Wach already pointed out many years ago that Westerners tended to ignore these doctrines by regarding them as wholly secondary (deviations), and appealed to scholars to look at the bare historical facts to be described by objective study.<sup>19</sup> Wach, however, still tended to emphasize the scholastic interpretation of the sūtras, in which the process of salvation consists merely in the imitation of the Master (“the achievement of the ideal of the *imitatio*”).<sup>20</sup> Smart has been more careful in this connection. He sees in some forms of the Mahāyāna a dominance of the numinous and incarnational strands over the mystical :<sup>21</sup>

There is, be it noted, something of a split in Mahāyāna Buddhism between the two powers to save, i.e., the power to save through preaching and the power to save by mysterious means. The historical Buddha is usually represented as the giver of saving doctrines..., while the popular evolution of the doctrine of largely unhistorical Bodhisattvas contains as a central notion that the Bodhisattvas, through renouncing nirvāṇa till others are saved and transferring to lesser beings the merits they have acquired, can lead them to final peace. Thus the concept of mysterious saving-power was developed independently of doctrines about the historical Gotama.

I am not sure that I can agree completely with Smart’s historical analysis, but his observations are correct insofar as they point to the diversity of views that coexist in what is purported to be one single system: on the one hand, the Master is conceived as saving only through teaching; yet on the other hand, his life and ministry is a unique occurrence, a momentous, cosmic event, so much so,

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Nāgārjuna’s) *Upadeśa* is quite well known (E. Lamotte, *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1949-1980, 5 vols., pp. 542-545). The uniqueness of a Buddha’s existence is emphasized in Sarvāstivādin and Mahāsāṅghika circles with the simile of the Udumbara flower (*Lalitavistara*, *Mahāvastu*, and, in Lamotte, *Traité*, pp. 304-305).

19. J. Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and Non-Christian*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1951, pp. 104ff.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 112ff.

21. *Op. cit.* p. 116, n. 2.

that even his mere presence can save. These two strata of the symbol are then further divided: as rare as the blooming of the Udumbara tree is the appearance of a Buddha in the world, yet, there are other Buddhas in other worlds to whom one may appeal in different ways for some form of saving influence.<sup>22</sup> And then, as if this were not enough, there are the Bodhisattvas, who gradually take on more and more the role of the embodiment of the compassion of the transcendent. In the end we find even the question—familiar to Christians in a slightly different form—of why all beings are not immediately saved if the mysterious saving powers of the Holy are so overwhelmingly irresistible.<sup>23</sup>

Having come so far, one can sympathize with those who would rather use the catch-all “salvation” and thus avoid the agony of trying to make sense of so much diversity. But by following the easier course of simplifying differences within Buddhism one is by necessity erasing some of the fundamental differences that separate Buddhism from Christianity. One has simply chosen *a priori* to ignore the context in which these doctrines occur, the context that makes it possible for Buddhism to include the degree of variation which Christianity does not admit. This will become clear as we examine the matrices within which the two doctrines of salvation function.

The cornerstone of the Christian matrix is, without question, creation. It is only in terms of this momentous event—which, strictly speaking, should have been the first event in time—that the human condition as we know it can be described as “fallen”, and the Christian can interpret his existential distress in the peculiar way in which he understands it: to be fallen is to be in sin. It is also in terms of this germ concept that the word “sin” acquires its distinctively (though not exclusively) Christian meaning: to be in sin is to have offended the Lord Creator. Moreover, this special relationship between man and Divinity lends itself to the sort of interpretation of the process of salvation that so clearly characterizes Christianity: incarnation and redemption.

This x-ray view of Christian doctrine leaves out all the life, blood and muscle of the system, but I believe it describes accurately the fundamental skeleton. Although there have been Christians

22. See note 17, above, especially, Lamotte, loc. cit.

23. Lamotte, op. cit. pp. 536, 545-557, 1930.

(some described as “heretics,” others living, even *today*—or rather, *all the more* today—in the midst of the established churches) who would disagree with some of these fundamental tenets, in general the above description is schematic enough to be acceptable to most main-line Christians. But what is truly significant about this outline is that, although it is a mere schema, although it represents the bare bones of Christianity, it is still irreconcilable with Buddhist doctrine.

In the first place, Buddhist tradition may have developed various myths of cosmic evolution, but there is no concept of creation in the strict sense of *ex nihilo*. What is more, at least in India, Buddhist scholastics have a consistent record of opposition to all creation theories (though these be primarily emanationistic), but very especially to doctrines of universal creatorship or lordship. This opposition not only grew out of certain basic philosophical presuppositions of the religious system, they also can be traced to canonical formulae such as the silence of the Buddha (the so-called “unexplained points”), and, above all, to the doctrine of *anāditva*, that is, of the beginninglessness of *samsāra*.

The latter doctrine is the closest parallel (that is, structural or typological parallel) in Buddhism to the Christian doctrine of creation. Very appropriately it offers a clear contrast to its Near Eastern and Western counterpart. Again, if we look for a similar parallel to the fall, it is to be found quite obviously in the pair *avidyā/trṣṇā*, usually with the emphasis on the former. Although the well-known formula of the Four Noble Truths only mentions the latter of these two, the former is the dominant explanation already in the canonical sources, and will gradually displace the latter, culminating with the Mahāyāna emphasis on some form of “cosmic illusion” as the ultimate source of transmigration.<sup>24</sup>

No matter how schematic the presentation, there is one additional element that must be included. The relationship between Creator and creature has come to be conceived in Christianity—as it is, say, in *bhakti* Hinduism—as so close and intimate that it

24. See *Abhidharmakośa*, III. 21, 29d; VI. 3. In the canon, it is the formulae of “conditioned production” (*pratītyasamutpāda*) that best express the preeminence of *avidyā*. The triumph of the “gnoseological” in Mahāyāna is seen in the critique of Hīnayāna implicit in the doctrine of the *jñeya-āvaraṇa*, expressed rather forcefully in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (IX. 31-35, 41) and its Pañjikā.

must be expressed in the imagery of human love. Again, Christianity shares with other theistic religions the notion that God's love is somehow inherent to Him—an integral part of His nature, or, if you will, His inner structure. Whereas other religions, such as Hinduism, have chosen sexual love as the symbol for this inner structure of love, Christianity has chosen a tripartite structure, in which the fundamental human image of love is that of father and son. Without any claims to historical validity, we may say, as an heuristic figure of speech, that by defining God's love in terms of father and son, Christianity found itself in a position to speak of God's "avatāra" as His Son, in a way in which Hindu mythology would never express itself. In this way, only in Christianity did it come to happen that one would conceive of Redemption as a process carried out not only by Divine Self-Sacrifice (a "mythologème" not unknown in other religions), but by the *unique* historical event of the sacrifice of God's *only* Son.

Consequently, this divine sacrifice can occur only once, and it does occur in human time. It was the sacrifice of one individual, a unique person, and it was an event occurring in history. Of course, there is much in the writings of modern theologians to suggest that this strictly literal sense of the "historicity" of the redemptive events in the life of Christ is not necessarily the only interpretation open to the Christian believer. This is partly due to the fact, always recognized by the tradition, that the historical event is at the same time a cosmic, timeless event. Still, it is an accurate description of what is distinctive of Christianity to say that the redemptive process is not simply symbolized by the Cross and the Resurrection, that both of these historical events *are* a unique redemptive event that is not repeatable.

There is, nevertheless, room for interpretation. For instance, statements such as the following by Hans Küng lend themselves to certain syncretistic interpretations that I have heard among Christian and Buddhist friends alike:<sup>25</sup>

Since according to New Testament faith the raising is an act of God within God's dimensions, it can *not* be a *historical* event in the strict sense: it is not an event which can be verified by historical science with the aid of historical methods. For the

25. Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976, pp. 349-350.



raising of Jesus is not a miracle violating the laws of nature, verifiable within the present world, not a supernatural intervention which can be located and dated in space and time... neither the raising itself nor the person raised can be apprehended, objectified, by historical methods.

And to the question "Is the resurrection imaginable?" he replies:<sup>26</sup>

...Here there is nothing to be depicted, imagined, objectified... Here too we come up against the limitations of language. But then there is nothing left for it but to speak in paradoxes: to link together for this wholly different life concepts which in the present life are mutually exclusive.

How Buddhist can you get without ceasing to be a Christian? Certainly much more. This is not what it would seem to the casual reader. I do not believe Küng's imaginative interpretation of Christian doctrine really lends itself to any Christian-Buddhist synthesis.

Of course, his is not necessarily the most widely accepted approach to this question. But secondly, what is more significant, read in context his views are still centered on the notion of uniqueness, which is the real *skandalon* to the Buddhist. In the third place, most Christians, Hans Küng included, would have to agree to the fact that, however, imperfect the language of New Testament theology may be (if even that much is conceded to Küng's interpretation), it is irreplaceable. Let us examine briefly these three points.

Although it would be difficult to prove statistically—and the question of official sectarian positions is well beyond the pale of my limited scholarly expertise—I think my readers will have to agree with me that the majority of Christians—and very especially the Catholic Church—have held that the resurrection was an event, an event that to most was something that occurred *in human history*. The more literal view is expressed by Karl Rahner and H. Vorgrimler in their brief lexicon, *sub voce* "Auferstehung Christi":<sup>27</sup>

...es ist wichtig, angesichts der heute möglichen Glaubenschwierigkeiten zuerst auf die gutbegründete Historizität dieser

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 350-51.

27. *Kleines theologisches Wörterbuch*, Freiburg: Herder, 1961.

Tatsache hinzuweisen. Sie stützt sich auf zwei sich gegenseitig tragende und erhellende Erfahrungen, die selbst bei kritischer Exegese und rein historischer Forschung jeder ernsthaften Bestreitung standhalten. Die eine Erfahrung ist die Entdeckung des leeren Grabes...Die andere Erfahrung ist die der mehrmaligen Selbstbezeugung Jesu...

The empty tomb and the apparitions of Jesus are indeed events occurring in history, which point to the "historicity of the event" of the resurrection. Even more "modern" works where the kerygma are seen as revealing a historical event ("Died and was buried") and a suprahistorical "significance" ("risen" and "exalted"),<sup>28</sup> insist that, although no one saw the resurrection, God did raise his Son from the dead, and the Apostles saw Him after the resurrection. These events are the cornerstone of Christian faith.

In spite of the disagreements that Christians may have on these points, *vis à vis* the non-Christian they are one—with very few exceptions, Küng *not* included among them—in emphasizing the uniqueness of the historical and the suprahistorical redemptive process. In a certain sense, the suprahistorical aspect of this process is an event—however paradoxical that may be. Even if one believes that it is a timeless process, something actually occurred in human history—and it occurred only once—that made this process accessible to humanity. *On Being a Christian* has not been Küng's most daring statement of his positions. Those who are more knowledgeable in this field perhaps may want to discuss the question of exactly what segment of Christian thought he represents. He is obviously at odds with the "official" position—witness the sad events of his encounter with Rome. But, be that as it may, even as he tells us that the resurrection is "completely intangible and unimaginable," that "resurrection and raising are pictorial-graphic expressions," "images, metaphors, symbols", that "the empty tomb never led anyone to faith in the risen Christ,"<sup>29</sup> Küng affirms :<sup>30</sup>

...it becomes clear how closely Jesus' person is linked with his

28. See, e.g., the "Dutch Catechism": *A New Catechism*, N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1967, pp. 178 ff., 209 ff.

29. *Op. cit.* 350, 365.

30. *Op. cit.* 380-81.

cause. No one believes in Jesus who does not acknowledge his cause by following him...Here then is the explanation of why Jesus was not only venerated, studied, and followed as founder and teacher, but known as active in the present; why the mystery of God was seen as linked with his whole tense, enigmatic history and thus Jesus himself became the content of their proclamation, the compendium of the message of the kingdom of God...Christianity, inasmuch as it is a confession of Jesus of Nazareth as the living and powerfully effective Christ, begins at Easter. Without Easter there is no Gospel...Without Easter there is no faith...

This is why the basic elements of the language of Christology are irreplaceable in a sense that the language of "Buddhology" is not. The former are the elements of a unique event, the latter the elements of a description of a fundamental, timeless truth (*dharma*). Thus, although the Buddha affirmed the effectiveness of his method to liberation by appealing to his own experience,<sup>31</sup> or by declaring himself the establisher of a "path" that had not "arisen before",<sup>32</sup> his path is effective because there is a "beyond",<sup>33</sup> not because of what he himself did or may do for others.<sup>34</sup> There is nothing inconsistent with the rest of Buddhism, nothing surprising in the classical statement on *dharmatā*, which, in fact, defines Buddhism as a suprahistorical truth :<sup>35</sup>

Whether a Tathāgata arises or not, there remains ...as a necessary condition of all phenomena (*dharma*) the fact that all conditioned things are impermanent, ...that all conditioned things are suffering...that all phenomena are not self. To this a Tathāgata awakens fully...this he makes known...

This is indeed a world apart from the message of Paul in I Corinthians 15:17-21 :<sup>36</sup>

And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins. It would also mean that the be-

31. *Samyutta Nikāya* III. 139.

32. *Samyutta Nikāya* III. 66.

33. *Udāna* VIII. 1-3, *Samyutta Nikāya* IV. 359.

34. *Majjhima Nikāya* III, Sutta 107.

35. *Ānguttara Nikāya* I. 286.

36. *Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's English Version*, N.Y.: American Bible Society, 1966, 1971.

lievers in Christ who have died are lost. If our hope in Christ is good for this life only, and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world. But the truth is that Christ has been raised from the death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will be raised. For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man.

The above considerations clearly separate the concept of the *rarity* of the arising of Buddhas in the world from that of the *uniqueness* of the redemptive event of the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus. But we must still elaborate this distinction further. The uniqueness of the incarnation is not an isolated statement of dogma: it is closely related, in the Christian matrix, with the personal uniqueness of God—another stumbling block for most Buddhists—and with the presence in Jesus of the temporal and spatial limitations of a human consciousness. There is one God, He has only one Son, who took only one human form.

It is highly significant (following Regamey and Northrop) that the deceptively similar term “emptiness” should have totally unrelated meanings in Buddhism (*śūnyatā*) and Christianity (*kenosis*). In the first place, the Buddhist *śūnyatā* is stative (though not static), whereas *kenosis* expresses a reflexive act, *kenoō*: “I empty myself.” Keno is an act of God: the Holy divesting itself of those aspects of divinity that are incompatible with humanity, in order to be fully human. It occurs at one point in the salvific plan, as a free act of God. *Śūnyatā* has no connection whatsoever with any conception of divinity; it is not an act, not a matter of choosing; it is the natural condition of all things (including humanity), their total lack of self-existence. We could say, perhaps, that in Buddhism things are empty in themselves; only human beings try to be “full,” because of their fundamental illusion. The ideal is to discover and accept emptiness, an emptiness that liberates man from the bonds of his human condition, revealing the identity of the conditioned and the unconditioned.<sup>37</sup> In Christian doctrine, on the other hand, we could say that emptying Himself is a

37. A brief but insightful and empathic analysis of this position by a Christian apologist is found in a valuable, but unfortunately neglected, study: Étienne Cornelis, O.P., *Valeurs chrétiennes des religions non-chrétiennes. Histoire du salut et histoire des religions. Christianism et Bouddhisme*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1965, pp. 124-133.

concession that God, as the absolute, makes to human frailty, but it is also a concession that reveals the important part that humanity—with all its failings—occupies in God's plan.<sup>38</sup>

These two concepts are hardly comparable, in the sense of their being in any way parallel. But I trust this has not been a mere exercise in futility. The intent was not to show that the two religions cannot speak to each other, but rather, on the contrary, to demonstrate that it is the investigation of the context and not the mere pairing of terms, that leads to understanding of differences, and, it is to be hoped, eventually to the discovery of what there might be that is common ground. But one must remain wary of deceptively simple equivalences that, passing for descriptions, may be in reality subtle apologetics. E. Cornelis, for instance, by equating *sūnyatā* with *kenome* (the state of the Incarnate Verb having emptied Himself of the attributes of His divinity), is able to argue for the superiority of Christianity over Buddhism, because the ultimate goal of the former is the *plérôme*, as we all know, while the goal of the latter is merely the *kénome* (*sūnyatā*).<sup>39</sup> It is difficult to see how this could come from the mind of someone who otherwise seems to understand Buddhism,<sup>40</sup> unless we assume that he has been confused by deceptive verbal correspondences.

Nevertheless, Cornelis does express quite succinctly and clearly what seems to separate Buddhism from Christianity in their conceptions when he states that it was impossible for Buddhism to give a human countenance to its *kénome* (read: *sūnyatā*), whereas Christianity found that face when “the Son of Man humbled himself even to the point of the kenosis of the Cross.”<sup>41</sup> This difference is better understood with a different set of terms.

If we look for the concept that serves a similar function in Buddhism to that of *kenosis* in Christianity, the only approximate parallel is that of the Buddha's “Body of [Magical] Transformation,”

38. This is the fundamental conceptual implication of the *theologia crucis*. In more recent times one of the clearest formulations is that of Jürgen Moltmann in *The Crucified God, the Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, New York, etc.: Harper & Row, 1973, especially chapter 6, section 9, “The Experience of Human Life in the Pathos of God.” See also Cornelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-87.

39. *Op. cit.* p. 145.

40. See note 38, above.

41. *Op. cit.* p. 146.

lievers in Christ who have died are lost. If our hope in Christ is good for this life only, and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world. But the truth is that Christ has been raised from the death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will be raised. For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man.

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Nevertheless, Cornelis does express quite succinctly and clearly what seems to separate Buddhism from Christianity in their conceptions when he states that it was impossible for Buddhism to give a human countenance to its *kénome* (read: *śūnyatā*), whereas Christianity found that face when “the Son of Man humbled himself even to the point of the kenosis of the Cross.”<sup>41</sup> This difference is better understood with a different set of terms.

If we look for the concept that serves a similar function in Buddhism to that of *kenosis* in Christianity, the only approximate parallel is that of the Buddha's “Body of [Magical] Transformation,”

38. This is the fundamental conceptual implication of the *theologia crucis*. In more recent times one of the clearest formulations is that of Jürgen Moltmann in *The Crucified God, the Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, New York, etc.: Harper & Row, 1973, especially chapter 6, section 9, “The Experience of Human Life in the Pathos of God.” See also Cornelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-87.

39. *Op. cit.* p. 145.

40. See note 38, above.

41. *Op. cit.* p. 146.

(*nirmāṇa-kāya*). This is the doctrine that tries to explain how a Buddha can be a human being (Siddhārtha Gautama) and a Tathāgata at the same time. Similarly, *kenosis* has been used in the West to try to solve the paradox of the incarnation: the tension between transcendence and immanence. It is significant that some Buddhists do not seem to have paid much attention to this tension in their conception of Buddha as Gautama and Tathāgata. It is equally significant that when they did address themselves to this issue they did so with a doctrine that is reminiscent of *docetism*, a position that was popular in the West among the Christian Gnostics and independent Christian Docetist in the second century A.D. Since its rejection in that same century in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, docetism has been traditionally denounced as a heresy—although its fundamental theological assumptions were not explicitly rejected until the condemnation of Monophysitism at Chalcedon.

“Buddhist docetism,”<sup>42</sup> however, is not the theological anomaly that its Western parallel is in Christianity. The evolution of this conception within Buddhism is not at all clear, especially in its earliest stages. Although the writings of rival schools often suggest that Buddhist “docetists” would have the Buddha eternally free from the conditioned world,<sup>43</sup> and although this seems to be the doctrine proposed in some parts of the *Lotus Sūtra*,<sup>44</sup> the earliest evidence seems to point in two different directions, more in

42. The term was first used by Rhys Davids. See also the article, “Docetism (Buddhist)” in Hasting’s *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

43. See, e.g., *Kathāvatthu*, XVIII, 1, p. 559, as quoted by É. Lamotte in *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien* (Bibliothèque du Muséon, 43; Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1958), p. 693. But this passage is rather confused and does not refer explicitly to the main docetic sect, the Lokottaravāda. Cf. the analysis of the latter sect in A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule* (Publications de l’École Française d’Extrême Orient, XXXVIII; Saigon, 1955), pp. 75-6.

44. Clearly the *Lotus* has not abandoned the belief in the basic Buddhist conviction that Buddhahood is to be sought and attained by living beings; this is in fact at the root of its doctrine of the One Vehicle. Yet the Buddha tells us in Chapter XV (XVI in the Chinese) of his long (or is it eternal?) life and enlightenment, as if it were something unacquired. I suspect this apparent inconsistency has to be resolved, as the case is in much of the Mahāyāna, by understanding neither statement literally. This interpretation is supported by the XVth Chapter, where the paradox is explained as a case of *upāya* (pp. 269-272 in the Wogihara-Tsuchida edition).



agreement with later, Mahāyāna “docetism.” In the first place, the *Mahāvastu* (a text belonging to a leading “docetic” school) does not seem to consider the Buddha to be a transcendent being *ab aeterno*; the condition of transcendence is an acquired state; it is still the result of the practice of the perfections and enlightenment.<sup>45</sup> The position of this text seems to be that after enlightenment the Buddha continues to manifest his career, in subsequent apparitional (*upapāduka*) births, in which in order to conform to the world (*lokānuvartana*) he manifests the behavior expected of a human Buddha.

In the article on “Buddhist docetism” by M. Anesaki,<sup>46</sup> one is able to appreciate how much can be misunderstood when a conceptual schema from one religion is used to interpret another. Commissioned to write this article for Western readers by a Christian editor, Anesaki seems to have felt it necessary or appropriate to use Christian categories. Thus, he speaks of Buddhist “docetists,” “antidocetists” and “trinitarians”. He distorts completely the Mādhyamika position, because it obviously cannot fit into these distinctions. Eventually, he is forced into contradictory or patently absurd statements such as: “thoroughgoing docetist as Nāgārjuna was, he did not deny the historicity of the Buddha’s life,” “[Aśvaghōṣa’s] Buddhology verges on a docetic view, almost abolishing the distinction of persons in the Trinity through its emphasis on the identity of the substance, ” “or Vasubandhu is a theosophist, or a Gnostic...”

The specious analogy behind this misuse of Western categories shows, furthermore, an equally serious distortion of the Christian concepts. Anesaki, for instance, fails to perceive the philosophical core of docetism: the dualism of spirit and matter. The Buddhist doctrines described as “docetic” are not based on this dichotomy. On the contrary, they are closely related to the doctrine of the identity of the world of change and suffering (*saṃsāra*) and ultimate peace (*nirvāṇa*) and are meant as an explanation of how Buddhas, or Bodhisattvas, attain to a condition that is neither one nor the other. But Anesaki, instead of attempting to make his readers understand these doctrines on their own ground, tries to reduce them to Christian categories. In the end, again and

45. *Mahāvastu*, I. 148, 159, 167-79.

46. Hasting’s *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Volume IV, 835b-840.

again, he is forced to qualify his statements in such a way that they lose much of their meaning. For instance, after analyzing briefly the second chapter of the *Sūtra of Golden Light* and concluding that it is a docetic text, he proceeds to describe the *closely parallel fifteenth* chapter of the *Lotus* as “less docetic,” only to conclude a few lines later that “according as the emphasis is laid on one or other of these two aspects of the Buddhahood,—the eternal and the temporary,—one who derives his ideas from this book may be led to an anti-docetic or a docetic view of the Buddha.”<sup>47</sup> Wouldn’t it be much easier, and clearer, to try to understand these texts in their own context?

One only has to read these passages (and the second chapter of the *Lotus*) to realize that the doctrines they contain may be obscure, difficult, and definitely different from “orthodox” Christian views, but they certainly have very little to do with a creator god, a demiurge, the manifestation of God on earth, the opposition between matter and spirit, creator and creation, or the like. Nowhere do these texts contradict the basic Buddhist teaching that Buddhahood is a state to be reached by human beings; in fact, the leitmotiv of the *Lotus* is precisely the “one Vehicle” of Buddhahood—the doctrine that all beings can and should aspire to become Buddhas. What is new in the *Lotus* is the teaching that, although Buddhahood is attainable, from the perspective of Buddhahood itself there is (or has never been) any attainment. By “identifying the actual Buddha with the Buddha that had no beginning”<sup>48</sup> the *Lotus* is not denying his presence in *samsāra*; rather it is denying the reality of a *nirvāṇa* as an exit from *samsāra*; not because *samsāra* totally excludes *nirvāṇa*, but only because “all *dharma*s are from the beginning at rest, forever in *nirvāṇa*.”<sup>49</sup>

47. *Op. cit.*, p. 839a-b. In both Sūtras the corresponding chapters are titled “The Length of the Life-span of the Tathāgata” (*Tathāgatāyuyipramāṇa*). *The Sutra of Golden Light* (Sanskrit title: *Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama-Sūtra*) has been translated into German by J. Nobel, and into English by Emmerick. The *Lotus* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-Sūtra*) has been translated many times and into many languages. The reader should keep in mind that if he is using a translation from the Chinese version of Kumārajīva, Chapter Fifteen of the Sanskrit version will appear there as Chapter Sixteen.

48. Anesaki, *op. cit.*, p. 839a.

49. *Lotus*, II. 68.

Both of these texts tend heavily towards the poetic and the mythological, to the point of obscuring sometimes the fundamental philosophical statement of the identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. One could rightly say that by emphasizing the timelessness of *nirvāṇa*, these Sūtras tend to neglect the fact that it is precisely this timelessness (the “eternal” *nirvāṇa*) that makes it possible for there to be no opposition between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. In other Sūtras of approximately the same date as the *Lotus* we find less emphasis on the supernal and a more detailed examination of the dialectic that is so characteristic of this aspect of Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>50</sup> The Sūtra known in English as *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*<sup>51</sup> also speaks of the timeless Buddha who has not attained enlightenment or *nirvāṇa*; but in this context it is much easier to see in how many ways this is different from the concepts traditionally associated with docetism in the West.

In this Sūtra we find a prose passage reminiscent of the famous stanzas from the *Vajracchedikā* :<sup>52</sup>

Those who saw me as [my bodily] form,  
 And those who followed me by [my] voice,  
 Were engaged in vain efforts,  
 These people will not see me.  
 Buddhas should be seen as dharma,  
 For the Guides have a body of dharma.  
 One should not [try to] understand the nature of dharma.

A cursory reading of these lines out of context may lead someone to think that this is an example of “docetism,” but one can hardly propose this as a rigorous and responsible interpretation of the

50. Anesaki was perfectly aware of this doctrinal evolution in Buddhism, but failed to appreciate its significance because it simply could not fit into any of his categories.

51. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra*. References are to the pages in Rajendralal Mitra’s Sanskrit edition (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Buddhica, 18). Readers using Conze’s translation (*The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary*, Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973) will be able to locate these passages, as Mitra’s page numbers have been included in brackets in the text of Conze’s translation.

52. E. Conze, *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Serie Orientale Roma, XIII, Rome: Is. M.E.O., 1974, pp. 56-57 text and references to parallel passages elsewhere in Buddhist literature, p. 89 English translation. The parallel in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* is in pp. 512-13 of Mitra’s ed.

passage. The Buddha is not presented here as a spiritual being who cannot come into contact with matter or assume a physical form. The Buddha is neither form (matter) nor spirit; he is of the nature of dharma. That is, he is the epitome, or he stands as the symbol of the true nature of all dharmas. What has been said of the Buddha can *be said of anyone* or anything,<sup>53</sup> but the Buddha, as a living being that has realized the true nature of dharmas, is dharma par excellence.

With these expressions the Mahāyāna Sūtras are playing with the ambiguity of the term “dharma”. In earlier scholastic tradition, the Buddha’s “body of dharma” was in reality a “body of dharmas.” It was the end result of a long process of accumulation of positive qualities (*anāsrava-dharma*) that had gradually created for the Buddha a body different from that of normal human beings. As in the case of other doctrinal evolutions, Mahāyāna did not reject completely this notion; it was quite popular especially among the Mahāyāna scholastics. Yet some texts, such as those quoted in the previous paragraph, are openly criticizing and reinterpreting this notion by taking the word “dharma” in the sense of “dharmatā,” that is, the true nature of all dharmas. In that sense, the Buddha is unknowable to those who fail to see the true nature of *dharmas*; but he is also unknowable in the sense that *all dharmas* are unknowable, for they are like a dream.<sup>54</sup>

With this we enter another area where there seem to be irreconcilable differences between Christianity and Buddhism: the reality or unreality of the world. But before we broach this subject I would like to explore briefly the concept of the “three bodies” of the Buddha and its interpretation in two texts of the Buddhist tradition.

The Sarvāstivādin scholastics proposed that Buddhas had three kinds of “bodies”: the “form,” or physical body in which he is known to living beings during his sojourn in his last birth; a “body of dharmas” constituted by the “pure” (*anāsrava*) dharmas that make him something more than a common human being; and lastly, his bodies of magical creation. There is nothing particularly extraordinary in this doctrine: the pair *dharma*-and *rūpa-kāya* are meant to explain the two aspects of Buddhahood, a Bud-

53. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* pp. 306-308, where similar expressions are used to describe Subhūti. Also, pp. 512-13, referring to all *dharmas*.

54. *Op. cit.* p. 513.

dha's personality, but no strong tensions are perceived in their coexistence. Rather matter-of-factly the Sarvāstivādins consider and discard the possibility that a Buddha may be only either of these two aspects.<sup>55</sup> The third type of body does not have the important role it has in the Mahāyāna; here it is meant simply as the recognition of the fact that Buddhas are capable of producing doubles of themselves by their "psychic" or "magical powers." There is really nothing in this that one could even dream of comparing with the Christian Trinity.

The Mahāyāna, on the other hand, due to its stress on the absolute aspect of Buddhahood, did see a tension here, and had to seek for solutions to a doctrinal formula that could reconcile the two (or three?) extremes of the polarity. Partly due to a simplistic equation based on the fact that both doctrines speak of three natures or manifestations or persons in the supreme religious ideal, but partly because this polarity belongs to the same category of religious conceptualizations or experiences as the polarity behind the debates on the humanity and divinity of Christ, one is tempted to seek parallels between the *Tri-kāya* and the Trinity.<sup>56</sup> However, as pointed out repeatedly in this paper, one must proceed with caution. The differences are definitely more than the similarities.

The frame of reference, of course, is totally different in the most fundamental way: the condition of having a threefold body is an attainable goal to all—or at least, many—human beings, and it symbolizes the relationship that the person who has actualized the absolute will have to the relative. In a certain sense, this symbol is also meant to reflect the very structure or nature of reality, as constituted by a dimension of appearance, the dimension of the

55. See the discussion in the *Abhidharmakośa*, IV. 32.

56. One could see similarities between the *trikāya* and still other Christian doctrines. Beyond the obvious, though at times superficial, resemblance to the Christian docetists, one can see an analogy with other trinitarian categories, as done by R.C. Zaehner, who has claimed (in *Christianity and Other Religions*) that if there is any parallel it is with the three aspects of Christ as Logos, the transfigured Lord, and the man Jesus. Zaehner, however, overlooks the chasm that separates the human Christ from the *nirmāṇa-kāya* and the fact that the *dharma* of the *dharma-kāya* has very little in common with the Logos. Zaehner's book was published in New York by Hawthorn Books (1964); unfortunately I only have at hand a Spanish translation (Barcelona: Herder, 1969), and can refer the English reader only to the chapter II. See also footnote 8, above.

absolute, and a sphere in which the absolute manifests itself in the sphere of the relative, but in a form that is clearly, unmistakably non-human and sacred, yet experienced by humanity. It is difficult to see how one could see anything more than a superficial correspondence with the elements of the Trinity here, unless one ignores completely the world conception and the program of liberation into which these concepts were meant to fit.

Further, once one moves beyond the mere exposition of the threefold schema into its detailed analysis in the various hermeneutical traditions of Buddhism, one is forced to revise or abandon completely this simplistic analogy. In Maitreya and Asaṅga's classical statement on the *Trikāya* doctrine, for instance, we find that the "body" that would be "the equivalent of the Father" is described as follows:<sup>57</sup>

The Body of Essence is considered superior to the other two, the same [in all Buddhas], and subtle; it is the cause of mastery over participation [in Buddhahood], with respect to the voluntary manifestation of this participation.

This is not the place to try to explore this complicated issue, but it is clear that the Buddhist is speaking here of a state to be attained by many human beings, a body that could become the body of more than one living being. This is why we may speak even of a special "body of the absolute" for those who are not full Buddhas yet, the Bodhisattvas.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, because it is the absolute which is common to all Buddhas, this body is definitely superior to the rest. Moreover, although one may approach the absolute by means of any of these three bodies, the true cause of one's experience is the *dharmakāya*.

But the *dharmakāya* is "subtle," that is, it cannot be understood or known by conventional means of knowing. Nor is it known fully in either of the other two bodies; nevertheless, the latter are the only approaches available; they are the means whereby we are able to know about the absolute. The bodies of transformation (or magical bodies: *nirmāṇa-kāya*) here stand for the actual, "historical" bodies of Buddhas. They are, therefore, the embodiment

57. Asaṅga, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, Chapter IX, verse 62.

58. In the more advanced stages of his career, the Bodhisattva is sometimes said to have a *dharmakāya* (sometimes called *dharmadhātujakāya*). Lamotte, *op. cit.*, p. 711, 716, n. 1 in p. 711; also *Siddhi*, p. 780.

of the Buddhas' compassion for common living beings.<sup>59</sup> The body of "enjoyment" or "participation," (*saṃbhogakāya*) is the fruit of complete enlightenment which is produced primarily for the enjoyment of the Buddha himself. Yet it is always made manifest in the presence of the "community of saints" (the "celestial" assemblies of Bodhisattvas), so that it is evidently at the same time a fruit of enlightenment that exists for the sake of others.<sup>60</sup>

In the Buddhology of Asaṅga's school the three bodies are thus conceived as three aspects of the enlightened state, but at the same time they express the school's interpretation of three levels of liberating knowledge. In this way, the structure and inner relationships of the *Trikāya*, although they reflect the structure of reality, are meant primarily as the embodiment of the three goals of the program of liberation: becoming one with the transcendent absolute, sharing in the bliss of Buddhahood, sharing this bliss with other beings out of compassion.

In this sense, the *Trikāya* doctrine approaches its putative Christian counterpart, which has been considered also as both a description of the nature of the ultimately real and a symbolization of the program of salvation.<sup>61</sup> However, apart from significant differences of detail, the two doctrines are separated by the chasm that is the theme of the first part of the present paper: the gap between the creation-incarnation schema and the Buddhist matrix based on beginningless illusion and enlightenment. It is by addressing this issue that the fundamental differences between the two religions have become apparent. Comparing the component elements of the two trinitarian conceptions does not take us very far. Apart from the infinite variety of positions within Buddhism (e.g., the Four Bodies, etc.) that make simple correspondences impossible, there is the obvious fact that the number three itself means very little. As pointed out by Küng, "...this number three, fascinating from time immemorial as the primal unity in variety, immensely important for religion, myth, art and literature and even for ordinary life, and the triple divinity (found from

59. The school of Asaṅga considers these to be illusory, that is, not wholly like the physical bodies of living beings (*Siddhi*, pp. 792-8).

60. A distinction is made, therefore, between a body of enjoyment for oneself (*svasaṃbhogakāya*) and a body of enjoyment for others (*parasāṃbhogakāya*).

61. See H. Küng, *op. cit.*, pp. 472-8, who prefers the latter interpretation.

Rome and Greece to India and China) are anything but specifically Christian. They have no more to do with Christianity than life's three part time...or the dialectical triad..."<sup>62</sup>

Now, what is specifically Christian and what is specifically Buddhist of each of these doctrines? And why is this question relevant to dialogue? Küng insists that the Christian Trinity is "not an 'immanent' but an 'economic' theology...not an inner-divine (immanent) essential triunity in itself but a salvation-historical (economic) unity of Father, Son and Spirit in their encounter with us."<sup>63</sup> His unqualified rejection of the "immanentistic" interpretation cannot be accepted for the purposes of the present paper, as it does not reflect accurately traditional Christian theology; but there is no question that the emphasis on the "economy of salvation" and on the Christological aspect of the Trinity is characteristic of Christianity. These emphases can be used as a touchstone in our analysis; as such, they point to the essential differences we are seeking to clarify.

What is characteristic of the Buddhist "trinitarian" doctrine can be defined extensionally by examining its various modalities, or intensionally by determining its position within the matrix. One cannot do full justice to the first of these approaches in the limited space of this paper; however, one could consider briefly a few examples that illustrate the full range of Buddhist doctrines on this subject. The school of Asaṅga no doubt represents the most developed form of the type of interpretation that emphasizes the differences between the bodies and the illusory character of the *nirmāṇa-kāya* (s). In this sense, it is the Mahāyāna doctrine that owes most to the early Lokottaravāda speculation, and the prime example of what Westerners have called "Buddhist docetism."

Of a very different sort is the interpretation of Hui-neng, who proposes perhaps the most "demythologized" version of the *Trīkāya* doctrine. For him, the three bodies are present in all living beings. The *Dharmakāya*—conceived here as the pure foundation and repository of all dharmas—is nothing more than the pure,

62. *Ibid.* pp. 473-4.

63. *Ibid.* p. 475. A more balanced view, or a view that better reflects the balance of history, would give equal weight to the immanent and the economic Trinity. Such is K. Rahner's position in *Theological Investigations*, IV, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966, pp. 87 ff.



original enlightened nature of a person. The “ten thousand hundred billion Nirmāṇakāya Buddhas” are the thoughts that arise in the pure mind which is the *Dharmakāya*; one single thought of good is a *nirmāṇa* manifestation of Buddhahood. If the good thoughts become the norm, the continuous flow of ever changing good thoughts is the *Sambhogakāya*.<sup>64</sup> But the three bodies are one.<sup>65</sup> What is more, in his death-bed poem Hui-neng definitely underlines the importance of the *Nirmāṇakāya* :<sup>66</sup>

The Transformation, the Fruition and the Pure Bodies,  
 These three are one Body from the outset.  
 To seek to perceive [these] for oneself in one’s own body,  
 That is the cause for the Enlightenment of a Buddha.  
 Since, from the beginning, the Transformation Body has been  
 born as the pure nature.<sup>67</sup>  
 The pure nature is always present in the Transformation Body.  
 If the [pure self] nature activates the Transformation Body to  
 follow the Right Path,  
 One will achieve perfection, true and without limit.

In this passage the stress is obviously on the Transformation Body (this human body) in a way that is somehow reminiscent of a similar emphasis in the Theravāda and the Pāli traditions.<sup>68</sup> It is in the present human body that the pure nature is born and actualized. One speaks of three bodies only to describe the different moments in the economy of liberation of this one body, which is the one human body and the one Buddha-body.

The school of Asaṅga also emphasized the unity of the three bodies, but one wonders if the reasons and the implications are the same. Philosophically, there would seem to be no difference: both propose unity in terms of ground (the *dharmadhātu*). But in reality Asaṅga’s school is concerned more with unity with respect

64. P.B. Yampolsky, ed. trans., *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967, text pp. 8-9, translation pp. 141-143.

65. *Ibid.*, text p. 29, translation p. 181.

66. *Ibid.* Unlike Yampolsky, I have preferred to follow the Tun-huang Manuscript without emendations.

67. More literally: “gives birth to the pure nature”; either way, my interpretation remains the same.

68. See, for instance, the *locus classicus* in *Aṅguttara Nikāya* II. 47-49 and *Saṃyutta Nikāya* I. 61-2; also footnote 18, above.

to the variety of different Buddhas, not with respect to the distinction among bodies.<sup>69</sup>

Other Buddhists differ from both Hui-neng and the school of Maitreya and Asaṅga in other respects. The school of Sāramati, for instance, seeks to define the relationship and unity of the three bodies in terms that clearly entail a different view of the relationship between absolute and relative. The basic Mahāyāna doctrine of the ontological primacy of the *Dharmakāya* is reaffirmed: like space, the Buddha can take many forms, but in reality he is one, pure, invisible, without support.<sup>70</sup> But this comparison with space is to be understood as pointing to the Buddha's transcendence of supramundane as well as mundane qualities.<sup>71</sup> Yet, seen as a duality, "transcendent" Buddhahood, as supramundane enlightenment experience, has a mundane manifestation or result.<sup>72</sup> What this means is that, in spite of the gulf which appears to separate perfect Buddhahood from the human condition, the former reaches down to the latter; what is more, this reaching down is an essential part of Buddhahood. Further, what appears in the two-fold wisdom as a goal to be attained is somehow already present in all living beings.<sup>73</sup>

The last of these points is at the heart of the unique position of the school of Sāramati, and has important implications for the whole programme of liberation, in that the school is forced to face the problems that are entailed in its acceptance of the "pre-existence" or "immanence" of Buddhahood. Thus Sāramati declares that the fact that this ultimate reality (*tathatā*) coexists with worldly pollution, yet remains perfectly pure, is a "mystery."<sup>74</sup> It is equally conceivable that this originally pure reality would have to "be purified" in the process of liberation.<sup>75</sup> The third mystery is that the "immaculate qualities of the Buddha" should be present

69. *Op. cit.*, stanza 66.

70. *Ratnagotravibhāga*, IV. 73-4, Jikido Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga...*, Serie Orientale Roma XXXIII, Rome, Is. M. E. O., 1966, p. 373.

71. *Ibid.* III. 36, Takasaki, p. 349.

72. *Ibid.* II. 18, commentary, Takasaki, pp. 318-319.

73. *Ibid.* I. 95 ff.

74. "tatra samalā tathatā yugapadekakālaṃ viśuddhā ca saṃkṣiptā cety acintyam etat sthānam..." *Ibid.* I.25 commentary, page 21 in the edition of E. H. Johnston, Patna, 1950.

75. *Ibid.*, ed. p. 22.

in all living beings.<sup>76</sup> The fourth and last mystery is that Buddha should be active, in spite of the immanent and universal character of Buddhahood; that their activities occur at the same time everywhere, always, effortlessly, without discrimination, yet in consideration of the needs and aspirations of each living being.<sup>77</sup>

These series of mysteries—expressive of a type of dialectical tension similar to those behind the debates regarding the incarnation—have still another important dimension. They describe one Buddhist view of the human situation and the reality of “divinity,” but at the same time they form the conceptual framework for an important segment of the programme of liberation. Thus, the *coincidentia oppositorum* that is seen in the highest reality takes a new form in the Bodhisattva’s career, for the Bodhisattva knows the pure, innate mind that is like space and models his conduct on its two aspects of purity and innateness. Thus he does not seek escape from the world, but aspires to that nirvāṇa which consists in not settling in either *samsāra* or *nirvāṇa*.<sup>78</sup> The Bodhisattvas,<sup>79</sup>

Having understood correctly the nature of this same [innate Buddhahood] as being free from birth, death, illness and old age, they are free from the suffering of birth and the rest, yet, because compassion for the world arises in them, they participate in the causes of this [suffering].

The commentary then proceeds to explain how the Bodhisattva accepts “afflictive states of mind” (*kleśa*) for the sake of the world, though he is perfectly free from the confusion normally produced by these.<sup>80</sup>

These ideas are summarized in the classical imagery common to all Mahāyāna schools:<sup>81</sup>

He is beyond all worlds, yet has not abandoned the world.  
He acts in the world for the sake of the world, yet is not tainted  
by its impurities.

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.* ed. p. 24.

78. *Ibid.* I. 37-8, especially the discussion on the *apraṭiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa*, edition p. 35, Takasaki pp. 219-220.

79. *Ibid.* I. 66.

80. *Ibid.* commentary, edition pp. 47-51, Takasaki 244-53.

81. *Ibid.* I. 71-72. The most radical use of the simile of the lotus to express involvement in the world is in the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*, VII. 3, p. 290.

Just as the lotus flower growing in [swampy] waters is not tainted by these,  
 So [the Bodhisattva] though born in the world is not tainted by worldly *dharmas*.

Perhaps this is as close as the Buddhist will come to the Christian. Yet some may object that the similarity is very superficial, since the Buddhist still considers that the Bodhisattva does not really suffer at all like other beings. This observation is no doubt correct, and points out one of the most fundamental differences, but one should not think, as is frequently suggested, that this entails a quietistic or escapist view of liberation. The Western analyst may feel that this would be the only explanation for the Buddhist predilection for the simile of the untainted lotus. Consequently, it is assumed that the experience of liberation that the Buddhist proposes as a model is one of "abstraction" from the world.<sup>82</sup> The lotus, however, is untainted but still rooted in the muddy waters in which it grows.

82. This simplistic and distorted image of Buddhism, or, as it is more commonly used, of "Eastern Religions" is still standard fare in Christian apologetics, and a serious impediment to dialogue. It is accepted even in otherwise imaginative and innovative works, such as Küng's *On Being a Christian* where, even as he extols the virtues of a "genuine Indian, Chinese, Japanese, ... Christianity" (p. 114), he shows little appreciation for precisely those aspects of Buddhism and Hinduism that, in my opinion, reflect the culture-specific world view in which they developed (pp. 106-107). A more profound and empathic understanding of the putative ideal of "aloofness" in Buddhism can be found in the writings of historians of religion. Compare, for instance, the following words of W.C. Smith (op. cit., p. 156, 157): "In the case of works of religious art, it is relatively clear that they give overt expression to the religious faith of the person who made them, and continue to give expression to that of the persons who continue reverently to cherish them... for instance, those superb statues of the Buddha, that, again to belittle them by prose, present a figure where a total joy and peace have been attained, not by abstracting oneself from this world but by living through it in compassion and righteousness until, as it were, one has come out on the other side in the most utter serenity. The hint of a smile almost playing on the lips of the Buddha and the eyes that almost seem closed in not a faraway look but a look that sees far through the world of tumult to quiet (in what seems at first a striking contrast to a Christian crucifix, where the ultimate truth of the universe is imaged as in agony within the tumult)—this tranquil truth, this incarnate TRUTH, this ultimate serene: this is the work of a man of a faith powerful and personal."

I should like to close this note by pointing out that the total distortion of the fundamental world-view underlying a religion is not the exclusive mark

This is not to say that there is a stronger escapist tendency in Buddhism than there is in Christianity: withdrawal is the most natural excess to contemplatives, as much as millenarianism and intolerant proselytism are the natural vices of more active forms of religion. The point is that what is a possible dangerous extreme in a doctrinal position is not the necessary implication of the belief. Understanding this distinction is an important element in dialogue. In interfaith dialogue, as in the history of ideas, one should not highlight the excesses of a religion only to force a system to say what it does not say and thus seem to prove that those aspects of it that we find unacceptable, or difficult to understand, must lead to absurd conclusions. That would only lead to an exchange of accusations (“You practice religious suicide,” “Yes, but you practice religious war”), and to the distortion of fragments of doctrine, not to a true understanding of the integral system of beliefs that makes sense to the believer.

In attempting to understand the differences between two such systems, we have come again to a point where differences in detail point to fundamental dissimilarities. Both religions, it is true, agree in placing the human being in a situation of sorrow or despair before he comes into contact and accepts the programme of salvation. Both share an intense need to define the way in which the liberating absolute can enter into or be present in the world of bondage and death. But once we go beyond the basic, schematic, description of the nature of their quest, radical divergences begin to appear.

That both religions share similar, if rather vague preoccupations, is a fact that cannot be brushed aside as insignificant. I would like to come back to this point later, but our brief consideration of “Buddhist docetism” suggests more as to how the two religions differ. In spite of the internal disagreements within Buddhism with regard to the *Trikāya* and the way in which the Buddha is present in the world, the doctrine reflects the position of Buddhahood within the matrix. It shows how different and irreconcilable this position is with the position of the Trinity within the

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of Christian apologetics. D.T. Suzuki, for instance, has done an analysis of the image of the crucifix (*Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, London, 1957, pp. 129-139, “Crucifixion and Enlightenment”) in which he fails to appreciate the profound human experience behind this powerful symbol.

Christian matrix. The exact etiology of these differences escapes the modern historian, and is ultimately irrelevant for dialogue, but we can propose certain doctrinal statements as the logical antecedent of the rest of the matrix. These basic principles have already been analyzed in the case of Christianity: creation, fall, incarnation. The elements that serve the same function in the case of Buddhism not surprisingly fail to match the Christian schema: beginningless ignorance, enlightenment and liberation. Thus, although the Buddhists are concerned with problems similar to that of the incarnation, this concern does not occupy the same position in their speculations, and in their experience, as it does in Christianity.

The Buddhist feels no need to bring God into the world in human form, because “God” was never rejected by man. The basic assumption is that “evil” (here described more like a “malaise”) is the result of a fundamental misapprehension and the rabid clinging that results from it; “good” (or “health”) comes about by the healing process of a spiritual discipline (in a certain way like the physical regimes so popular today). The doctor only dispenses the prescription; the patient must cure himself by following those instructions. This contrasts sharply with the view of man as creature, in sin and guilt, in need of forgiveness and redemption.

The medical analogy further enriches our understanding of the centrality of causality in Buddhism. The four Noble Truths represent the twofold causal explanation behind medical practice: symptoms-etiology, and health-cure. The process of healing is therefore understood in strict causal terms: knowledge of the two aspects of causality expressed in the four Noble Truths, and application of these principles leads to release. The importance of this knowledge cannot be overemphasized: although the cause in the formula of the Noble Truths is thirst (*trṣṇā*), that is uncontrollable clinging; it is knowledge and application of knowledge that liberates.

One could choose to give more importance to the role of clinging or thirst (*trṣṇā*) in Buddhism, and thus try to bring the two religions closer by arguing that in Christianity also man’s uncontrollable desires lead him away from God. One can think of a Western parallel to Buddhist thirst in the concept (again especially popular with gnostics) of *epithumia* (Latin *concupiscentia*), which

was of some importance in the Epistles.<sup>83</sup> Thus, for instance, in James 1:15, we read:<sup>84</sup> “Then his evil desire conceives and gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” But Cornelis has already observed that the context is quite different.<sup>85</sup> This is not a complete “chain of causation” as a Buddhist would understand it; rather the Epistle is condemning the human attitude that leads away from God: *epithumia* tests (tempts) man’s love for God. To further separate this conception from the Buddhist notions of *avidyā* and *trṣṇā*, knowledge and mastery over the “chain” is not the cause of bliss, for: “if anyone does sin, we have Jesus Christ the righteous, who pleads for us with the Father. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of all men.” (I John 2:1-2).

Thus, emphasis on sin as an explicit act of rejection of God, in contrast to emphasis on “ill” as a condition resulting from a fundamental misapprehension (*avidyā*) clearly separates the Christian and the Buddhist. The Christian is scandalized by the Buddhist emphasis on illusion, a most pernicious doctrine that must lead to indifference to the worldly plight of others. The Buddhist is scandalized by the Christian “obsession” with guilt. This is not to say that the Buddhist lacks a conception of “sin” (a serious misconception held by many Westerners, including some Buddhist scholars), but that the role and meaning of the conception is significantly different.

The core of the difference is in the fact that the Buddhist does not see the removal or the forgiveness of sin as the main goal, purpose or cause for liberation. Beyond that, however, there are other important distinctions to be made. In one of its most radical forms, the Buddhist treatment of evil is limited to its inclusion with the rest of illusion. In the words attributed to Hui-neng:<sup>86</sup>

The nature of worldly human beings has been from the outset pure; the ten thousand things exist within their own nature. If people think of all the evil things, then they will do evil; if they think of all the good things, then they will do good. This is how we know that all dharmas are within your own natures, yet your own natures are always pure...

83. As suggested by Cornelis, *op. cit.* 183.

84. All New Testament quotations are from the translation noted above.

85. *Op. cit.* 182-184, also pp. 128 ff., 173-77.

86. Yampolsky, *op. cit.* text p. 8, translation p. 143.

Thus, the Buddhist who holds these views is not only presenting a different view of the human condition and a different view of sin, but a different view of purity, especially purity as an attribute of the highest value in his system.

The gulf that separates sin from *avidyā/trṣṇā* is complementary to the disparity between *kenosis* and emptiness—and the related notion of *nirmāṇa*. Precisely because sin expresses an opposition—or, rather, the fundamental opposition—between man and his Creator, and because man is so dependent, yet so rebellious, it is God who has to make, as it were, a conciliatory move.<sup>87</sup> God divests himself of his transcendence, and in assuming a human form brings the creature back to his Creator. Of course, there is in the reality of God Himself no such time sequence, but in the history of man, God's humanity is revealed after and in consequence of the fall.

In Buddhism, on the other hand, what corresponds to a “state of sin” is not the result of a voluntary break with a real God, but the fruit of a mistaken assumption about reality. Buddhas (the absolute *Dharmakāya* as a *Nirmāṇakāya*) liberate living beings by showing themselves first in their “unreal” form, that is, in the form that corresponds to the magical show that *all* of reality *is*. Then, as the final liberating gesture, they reveal their true nature; they expose the original deception like the master magician at the end of his show.<sup>88</sup>

In order not to impose false analogies or transpose categorical systems from one matrix to the other, it is important to bear in mind that the state of sin is “accidental”, that is, it originates by rejection at one point in time and ends with forgiveness at another, but the condition of being a creature created by a real, liv-

87. For a general treatment of the doctrine of sin in Christian theology, see Yves Congar, ed., *Vocabulaire oecuménique*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970. I have only had before me the Spanish translation of this manual (Barcelona: Herder, 1972), and all references are to this edition, but the topical arrangement of the book makes it relatively simple to locate the corresponding passages. The article on sin is in pp. 65-102, and is by A. Dumas (Protestant view) and J. Hoffmann (Catholic view).

88. This is, in a rather simplified and demythologized version, the message of the *Lotus*. For a general treatment of the concept of the Buddha as a magician, see my article “The Bodhisattva as Wonder-worker” in L. Lancaster and L.O. Gómez, *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, No. 1, 1977.



ing God is not accidental. The condition of delusion in which the Buddhist places humanity is “accidental” only insofar as it will have an end in time and, as an illness, it is not the “natural state of things.” The Christian is *redeemed* by a real God, willing to pay the very real debt incurred by man. The Buddhist is aided in his liberation by a Buddha who is not a creator nor a redeemer. There is no debt to pay, only an illness to cure, an illness that can be described accurately as a mental illness. The creator God is creditor, judge, advocate and redeemer. The Buddha is—to continue with the medical analogy—a psychotherapist who tries to do as little as possible in the patient’s stead, yet is willing to use all the means possible to guide him gradually to a change in awareness that will change the patient’s perspective and, eventually, his habits.<sup>89</sup>

The fact that the Buddhist uses medical imagery is not without importance. It points to a basic disagreement in the conceptualization of good and evil, a difference that perhaps can be traced to the substratum of both religions. But the distinction extends beyond the purely causal stage, and the first speculations on the nature of the conditions of suffering and liberation, for it seems to affect the very conception of the process of liberation: the Buddha is a doctor, a psychiatrist—if you will—, he cures, but Jesus must redeem and justify.<sup>90</sup>

The visual image of the healing Buddha and the concept of delusion (or illusion) as an illness help us understand the matrix of Buddhism as they dispel any misconceptions we may have about “Buddhist pessimism.” The image of the multiple legal roles of Christ, again, clarifies more than one aspect of the matrix as it

89. In this connection one would have to mention the doctrine of *upāya*. Both as psychotherapist and magician he is a master in skilful means. This concept of Buddhism is an example of an element central to one matrix and absent in the other. The only area in which there may be some correspondence is that of “gradual revelation.”

90. Not all theologians accept this as the best imagery to express the Christian process of liberation. For instance, Jacques Ellul, in *The Ethics of Freedom* (Grand Rapids, 1976, pp. 66 ff.) believes that a more apt analogy could be found in modern political (especially Marxist) terminology. He prefers “freedom” to “redemption.” See also Yves Congar, *op. cit.*, the article on freedom is by J.P. Jossua (Catholic) and R. Peter (Protestant); also relevant is the article on justification by V. Vajta (Protestant) and J. Hoffman (Catholic).

helps dispel the misconception of “Christian pessimism.” This divergence in imagery, however, should not be taken as a clear-cut distinction. It reflects a fundamental contrast, but differences, even fundamental ones, are never simple. Christ is also a healer, and the Buddha, though never a redeemer, is sometimes something more than a doctor—he is, for instance, a master magician, as we have seen. Perhaps the two systems of belief overlap at enough points to make us proceed cautiously.

This overlapping occurs in at least two important areas: in the axiomatic principle of sin, and in the redemptive corollary of grace. In both cases most Buddhists would deny that their religion has anything in common with Christianity, and, it is true, the differences are fundamental, but the similarities must be explored, however briefly, first because they may help explain some phenomena within Buddhism that seem aberrant, and secondly because they may point to certain universal religious categories that should be explored in greater detail.

Firstly, with regard to sin, we are all too familiar with the thesis that this concept is not found in Indian religions. Western Buddhist scholars especially seem to have an aversion to the idea that there is a concept of sin in Buddhism.<sup>91</sup> It is true that there is nothing comparable to “original sin”—the Buddhist functional counterpart being “beginningless delusion.” But the Christian notion of sin is much wider in meaning, and in many of its various uses the term does correspond to the Buddhist terms *akuśala*, *aśubha*, and *pāpa*. In Catholic theology at least, a distinction has been maintained traditionally between sins against God, sins against oneself, and sins against others.<sup>92</sup>

Buddhism knows a concept of sin, not only in the logical sense of the antithesis of virtue, of those instances or patterns of behavior that are harmful to oneself or others. The psychological dimensions are also present: disgust, remorse, repentance, and confession. In meditation the Buddhist is supposed to transcend disgust and remorse, to go beyond all dualities, even sin and virtue. Yet at other levels—whether in the Mahāyāna confession formulae or in the Hīnayāna moral codes—aversion to sin is evident,

91. Consequently, they are forced to translate two different concepts—*pāpa* and *duścarita*—with one word, “evil deed.”

92. Congar, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95.

even to the point of abhorrence and remorse. In fact, even in some exceptional, but nevertheless important cases, we find sin (*pāpa*) being interpreted as a fault against the Buddhas.<sup>93</sup> This must be borne in mind when one uses, in interfaith dialogue, the more “orthodox,” or “higher-truth” view, according to which an “offense against the absolute” is an impossibility.<sup>94</sup>

One can assume of course that the latter position is the only correct one within Buddhism, the only one that is consistent with the rest of the system. But I am not too sure that this is the way it is perceived by all Buddhists, including some of the most distinguished scholastics. In both Śāntideva and Sgampo-pa, for instance, we find both approaches to sin present, side by side.<sup>95</sup> The sudden enlightenment school in China and Tibet proposed that the only true confession was the “confession of emptiness,” that is, meditation on emptiness.<sup>96</sup> But the great scholar from the University of Nālandā, Kamalāsīla, while accepting the confession of emptiness, insists on the necessity of ritual confession.

With regard to the problem of grace<sup>97</sup> we find a similar ambiguity in Buddhism. Once more, there is nothing in the traditional systems of doctrine that would necessarily lead to such a doctrine; in fact, it would be more accurate to say that it is implicitly denied in more than one place: “One can only taint oneself, one can only purify oneself,” say the *Dhammapada*. It seems logical to assume that only the notions of creation, fall and redemption can lead to a doctrine of grace. However, one cannot hide away the fact that there are at least three concepts in Buddhism—Mahāyāna Buddhism primarily—which at different points in the geographic, chronological, and practical coordinates of Buddhist belief appear to have a function similar to that of grace in Christianity. The three concepts—*anubhāva*, *pariṇāmanā*, and *bodhi*—

93. This is one level of the doctrine of *pāpa* as expressed by Śāntideva in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

94. See Kosho Uchiyama Roshi, *Approach to Zen*, Tokyo and San Francisco: Japan Publications, 1973, pp. 118-119.

95. See, e.g., H.V. Guenther, trans. *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, London: Rider, 1970, Chapter 6 and pp. 121 ff.

96. Thus in Vimalamitra. See also Guenther, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

97. General discussion in Congar, *op. cit.* pp. 195-212; Rahner and Vorgrimler, *op. cit.*, s.v. *Gnade* and *Gnadensysteme*; and Ellul, *op. cit.* 222 ff.

Compare also the Hindu notion of *prasāda*, which may be the main source of influence on the Buddhist idea.

*citta*—are not exact correspondents, of course, but they do stand out enough in Buddhism as apparent aberrations to justify our mentioning them here as important areas for future study in dialogue.

The first of these concepts (*anubhāva*) occurs in the Mahāyāna Sūtras, where it is clearly still used in its primary sense of a gesture expressing a person's feelings or determination. But the Buddha's gesture is one that in fact can bring about his desire, so that he can, by his *anubhāva*, actually lead beings to their own liberation.<sup>98</sup> In its earlier occurrences in the sūtras the idea is still not clearly separable from that of the Buddha as teacher, but it will gradually acquire more a sense of "control" than "expression" or "instruction" until, in works like Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* we find the following thoughts :<sup>99</sup>

Only through the *anubhāva* of the Buddhas, sometimes there arises in a human being, and only for an instant, the thought of [practicing] what is good, like lightning flashes only for an instant in a cloudy night. Thus, good is always weak, while evil has a great and awesome power. What other good is there that could vanquish it, if the thought of perfect awakening never arose?

This passage clearly states that man is so unworthy or incapable of enlightenment that even the idea of practicing what is good and seeking enlightenment will not come to his mind without the aid of the Buddhas.<sup>100</sup> And this "thought of enlightenment" is the only force that can stop evil. In other words, it seems that we have here the complex matrix of grace. However, one must qualify this statement carefully. The Buddha's grace is not irresistible, and it acts only when living beings are receptive to it. Buddhas constantly survey the world looking for those beings that have the potential or maturity for setting out on the path (*bhavyatā*); only then do they approach a living being with their *anubhāva*—and even then his power could be resisted.<sup>101</sup> These are the distinctive

98. See, for instance, *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, section 1P, according to Rahder's divisions.

99. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* I. 5-6; the rest of the chapter confirms the interpretation suggested below.

100. See, e.g., the commentary to *Bodhicaryāvatāra* I. 5-6.

101. Important references in Lamotte, *op. cit.*, pp. 545 ff.; also pp. 536, 1930. Also relevant is *Bodhicaryāvatāra* V. 9-10.

qualities of the Buddhist doctrine, and its context is still karma and individual effort; but it would be simplistic to assert that *anubhāva* does not share some of the elements of Christian grace. The universal redemptive act of the cross is missing, of course, but there are other, phenomenological correspondences.

The force of *anubhāva* is an external force, without which, Śāntideva tells us, there would be no turning towards good. The internal force, the thought of enlightenment that initiates the path, would never arise if it were not for this undeserved assistance from the Buddhas. The first chapter of Śāntideva's work is a hymn to the mystery of "the jewel of the thought of enlightenment" appearing in the "corrupt body" of man. The thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) thus becomes the symbol for the mysterious root of goodness that makes it possible for sinful man to make the necessary effort for his own liberation. Three observations are here in order: first, this is not the only passage in Śāntideva that suggests this idea. Nor is it the only and final step in the evolution of this doctrinal complex; for it is in the notions of *anubhāva* and *bodhicitta* that we find the conceptual basis, the seed for much of the sacramental elements in Tantric Buddhism.

In the second place, this doctrinal evolution does not occur in isolation from other, rather logical developments in Buddhist theory and practice. Nor does it end in a complete and explicit break with earlier Buddhist notions. These "new" ideas do not represent a completely different or discrete level or style of Buddhism as some have suggested. This is not the place to discuss this matter in detail, but summarily stated we can say that the Buddhist "doctrine of grace" is not conceived by Buddhists as distinct or in contradiction with "karmatic" or "nirvanic" Buddhism. *Anubhāva* and *bodhicitta* refer to the innate or externally injected element that changes the direction of karma; it is, like the transference of merit, an expression of man's freedom within karma (a basic principle of Buddhism), made possible by the ever-present reality of emptiness (the nirvanic level).<sup>102</sup>

102. The internal logic of Pure Land Buddhism, for instance, is developed on the basis of two axioms accepted by all Mahāyāna Buddhists: the fundamental vow of the Bodhisattvas, and the transference of merit. The agreement of Pure Land Buddhism with general or "fundamental" Mahāyāna is discussed clearly, thoroughly, and convincingly by the Chinese patriarchs of the school. The English reader can find a sampling of these arguments in W.T. de Bary,

In the third place, the ideas which we have chosen to represent a Buddhist concept of grace do not show a one to one correspondence with Christian doctrines. They are rooted in a different tradition, and never abandon that tradition. In the Christian conception, God acts upon man, in history. Although strictly speaking grace is not some kind of substantial reality given by God to man at some point, still, the separation between man and God is the basic point of departure which leads to a free gift of redemption: alienation leads to grace. In Buddhism, on the other hand, there are no historical events of alienation and redemption; strictly speaking the graceful act is the ever present reality of emptiness. Emptiness is the *bodhicitta*, the transference of merit is no transference, and the Buddha's "supernatural" appearances are just that, appearances.

Despite the vast gulf separating grace in the context of the redemption of a fallen creature from its other forms in the context of emptiness, there are important points of contact. These doctrines embody not a set of separate statements on philosophical questions, but the fundamental experience of the futility of man's attempt to capture God through human norms and efforts. They express the paradoxical unity or coexistence of conscious human effort toward good, and the religious experience of good as something different or far superior to the person that seems to make the effort. Their unity occurs in experience, though conceptually the tension remains. To use Buddhist terminology, the goal is always there; it is not something to be obtained by man, yet we do not see it unless it is actualized in the path; but if we stand back and look at the path as the means to the goal, the latter is no longer perceived as actualized; hence the paradox.<sup>103</sup> J. Ellul has expressed the Christian equivalent of this paradox in the following manner:<sup>104</sup>

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et al, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York and London: Columbia, 1960, pp. 376-86.

103. Dogen, in his *Shōbōgenzō*, goes over this point again and again; after all, this was the paradox he set out to solve when he left Japan in search of an enlightened master. See T.J. Kodera, *Dōgen's Formative Years in China*, Boulder: Prajna Press, 1980, pp. 23-25, and *Shōbōgenzō Gyōji*, partly translated in R. Tsunoda, et al, *Sources of Japanese Fiction*, New York and London: Columbia, 1958, Vol. I, pp. 243-45.

104. *Op. cit.*, pp. 222-23. This is of course a Protestant view, but one

...man's act is not separated from the work of God in us. And God's work...exists only in the work that is done by man in fellowship with God. If there is foreknowledge and predestination, if there is prevenience and primary love, on God's part, there is no actual accomplishment apart from us or outside us.

The practical realities of a religion, of course, are never that simple, and dialogue must not proceed under the assumption that only the most subtle pronouncements of theologians offer the key to understanding. One must be willing to examine all levels in which the matrix operates, or even all the matrices that are somehow perceived by the believer to belong to one tradition. As an example of this type of complexity in the context of grace one has only to mention the word "merit." In both the Christian tradition and the Buddhist traditions merit as "spiritual cash," recorded by some sort of holy accountancy, redeemable for even higher spiritual good, is a concept that competes with that of grace. In fact, the Buddhist doctrine of transference of merit is, at least in the Mahāyāna Sūtras, a critique by an actuarial metaphor of the accountant's view of the spiritual path. There is no sense in trying to deny this fact in the context of Buddhism, and there is no sense in denying its presence in Christianity by attributing it only to the pelagian heresy.<sup>105</sup> This heresy, like other heresies, expresses real tensions within a system of belief that is struggling to be consistent with itself.

Strictly speaking, merit, rather than standing in opposition to grace, exists only because of grace.<sup>106</sup> In practice, this must also be the case, if the practice is perfect. But practice takes place in the context of, or rather led by, different, more or less subtle or gross, accurate or erroneous, conceptualizations. It is to be expected that the believer will constantly return to the cleavage between grace and merit.

In Buddhism this dichotomy seems, on first analysis, to be less common; but on closer analysis it becomes evident that this is

should compare a recent Catholic view expressed in Küng's *Justification*. Another Catholic analysis can be found in Congar, *op. cit.*, article by Congar himself. Also see the "Dutch Catechism," pp. 286-89.

105. See, for instance, the prescriptive statements in the article by Congar, in Congar, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-228.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

due to the fact that the experience of grace has not been recognized as an important element in Buddhism, and that it is, as a doctrinal construct, not an obvious or common phenomenon. There is, nevertheless, another set of categories that corresponds better to the opposition between grace and merit. The functional equivalent to this pair, the corresponding place in the matrix, is occupied by the opposition between two views of the path that should, in principle, form one unit: the path as a karmic process, and the path as liberation from karma. To transform action into unconditioned action, to reach the effortless practice (*anābhogatā*) of Buddhist virtues is the goal of all effort applied to their practice. At least this seems to be the Mahāyāna ideal. But in the texts themselves, as well as in the practice of the faithful, it is very common to find the practice of the various elements of the path as completely unrelated activities contributing to the path only insofar as they lead to new, better—but still conditioned—states in the process of karma.<sup>107</sup>

One would expect that the dominant model would be the one suggested by the parable of the painters in the *Ratnacūḍa-sūtra*:<sup>108</sup> each painter contributes to the painting; without their cooperation there would be no finished work, and the mission of each one of the artisans is to contribute to the one painting they have been commissioned to paint. Another possible model is suggested by Śāntideva when he interprets the essence of the goal as identical with that of the practice of generosity (*dāna*):<sup>109</sup>

Nirvāṇa arises from total renunciation, and my heart seeks this peace. If I must renounce all, it would be better to give it to all living beings.

The concept of renunciation for the sake of living beings developed into the two meditations which characterize Śāntideva's integration of the ethical and the contemplative visions: identification of oneself with others, and substitution of self with another.<sup>110</sup> Both culminate with the formula :<sup>111</sup>

107. A similar tension exists in the leap (sudden) vs. step (gradual) dichotomy in Buddhism. See also note 103, above.

108. Referred to and explained in *Ratnagotravibhāga*, I. 88-92.

109. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* III. 11; see also his interpretation of the *pāramitās* in V. 9-17.

110. That is, *parātmasamatā* and *parātmaparivartanā*, *Ibid.*, VIII. 90-172.

111. *Ibid.*, VIII. 173. Without forcing the text, one can safely interpret



If you truly love yourself, do not love yourself.

If you want to protect yourself, do not seek to protect yourself.

However, the above do not represent the most common presentation of generosity, or for that matter, the ethical virtues generally. The Pseudo-Nāgārjuna, for example, hints at the intimate connection that should exist between the ethical elements of the practice and the liberation towards which they are supposed to contribute.<sup>112</sup> Despite his Mādhyamika position as a philosopher and mystic, in ethics he tends to follow closely the Abhidharmic analysis. He still understands the benefits of ethical behavior in terms of the mathematics of merit, and on the basis of the abhidharmic theory of accumulations of dharmas.<sup>113</sup> The latter is indeed one of the earliest attempts at understanding the relationship between the path as karmic process and the path as liberation, and will remain an important hermeneutical tool even in the later stages of the Mahāyāna.

In the *Upadeśa*, Nāgārjuna, in the midst of subtle scholastic distinctions, stresses the integrality of moral action as karma, as path, and as consummation of the liberating process.<sup>114</sup> He introduces in this discussion the Mahāyāna conception of the “perfections” (*pāramitā*): virtues are transformed into “supramundane” virtues when they are practiced not for the sake of an object to be attained (the principle of merit), but as the manifestation or actualization of the spiritual goal by means of *prajñā*.<sup>115</sup> To practice generosity, for instance, only for the sake of liberation is to follow an inferior path.<sup>116</sup> The higher path of the Bodhisattva is based on a state of mind in which the principles of merit are not the prime moving force: Buddhahood for the sake of all living

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much of what Śāntideva says in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as an exposition of different levels of “generosity”—symbolic (as in the vow), total (as in *nirvāṇa*), lesser (material objects), heroic (oneself), and transcendental (Buddhas and Bodhisattvas giving their whole being through Dharma or the identification of self with all living beings.)

112. See the valuable analysis and references by E. Lamotte in *op. cit.* pp. 662-769.

113. *Ibid.* p. 663, and n. 1, for reference to Vasubandhu.

114. Lamotte, *op. cit.* 664-667, 716-721 and 694-5.

115. *Ibid.* pp. 709 ff., and 677 ff.

116. *Ibid.* p. 677, on the distinction between the *dāna* of the *śrāvaka* and the *dāna* of the Bodhisattva.

beings, and renunciation of merit are synonymous with the path.<sup>117</sup>

But Nāgārjuna has not abandoned completely the mechanistic conception of virtue. The fact that it remains within his system is part of the evidence I wish to bring forth here. The theory of merit coexists with the so-called “higher” interpretation of the role of virtue in the path.<sup>118</sup> In fact, it is placed side by side with the radical denial of the ultimate reality of virtue, its subject and its object.<sup>119</sup> Their coexistence is so obvious, yet so shocking to the Westerner, that it has become one of the great obstacles to understanding, the pet peeve of apologues. Why, they ask, do we find such an unsophisticated (to avoid the word “primitive”) doctrine as that of merit accepted, only to be denied with the rash nihilism of emptiness? On the one hand, there is this obsession with the law of karma, with the strict accounting of merits and demerits.<sup>120</sup> On the other, freedom is sought in a void in which, because there are no real persons, there can be no real charity.

One of the major obstacles faced by Westerners who attempt to understand Buddhism is that they do not have a counterpart to the Indian conception of levels of truth (or value). The application of this theory is not universal in India, but in some systems, the Mahāyāna included, the principle is applied in most doctrinal formulations. The philosophical soundness of this principle is a moot point that better be left to the philosophers. In dialogue it is more constructive to try to understand its significance within the matrix of Buddhism first, before engaging in any discussion on its logical soundness.

Be that as it may, the important point to keep in mind is that even after separating its religious values into two or more levels (merit, compassion, emptiness), the Buddhist is still affirming their coexistence in one reality: Buddhahood. The role of these values in Buddhism clearly does not correspond to any Christian

117. This is, of course, a paraphrase of the bodhisattva's vow, as presented in the *Velāmāvadāna* in *ibid.*, pp. 682-85 and 687.

118. See, for instance, his analysis of the relationship between *dāna* and the other virtues in *ibid.*, pp. 752-69.

119. *Ibid.*, pp. 675 ff., 724, 725-50.

120. Moltmann sees a “point of correspondence” to the obsession of works in “obsessive ideas and actions” as symptoms of psychopathology. Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 292-93.

categorization (this is why dialogue is necessary), but the Buddhist values cannot be approached with the preconception that they form a disjointed mass of unrelated ideals. Dialogue must start from the acceptance—at least provisional—of the internal point of view of the believer—in this case, the Buddhist who would affirm that emptiness (*sūnyatā*) has compassion as its core (*karuṇā-garbha*), is adorned by other virtues (*sarvākāraguṇopetā*), and is achieved through wisdom and merit (*puṇyajñānasambhāra*).

Too much ink has been spent in extolling the virtues of one notion of “charity” and criticizing the other. Apologues have rushed into this arena with the vehemency of the *odium theologicum* that is especially inappropriate with regard to this subject. There is no point in reviewing the less intelligent of these disputes, but I should mention those differences that seem to recur in most arguments about Christian and Buddhist “charity.” Buddhists have not been as eloquent on this matter—they have been too much on the defensive, for political as well as conceptual reasons; the Christian view, on the other hand, has been summarized several times with great clarity—one need only mention de Lubac and Cornelis.<sup>121</sup> I would like to quote from the latter one of his most apposite remarks. In this passage he draws heavily on de Lubac, and takes exception with the purported “docetic” tendencies of Buddhism, yet his appreciation of Buddhist values is certainly among the most generous and open-minded in Christian literature :<sup>122</sup>

[1] To encounter Buddhist charity is for the Christian a test of the authenticity of his own charity. With too much ease the Christian tends to believe that his faith in Christ exempts him from that effort of purification by love that gives *maitrī* all its value in the eyes of the Buddhist... The Christian reaches his mature adult personality in Christ only at the end of a long process of growth, the psychological manifestations of which are analogous to those that characterize the path to be followed by the Buddhist toward the realization of *anattā*.

121. Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du bouddhisme*, Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1951. Chapter I, “La charité bouddhique,” pp. 11-54; Cornelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-117, also 131 ff., 144 ff., 163 f., and 179 ff.

122. *Op. cit.* 116-117, italics are Cornelis’ own; diacritics on Sanskrit words have been corrected and adapted to the English system. Paragraph numbers are my own, added to facilitate reference in the discussion that follows.

[2]<sup>123</sup> In Buddhism as in Christianity, love of others and high regard for spiritual poverty are closely tied together as joint causes of concord, unity, peace and unanimity. But, the Buddhist spirit of poverty culminates in emptiness (*śūnyatā*), whereas the evangelical spirit of poverty descends from the cross of the Son, who has taken up the form of a slave of His own free will.

Having given this general descriptive account of the similarities and differences that he sees in the two conceptions, Cornelis proceeds, in the same paragraph, to present what is clearly his apologetic view. It is to his credit, however, that even here he retains much of his impartiality :

[3] In spite of the actual proximity of their significations, *śūnyatā* and *kenosis* do not overlap any more than *maitrī* and *agape*, and this for exactly the same reason, namely, that Buddhism could not do more than open up the space that only the Beloved Son of the Father would come to fill. What is of value in Buddhism is, paradoxically, this *empty* space, which it knew how to protect from all imposture. But, its *love* does not yet have the *definitive* quality of its—truly inspired—conception of the radical demands of mystical purification. In Christianity, exactly the opposite is true. Here it is love that takes the initiative...Attention to ascetic effort is eclipsed by the demands of a love that can make no plans, because it depends on the sudden turns of the encounter of human persons.

In the next paragraph he continues

[4] The opening of Christian love to Buddhism means, therefore, recognizing the promise contained in this remarkable conjunction of love of one's neighbor and voluntary poverty, and, consequently, the acceptance of the challenge presented by Buddhism to all rival religions in the realm of the concrete achievement of spiritual realization.

Then, immediately thereafter, he presents his strongest and most explicit defense of Christian superiority:

123. This is not a separate paragraph in the original text.

[5] If these conditions are fulfilled, and only at this price, Christianity will be able to present itself as a victorious rival, by virtue of the superior power of love that it receives from the Heart of Jesus. To the seduction of the compassionate Buddha will respond then, with all the irresistible force of its gentleness, the superior seduction of redemptive Love.

This is not the place to discuss Cornelis's statements (descriptive, prescriptive and apologetic) in full detail. But I have felt that quoting him in extenso would give the reader a good idea of the complexity of the issue. What at first would seem a straightforward case of common ground for dialogue becomes, under analysis, a problematic point for two reasons that are methodologically distinct, but may be doctrinally related. On the one hand, this close intertwining of dialogue and apologetics can easily stifle the former, even in areas where there seems to be much in common to both religions. On the other hand, what at first seem to be equivalent terms ("friendliness": *maitrī*, *agape*) can be shown to operate in very distinct contexts, so that even if they are seen as compatible—as Cornelis sees them—they cannot overlap or be accepted as equivalent in the hierarchical scale of values that seems to be demanded by most religions.

I have elsewhere attempted to define what is characteristic of the Buddhist notion of "charity"<sup>124</sup>—or, rather, compassion; but I will not review or attempt to revise (as I now feel I should do) my views regarding the problem from the internal point of view of Buddhism. What is relevant to this paper is the discussion of my agreements and disagreements with Cornelis's position, especially with regard to his approach to dialogue and his views on how Buddhism differs from, corresponds to, or complements Christianity.

Cornelis, who is an ordained priest (a Dominican), has had the courage to balance his analysis of the shortcomings of Buddhism with similar remarks on Christianity. I think he is right on both counts: Buddhism does tend to emphasize ascetic discipline over

124. In two papers titled "*Karuṇā-bhāvanā*: the Cultivation of Compassion" in *The Tibet Journal*, III. 2 (1978), pp. 33-59, and "Emptiness and Moral Perfection" in *Philosophy East and West*, 23.3 (1973), pp. 361-373. More recently, Harvey B. Aronson has published a study that is relevant to our discussion here: *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.

the social virtues, whereas Christianity moves in the other direction. However, it would be simplistic to assume (and I am certain Cornelis would not do so) that this distinction is valid at all times and for all forms of both religions. The great danger of all apologetics (and Cornelis does fall prey to this) is that it slides easily and imperceptibly into an a historical conception of religion, in which the ideals of a certain moment in the thought-process of one believer (usually the apologue himself) are reified and perceived as the only reality of that religion. What Cornelis perceives as a tension or complementarity between Christianity and Buddhism is such only in a very general way. In reality he is dealing more with universal polarities that operate in many religious contexts.

With caution, his generalization is valid and can be useful, but once more the analysis of the internal tensions and inconsistencies of each system should precede the use of these generalizations in dialogue. The study of polarities within a religion is an indispensable step in the clarification of its matrix (or matrices) of meaning, in the elucidation of the context from which each symbolic form (philosophic, mythic, or ritual) takes all of its meaning. In spite of this warning, I would like to work my way backwards from a consideration of Cornelis's generalizations to a short analysis of the contextual and historical data he seems to ignore.

It is true that the dominant strand in Buddhism is the contemplative (mystical, in Smart's terminology), and that this approach complements Christianity, as a religion of "love," as much as Christianity complements Buddhism (paragraphs 1 and 4). But it is difficult to see how, on the basis of this observation alone, one can jump to an evaluation of the relative merit of the two religions, except insofar as the choice has been made beforehand. The generalization is useful in dialogue because it should remind each of the two religions where they tend to forget which element of the polarity (cultivating the self, benefitting others) they tend to neglect, but it cannot solve the dilemma of choice.

Cornelis manages to confuse the issue by suggesting that Christian asceticism is analogous to the path leading to the realization of *anātman* (paragraph 1). In this way, by including the Buddhist path in the Christian matrix, he thinks he can show that it is Christianity that has something new to offer.<sup>125</sup> But the truth of the

125. Cornelis here falls prey to the basic fallacy of Hindu (and some

matter is that Christian denial of the self is not wholly comparable with its Buddhist counterpart. The spiritual poverty of the Christian, precisely because it is spiritual poverty in Christ (paragraph 2), expresses an experience that is different from the Buddhist experience, not something superior or additional to it.

Though he is perfectly aware of the fact that *maitrī* and *agape* do not overlap (paragraph 3), he insists on comparing them, only to turn the gap that separates them into an advantage for one of the two. In fact, he does not distinguish clearly between *maitrī* and emptiness, and does not even mention *karuṇā*. Then, adding to this his misunderstanding of emptiness as mere void—instead of causal dependence and inapprehensibility—<sup>126</sup> he is able to make a deceptively convincing case for his apologetic stance (paragraph 5).

The most significant inaccuracy in Cornelis's analysis is due to the fact that he has not paired actual correspondences, but has been misled by terminological—rather, etymological—similarities. The closest etymological equivalent to *agape* is, of course, *maitrī*, but the correspondent field of meaning is represented in Buddhism by at least four separate concepts: *maitrī* (desire for the welfare of other living beings), *anumodanā* (joy at the welfare of others), *karuṇā* (sympathy for the suffering of others) and *dāna* (generous renunciation: giving up the idea of I and mine for the benefit of others).<sup>127</sup> It is this complex equivalence that must be examined more carefully in the future if our purpose is dialogue.<sup>128</sup>

For our limited purposes it will suffice to point out that the functional equivalent of *agape* is, strictly speaking, *karuṇā* only when we refer to the quality in the absolute which is the basis for the ideal of altruistic love in human beings. On the other hand, if we search for the functional equivalent in practice, perhaps we would find it in the “four points of attraction” (*saṃgrahavastu*): generosity (*dāna*), words of friendship (*priyavāditā*), service to others (*arthacaryā*), and sharing the goals of others (*samānārthatā*). If we consider the peculiar position of these values within

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Buddhist) apologetics, justly criticized by H. Küng in *op. cit.*, p. 103. See note 143 below.

126. Elsewhere in his book Cornelis offers a very clear exposition of the doctrine of emptiness. *Op. cit.*, pp. 124-25, 162-63.

127. Compare de Lubac, *op. cit.* 28-29.

128. This is one of the aims of Cornelis' work. See *ibid.* pp. 13-14.

the matrix of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and also keep in mind that they are usually seen as part of the still broader category of “means” (*upāya*), it becomes apparent that many of the facile comparisons made between Christian and Buddhist conceptions of “love” or “community” should be re-examined, if not discarded.

Equally complex is the question of the functional equivalent of the incarnation, as has been shown above. If the reader will bear with me, I would like to take up this question once more from a different angle.

The Buddhist and the Christian view of the presence of the “holy” in the “profane,” of “God in man,” if we may use these terms for both religions, seem to be far apart. The Christian has the model—or, perhaps better, the visual image—of the crucified God. The Buddhist, depending on his sectarian affiliation, may take as his model the Buddha within us (imagine a perfectly serene, seated Buddha), or, even better, may consider no image appropriate to visualize that which is neither a self nor a non-self. The contrast can be seen rather vividly by comparing the following two passages.

The Christian position is summarized by Moltmann :<sup>129</sup>

The incarnate God is present, and can be experienced, in the humanity of every man, and in full human corporeality. No one need dissemble and appear other than he is to perceive the fellowship of the human God with him. Rather, he can lay aside all dissembling and sham and become what he truly is in this human God. Furthermore, the crucified God is near to him in the forsakenness of every man. There is no loneliness and no rejection which he has not taken to himself and assumed in the cross of Jesus.

In contrast to this, the ancient formula of no-self, explicitly states:<sup>130</sup>

[Bodily] form is not self. If form were self, form would not bring us pain, and one would be able to obtain this with respect to form: “That form be like this, that form be not like this.”

129. Moltmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-77.

130. This formula is from the *Anattalakkhanasutta*, and is found in a great number of versions in Pali and Sanskrit. See, e.g., *Samyutta Nikāya*, III, 66-68.



The same description is further applied to the other *skandhas*: sensation-feeling, apperception, predispositions, and consciousness. Self-identity and sorrow, which have become so central to Western views of humanity, are presented here as segments of reality which are either totally illusory or irrelevant to man's self-realization. Even in cases in the latter tradition where the above formula was considered only a provisional truth, nothing close to Western notions ever arose. In the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition, for instance, the "true-self" is understood as the absolute *Dharma-kāya*, completely free from sorrow.

The Ch'an/Zen tradition, in its usual revolutionary way, moves in a different direction (as does Shinran of course). We have seen how Hui-neng identifies this human body with the body of the Buddha. Lin-chi also states :<sup>131</sup>

Outside I do not pick between the profane and the holy man;  
inside I do not abide in the fundamental reality...

...no effort is necessary in the Buddha-dharma.

You only have to be ordinary, with nothing to do.

Just defecate, urinate, put on your clothes, eat food, and lie down when you are tired.

But even here it is evident that we are speaking of a different sort of interaction between the world and the ultimately holy. The difference is, I suspect, primarily in the conception of the latter, *which* for the Christian is the suffering servant, whereas for the Buddhist it is (at least in Lin-chi) "the one mind without form."<sup>132</sup>

131. This passage is translated from the Chinese text in *The Recorded Sayings of Ch'an Master Lin-chi-Hui-chao of Chen Prefecture*, trans. R. Fuller Sasaki, Kyoto: The Institute for Zen Studies, 1975, Sections XI-XII. The Ch'an/Zen position derives its scriptural authority from texts, such as the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*, in which enlightenment is said to arise only in the afflictive states of mind (*kleśa*), or even to be identical with them (see *Vimalakīrti*, VII. 2-3, and *Dharmasaṅgīti*, *Taisho* No. 761 Vol. XVII p. 643b-c). Closely related to this doctrine is Hui-neng's interpretation of the Pure Land doctrine, which will remind the reader of the Hindu interpretations of Christianity (as in note 141, below); see Yampolsky, *op. cit.* pp. 156-59. This is inspired by the *Vimalakīrti*, I. 14, p. 119 in the translation of E. Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, Louvain, 1962.

132. *Recorded Saying of Ch'an Master Lin-chi, Section X*. One can rephrase the above argument as follows: the two religions' conception of immanence is not the only point where they differ. Differences in this conception

Perhaps a sympathetic but impartial outside observer would note that the concept of emptiness or non-self is not wholly absent from Christianity, and the notion of the suffering servant is not totally foreign to Buddhism. This is to a certain extent what Cornelis has observed. He recognizes the fact that both elements are important elements in human spirituality, but he fails to recognize that they are in tension. Like so many other pairs (e.g., sacred and profane, grace and works) they are conceptual poles that attract each other in practice but remain apart whenever they are the object of thought. The presence of "docetic" tendencies in the early apocryphal Acts or the doctrine of grace in Shinran, for instance, are not aberrations within their respective traditions, but manifestations of different aspects of the polarities that are universal to the religious mind.

This is not to say that the dominant preferences of a given tradition are capriciously and irrationally chosen and vehemently held for no reason at all. Rather the choice is fundamental, but the point is that the polarity is also fundamental, and is not resolved by a mere choice. The choice colors and directs the experience: without it there would be no experience, no religion. The polarity, on the other hand, is a reflection of the complexity of the living world in which faith lives: if it is suppressed, religion is no longer a living response to the human situation.

Christians and Buddhists agree that a true or full understanding of the doctrines that express this polarity should lead to the realization that in practice the tension disappears. And both religions, at least in their most inspired moments, apply this principle to their doctrines of altruistic emotion and action (*agape*, *dāna*, etc.). But in their mutual criticism they have failed to listen to this voice. Thus the Christian takes exception to the Buddhist notion of compassion with respect to a non-existent being.<sup>133</sup> The Buddhist objects to loving a living being *in* or *through* Christ, and as a real individual. Each is misled by the other's rhetoric.

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cannot be separated from those in the opposite term. If we assume that the *Dharmakāya* stands for transcendence in Buddhism, then one can easily appreciate the chasm between the two religions by considering the Christian God's transcendence as judge, creator, transformer of history, etc. Cf. Gregory Baum, "Divine Transcendence," in J.P. Whelan, *The God Experience: Essays in Hope*, New York: Newman Press, 1971, pp. 120-136.

133. de Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

The bind in which a religious interpretation of altruism puts us is similar to the bind of grace and merit. There is something inconsistent in the idea of feeling or doing something for someone, for the sake of a *third* thing; just as there is something rather disturbing in the idea that somehow a human reality or action is going to be transformed by a third principle which is neither the agent nor the action. But the truth of the matter is that there is no third person or principle. Love of neighbor *is* love of God. Grace *is* human action when it is God's action. Compassion *is* the discovery of emptiness (and vice-versa). Objectless action *is* human action, normal, everyday action, when it is free from delusion.

The question "Should I follow the precepts of my faith for the sake of the precepts, for my own sake, for the sake of others, or for the sake of a higher being or reality (God, the Buddha)?" represents a specious alternative. Buddhist altruism may seem a contradiction in terms for the Christian ("altruism for your own sake"), and Christian altruism may seem superficial to the Buddhist ("reinforcement of attachment" or "for the sake of a mere conceptual construction (self) in the name of another imaginary construct (God).") Both are right, for, insofar as the conceptual dichotomy exists, the religious principle is just a principle, not the living reality. It is therefore not surprising that both principles seem strange and unacceptable to the outsider.

Now, returning to Cornelis' analysis, one must point out one final weakness which is endemic, or perhaps unavoidable, in an enterprise with such broad aims as interfaith dialogue. The comparison of the two religions assumes a synchronicity which does not exist. In other words, the analysis that precedes the comparison is basically *ahistorical*. In the case of Cornelis, nothing is done to distinguish different periods in the chronological or doctrinal development of Buddhism and Christianity. The fully developed Mahāyāna seems to be *subsumed* into the "Hīnayāna" as if this were doctrinally possible, or historically correct.<sup>134</sup>

With respect to Christianity also, Cornelis seems to overlook

134. There is a definite tension between the so-called "Hīnayāna" traditions and the Mahāyāna. This has to be taken into account in any "comparative" analysis, and should receive the same type of critical or exegetical acknowledgement that the tension between the Old and the New Testament receives in the West. See, e.g., Cornelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 and 12.

the important factor of historical and sectarian variation. In doing so the apologue chooses the stage and form of his own tradition that seems more in agreement with the values of his own historical and cultural frame of reference, more in consonance with the "reason" of his own age, and ignores the meanderings of history—some of which may be seen as early steps in the evolution or the gradual revelation of a dogma, others as mere stumblings, still others as outright heresies.

Thus it has come about that apologues will lump together various forms or stages in the belief of others, and demand a consistency and a modernity that they would not demand from their own tradition. Küng, for instance, repeats uncritically the trite attack on the putative social indifference of "eastern religions," but does not compare seriously at that point the political role of the Christian churches in the West.<sup>135</sup> He cannot overlook

135. Küng, *op. cit.* pp. 93-4. Take note also of the absence of any reference in his index to those moments in the history of his tradition that represent real tests or crisis to his interpretation of it (e.g., items such as "Inquisition," "Crusades," "Congregation of the Index," etc.).

The Buddhist could—I believe as unfairly as the Christian assuming Buddhist "indifference"—assume that the Christian passion for the salvation of others can only lead to the *auto-da-fé* and the holy war. It would be unfair, however, not to mention Küng's critique of Christianity's record. This appears later in his book. See, for instance (*op. cit.* p. 582) his description of the change in the social teachings of the Church :

Formerly this God was seen as God the judge who acquits man from his sin and declares him just. Now he is seen as God the partner who calls man to freedom and to responsibility for world and history. Formerly it was a question of individual justification and of "saving our souls" in a purely personal sense. Now it is a question of the social dimension of salvation and of all-round care for our fellow men. Formerly people were concerned in a spiritual sense with salvation hereafter and peace with God. Now they are concerned wholly and entirely with social conditions and the reform or even revolution of structures. Formerly man was constrained to justify his life before God. Now he is constrained to justify his life to himself and his fellow men.

Then he proceeds (*Ibid.*, pp. 582-83) to give us some concrete examples of the former states :

...Undoubtedly Luther did not appreciate the social consequences of his conception of justification, for instance, in regard to the misery of the peasants. ...Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms decisively simplified the problem and it has exercised a negative influence up to recent times, particularly on the question of resistance to National Socialism. The Catholic

this fact, and he does face it courageously elsewhere in his book, but he fails to give other traditions the margin for error he gives his own—the validity and value of the dynamics of history, of historical change and evolution of the teachings of the Church.

A different sort of demand for consistency is made by de Lubac, who asserts that whenever Buddhist pity appears as “human tenderness” it is only in spite of, not because of Buddhist doctrine. This comes after a long passage in which he finds fault with Buddhism for not proclaiming the “essential nobleness of every man and the essential unity of the human family”.<sup>136</sup> In both cases he is asking a tradition different from his own to operate under the same assumptions that he does. Dialogue has been interrupted even before it began.

Two preliminary steps in dialogue have been ignored by de Lubac. First, the critical phase: are there similar doctrines or phenomena in my own tradition, are there similar inconsistencies in it? Second, the analytic phase: what are the basic assumptions or axioms on which the matrix of this other tradition is built, and how do the particular doctrines under consideration operate within this matrix? Dialogue requires, even at these early or preliminary stages, a certain empathy for what is not one’s own. And it requires a total immersion in the detailed workings of the conceptual and experiential matrix that give meaning to a tradition. This often entails dealing with issues and assumptions and values that cannot be represented in a simple schematic way.

This preliminary exploration of the concept of matrix would be incomplete if one were not to mention some of the other, more subtle and complicated, but nevertheless crucial, issues that arise in the analysis of matrices. The particular issue to be considered briefly belongs to the hermeneutics of religious and paradigmatic legends: Without attempting to understand their function as styles of religious literature, de Lubac attacks the *avadāna* legends

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tradition too undoubtedly saw the consequences of the doctrine of justification more in pious works than within the Church than in the reorganization of society. The papal states with their monsignorial economy were largely regarded as the most socially backward in Europe and until their fall those in Rome successfully opposed any sort of Catholic social teaching. A great deal could therefore be said in the light of history for the turning of the Church to the world and society.

136. *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

on the Bodhisattva's past deeds of virtue. He describes their imagery as "childish" and ornate to the point of being "tasteless". What is more, he says that the ideal they embody is so phantastic, so incredibly imaginary, that it cannot be intended as a goal to be sought. That the "purely phantastic" career of the Bodhisattva cannot be meant as a model to be emulated.<sup>137</sup> As far as I can ascertain, Buddhist scholars have not become aware of de Lubac's criticisms. Moreover, these are so contemporary in character that I doubt very much that we could find anything in the scriptural or scholastic traditions of Buddhism that could be construed as a reply to de Lubac's objections. However, one can easily see what the strength and weakness of this approach are in terms of its possible usefulness in interfaith dialogue.

The style in which Buddhist ethical ideals are formulated is indeed hyperbolic, almost on the verge of phantasy. But is this not equally true of Buddhist formulations of other ideals, such as those of meditation and insight? Could we argue, then, with respect to the latter case, as de Lubac has done with respect to the former? Why not assume that the ideals of Buddhist monastic or contemplative life are not meant to be practiced because they are often described in such phantastic terms that no one can imagine a real human being following those practices? The reason we do not jump to such a conclusion is twofold: (1) that we also know of textual and oral traditions in which these principles are expounded in down-to-earth, concrete terms, and (2) that we do observe, in the field, the monastic and contemplative life of the Buddhist. For the same reasons we must discard de Lubac's interpretation of Buddhist ethical literature.

De Lubac is simply ignoring the ethical counterpart of the texts that explain the practical aspects of the contemplative life. In both types of texts, what to the Westerner appears to be "unreal and phantastic" is explained as the higher achievements, reserved for great Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the model of the lesser, but fundamental practices.<sup>138</sup> Thus, in Nāgārjuna's *Upadeśa* the extreme acts of generosity chosen by de Lubac as examples of the impossible ideals proposed by Buddhists are classified as belong-

137. de Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

138. I have attempted to clarify the meaning of one set of such "phantastic" symbolism in my paper on the Bodhisattva as wonder worker: see above, note 88.

ing to the class of “supreme generosity”; but two other classes are discussed, the “lower” and the “intermediate” classes. As an example of the latter we are told how the Buddha Śākyamuni, after he produced the thought of enlightenment for the first time, was reborn as a master potter and at that time he gave to a former Buddha Śākyamuni and his monastic community honey syrup and bathing utensils. Moreover, even before producing the thought, he gave food to the needy, copies of the scriptures to those who had not heard the *dharma*, etc. Only later did he progress to the point of being able to offer himself, that is, his own physical body, to living beings. Finally, he was able to offer the Dharma (offering his own body as *Dharma-kāya*??).<sup>139</sup>

Clearly, the tradition provides for both functions of the myth: *glorification* of the ideal, and use of the ideal as *model*; that is, the *ideal as supernal reality*, unattainable goal, and the *ideal as paradigm*. At least in purely *functional* terms, this is not unlike one of the meanings of the Christian fusion of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is significant, again, that here as before, the Buddhist can present arguments which are specious for exactly the same reasons that make de Lubac’s conclusions so superficial (though not completely wrong, as we shall see). Buddhists do wonder, for instance, how Christians can speak of prayer and the contemplative life, if the only thing they can do is praise the direct encounter with God in very vague and emotional terms, but do not have any technique or discipline (*yoga*) to accomplish this end. Such remarks are only possible if one ignores or tries to force into pre-conceived notions the idiosyncratic style of Christian contemplative practices and of the rhetoric of its speculative mysticism—both of which are defined, of course, by the complex theological framework that we call the matrix of the religion.

Yet, divested from their obvious apologetic intent, and used with the necessary caution, both appreciations—the Christian outlook on Buddhist “ethics” and the Buddhist evaluation of Christian “yoga”—point in the right direction. They do reveal fundamental differences that should be borne in mind in dialogue. These are the differences that make religious choice and sectarian identity possible. However, disparity has to be understood

139. Lamotte, *op. cit.*, pp. 750-752.

through an understanding of the value of each element within its own system, not by examining the incongruity of an element within another system. At any rate, this example shows how the comparison of matrices goes beyond the simple and obvious comparison of ideas into the realm of divergent teaching and literary styles.

At the ideological level, on the other hand, one has to give due weight to the meaning of “benefitting living beings” within the Buddhist program to understand how the fundamental framework of “altruistic” behavior here is different from that of Christianity. There is, ultimately, nothing inherently necessary in either conception of the hierarchy of values. What makes each believer feel the necessity of accepting one or the other is in reality the degree of consistency that he or she perceives between a particular view of ethics and the total program of salvation/liberation he has embraced.

This is not to say that the believer’s perception may not be wrong. It could easily be “mistaken” in terms of his own system of belief, or in “logical” terms. But even then, or perhaps even more then, dialogue may prove rewarding. Because the understanding that each one has of his own tradition is always imperfect, there is obviously room for communication and mutual enrichment at all times. As long as one starts out with his mind set on determining in the end who is superior, the exchange will be stifled or, at best, incomplete. There has to be a certain willingness to listen and learn. It is not necessary to assume that one of the two traditions is totally lacking in some aspect of its spiritual development; it is only necessary—if that will allay one’s deeply-rooted fears of not being in possession of the absolute truth—to assume that the study of a totally different perspective can grow into a fresh approach at values that are already present, but unnoticed in one’s own tradition.

In a certain subtle way, this kind of exchange has taken place in our times. It is difficult to identify exactly what has motivated Buddhist groups to emulate the Christians in their interpretation of the “social virtues,” and what has moved—to a less, but nevertheless noticeable extent—some Christians to try to discover the value of contemplative compassion (I have seen no attempt to understand the meaning and function of “skillful means”).<sup>140</sup>

140. Prof. Douglas Daye, from the University of Bowling Green, Ohio, is the only scholar, Western or Eastern, who has brought to the attention of



There is, for instance, an obvious tendency among certain Asian religious groups to try to develop charitable institutions along the lines of a Christian model. Witness the impressive complex of such institutions in Iri, South Korea, built by the Won-kyo Buddhist sect. The charitable activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in India are also clearly meant as responses to Christian influences. The movement in the other direction is equally sporadic, but, again, significant. It is seen mostly in the efforts of individuals, Catholic monks like Father A. Graham, or Brother David Steindler-Rast, or, in Japan, Enomiya LaSalle and Johnston, for instance, in whose teaching and practice it is easy to discover the imprint of Buddhist and Hindu concepts of compassion as a contemplative dimension. Only a year ago I had the occasion and pleasure of meeting a Franciscan monk engaged in Zen meditation who (to prove my point) had taken Bodhisattva vows!

It would also add much to dialogue if one were to consider more carefully the social and historical factors, the specific historical situations that interact with a religion's ideology, instead of speaking in the abstract in praise or condemnation of doctrines that represent only the distillation of ideals. The debate concerning "love" and its role in religious practice would take a very different course, I suspect, if both sides were willing to look at and discuss publicly their historical failings. The list would be interminable, but it is essential that this review be undertaken with understanding and not guilt or recrimination as its aim. That is, the purpose of such an effort would be to attempt to clarify the relationship between a social milieu and the practice of a religious ideology. To compare the values and goals of one religion with those of another without consideration to the specific historical setting is not only absurd, but dangerous.

At one point in its historical "evolution" a society will interact with religious institutions in a way quite different from the manner in which it affects and is affected by the religion at another stage. This is obvious to the point of becoming a platitude, yet apologues often ignore this principle. Of course, its application complicates things considerably—perhaps to the point of making definite conclusions almost impossible, but it must be applied if dialogue

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others the difficulties involved in using this term in cross-cultural communication. Unfortunately, his analysis has been grossly misunderstood and underrated. As far as I know, his position has not appeared in printed form yet.

is to make any sense. Why is it, then, that the Buddhist chooses to compare the reign of King Aśoka with the Crusades, while the Christian prefers a comparison between twentieth-century liberal Christianity and Lamaistic “theocracy”? In most cases the choice is not the result of a conscious desire to distort reality, but it results in a distortion nevertheless. Obviously, and very naturally, our defense mechanisms lead us unconsciously not only to forget those incidents that project a clearly negative image of our ideals, but also to exaggerate the virtues of what seems good to us: to forget what there was of the cunning politician in Aśoka, what there may be of sheer bigotry and self-righteousness in the “liberal’s” enthusiasm for “social justice.”

These historical considerations are vital for the effective practice of interfaith dialogue, but the analysis of historical conditions is not the same as the analysis of matrices, and is only complementary to it. Thus, although we may speak of two phases—the historical or critical, and the analytic or systematic, the second is what defines the specific methodology of dialogue. Both lead to the discovery of common elements, but the second leads to the clarification of the religious common ground.

The various models of the final goal of the religion, of the outcome of the program of salvation or liberation, often reflect, like the doctrines on the human condition as the starting point of the program, the most important differences in the matrices of symbolization. It is in these areas that we perceive quite clearly that we must be dealing with diverse, if not fundamentally different experiences. But how different are these experiences and conceptualizations *vis à vis* other sets of experiences and conceptualizations?

The Christian beatific vision and the New Creation have to be understood as consistent with the whole vision of creation, fall, sin and redemption, but discrepant with the Buddhist doctrines of beginningless ignorance or innate Buddhahood. But two questions arise at this point: (1) what makes us think of dialogue between these two apparently discordant systems, and not between Christian theology and political economics? And, (2) if the incongruity between the two systems of belief is such, why do we occasionally encounter some striking similarities? Granted, these similarities are sometimes contextually very different, but are they only accidents? Were the examples quoted at the beginning of

this paper suggestive of Buddhism merely because statistically such similarities are bound to occur by mere chance?

Here and there different Buddhist sects meet some Christian groups—the predestination of the Calvinist and the Fa-hsiang school, the mystery of Grace and the bodhicitta or the “fundamental vow” of Amida—but are these correspondences accidental? Within the context of the systems there is still a gulf that cannot be bridged by a simple correspondence. The Buddhist cannot understand how the Christian expects to grow spiritually in one lifetime; the Christian finds rebirth an easy way to renege or procrastinate one’s obligation to respond to the Creator. One emphasizes discovery, or growth leading to the unveiling of reality—the *removal* of ignorance. The other stresses choice, response and obedience—the avoidance of sin. Strictly speaking, if one seeks some kind of conceptual encounter at this level, there can be no doubt that this is one of those cases in which the “twain shall never meet,” in which dialogue as an exploration of differences seems to be its own and sole reward.

In one important sense, however, these irreconcilable differences suggest a common concern, the discovery of which may come to be shared by Christian and Buddhist as the fruit of dialogue: for, as a whole system and integral matrix, these doctrines reflect a view of humanity not shared by the secular world. In both doctrines the human being is seen as coming into a life that is filled with both despair and hope. Something is fundamentally wrong, even when everything seems to be going well, but the possibility of escape from this condition of malaise is somehow guaranteed by the presence (immanence, if you will) of a higher order of being in the chaos of existence, yet paradoxically there is no “escape into what is present among us” without some kind of radical change in us. Freedom from this condition requires surrender of the self, expressed in a life of morality and contemplation. This is, in spite of all its limitations, the common ground that makes our desire for interfaith dialogue a reasonable expectation. This is not merely an abstraction, a distillation of the least common denominator. It is a formulation of the fundamental view of existence that separates Christianity and Buddhism from the secular mentality.

In spite of the great differences that separate the two religions, the common existential ground is what makes possible other, apparently coincidental, correspondences. In the meanderings of

sectarian variation, the specific conceptual and experiential forms, in which the common ground is lived by the believers of both religions, will meet only to separate again at another point. There is no question that there is great variety and disparity, but the meetings are more than coincidences, and their study can show how, in spite of differences, the two religions are not islands in separate oceans.

These preliminary investigations have suggested two principles for the practice of interfaith dialogue. *Firstly*, meaning is conveyed only contextually. This may lead to two apparently undesirable conclusions: (1) that religions are closed systems, discrete and isolated from each other, that they have nothing in common; (2) that, in spite of structural similarities in their matrices of meaning, and of shared concerns, many aspects of meaning reflect experiences that are not comparable. This means that important segments of religious discourse cannot be the object of interfaith value judgements, that much of their value depends on ultimate choice that gives life to what is otherwise an empty, dogmatic hulk.

The first of these possible implications of the first principle seems, on the face of it, most unlikely. I trust that by now my reader will be ready to agree with this statement—as long as I qualify it by suggesting that there may be specific instances in which one particular religion may be a closed system with respect to another particular religion.

Now as regards the second of these two implications, it is the conclusion that the data suggest to me at this moment in my study, but it is in no way an undesirable conclusion, as our next principle of dialogue shows. It is, in fact, the substance of dialogue.

*The second principle* of dialogue can be stated thusly: correspondences in context are valuable even when they reflect similar issues but different or mutually exclusive solutions. This is the area where differences can lead to shared meaning in the most profound sense.

The truth of the matter is that if there is to be meaningful dialogue, one has to assume at the very least that most religions refer, however vaguely, to the same object. In other words, even if one rejects as simplistic the idea that all religions express the same truth and exactly the same human experience, one has to assume that there is a common ground, a certain dimension in which they

overlap. This overlapping does not have to be in terms of a correspondence of doctrinal conceptualizations or “truths,” nor do we have to fall back on the “invisible factor,” the “ineffable experience.” Religions do coincide in their positive statements and in the form of their symbolizations, perhaps not as often as one would like it to be the case, but still with a certain frequency. Yet these correspondences do not mean much if they do not represent analogous contexts. When an overlapping of contextual types does occur, we discover that there may be a common ground without doctrinal agreement. This is the realm in which dialogue can take place most fruitfully, where one discovers common interests without having to erase differences.

The first level at which religions meet, and a level at which dialogue can be begun effectively, is paradoxically the one aspect which all religions wish to hide from their “rivals.” The internal tensions of a religion do not reflect necessarily its weaknesses; on the contrary, they reflect the dialectic process in which it grows. These tensions correspond to what that tradition considers to be the fundamental alternatives and, therefore, to those dimensions of human experience which are seen as the most vital. Full appreciation of a religious tradition occurs only when, those inconsistencies having been unveiled, one is able to perceive how the religion grapples with the life *krisis* it is trying to resolve or represent. In other words, it seems more fruitful, at least as a first step, for dialogue to begin with the investigation of common or similar *issues*, that is, *sets of problems and solutions* that occupy similar positions in the matrices of different religions. The starting point would then be the quest for the religious *needs* that unite us, rather than the question of how solutions differ—especially when the latter question only hides our desire to prove one solution better than the other.

This net of vital religious issues, tensions and polarities which antecedes logically, if not chronologically, the creation of religious systems, should be the first target of dialogue. The final “answers” mean something only in this context: they may be different because they respond to divergent needs, or they may be different responses to similar preoccupations. In either case, dialogue is enriching. In the first case one discovers unknown or neglected dimensions of spirituality; in the second, one learns to appreciate other religions as manifestations of a shared humanity.

In this way, the goal proposed here is close to the one sought by Cornelis: to find shared values. But if what one seeks is dialogue, and not simply confirmation of one's own beliefs, the starting point cannot be a quest for those values in other religions that correspond to our own: a "shopping list" of what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected. Rather, one must set out with a willingness to understand how certain religious values which we do not seem to share make sense, perfectly good sense, to others. One must have the courage to walk the dangerous tightrope of trying to understand how the beliefs of others form a matrix of meaning that makes sense in terms of *their* fundamental choices, while at the same time not assuming that we have to make those same choices.

Can one choose *not* to accept a creed without rushing to find fundamental flaws and "obvious" lackings in it? This is the quandry of interfaith dialogue, but there is in it no true dilemma. There are many intensities of acceptance, rejection and indifference. I am not advocating that form of detached scholarship, grounded on indifference, which has become the trademark of our times. Nor am I suggesting that we adopt Lessing's three-ring hypothesis. My point is that one can have a preference and still, out of deep respect for the sincerity of other human beings, understand how the beliefs of others also reflect a sincere and creative response to profound religious needs somewhat similar to our own. The real issue is whether you consider other human beings and their beliefs inherently valuable—worthy of respect—if you are willing to assume that what others believe must make some kind of sense, of universal sense, because it is of value to them. This is the kind of assumption that must be made as a wager, *before dialogue begins*.

One must admit that dialogue, if it is sincere, leads, as observed by Küng, to self-criticism, to a search for truth, more than a simple reaffirmation of "possession of the known truth." This is an encounter with other religions "no longer based on missionary conquest of the other religions," an encounter "which, while fully alert to syncretist indifferentism, includes tolerances". Although the type of dialogue proposed here does not, and probably should not, respond to the apologetic aims that move Küng to claim "*absolute validity*" for a given teaching, his vision of a "mission... ready to revise its own standpoint wherever this turns out to be in need of revision...engaged in free discussion, bound by its own

tradition but without dogmatic fixation, open to any good argument" epitomizes the effect that one would hope such dialogue would have on religious encounters generally.<sup>141</sup>

Once dialogue has begun, on the basis of the analysis of the contextual meaning of the symbols that are strange to us, two outcomes can be foreseen: On the one hand, any attempt to find equivalences or shared "truths" will come only after the real differences have been clarified and superficial analogues have been discarded. On the other hand, even if no such correspondences are discovered at the end of the road, a deeper understanding of differences should have ensued. This second possibility (which to me seems to be the most likely outcome of dialogue) ideally could lead to a greater appreciation of differences based on either one or both of the following *apologetic* stances: (1) Insofar as a human being can lay claim to possession of divine truth, he or she must regard the faith of his choice as true in an ultimate sense; but that true belief does not necessarily exhaust religious values; religions may complement each other in such a way that—even allowing for certain hierarchies—they stand parallel to each other, and one cannot be seen as only a step to another, or as an "unfulfilled" or truncated version of the other. The element of risk in this position, of course, is that it may slide from perspectivism into relativism. This danger makes this stance unpalatable to many. To those I would like to suggest a second position: (2) Though different religious systems stand in opposition to each other, and are *mutually exclusive*, though one must choose among them, in some important ways they respond to similar human predicaments, and represent diverse ultimate choices (*krisis*), made by equally honest human beings.

In either case, one does not engage in the common apologetic mistake of determining the meaning and value of a foreign religious symbol in terms of one's own system of belief or matrix of meaning. These apologetic stances, and the "comparative" method they presuppose, are not to be construed as presuppositions or necessary conditions for communication among religions, nor are they to be demonstrated logically in dialogue, but rather they are to be discovered and clarified gradually through the process

141. *Op. cit.* 114-115, pp. 112-116 summarize his position on the "criticism of the religions."

of dialogue. The intellectual activity of the analysis of meaning can be carried out without assuming any of these points. The only preconditions for interfaith dialogue are a fundamental faith in the inner worth of human beings and a willingness to postpone apologetics for the sake of communication. The direction that dialogue will take thereafter depends on many imponderable factors. I do not claim that the methodological suggestions of this paper are anything more than that. Nor do I wish to express myself as sanguinely as others have in the past regarding the great promise that the history of religions has for human understanding,<sup>142</sup> but I still retain a strong faith in the salutary effect that the objective study of religions may have on the practice of religious tolerance, and therefore, rather *directly* on peace. As stated at the beginning of this paper, perhaps there are other, instinctive forces that influence us more than rational discussion. Yet the latter is our only hope, the only means we have for effectively combatting those destructive forces, if for no other reason than the obvious and painful failure of other, more drastic—or shall we say “impulsive”—means proposed and put into practice in the history of humankind.

The point is that we tend to begin dialogue with an apologetic stance. To express it in a slightly more technical way: the first encounter with an alien belief tends to take the form of an attempt at finding a place for the contents of that belief within our own belief system. The end result is always the same because the outcome was, of course, predetermined—perhaps fulfilling a subconscious wish. If the procedure to be followed is to test specific items (concepts, symbols, scriptural passages) of the alien belief against the touchstone of our own system, then we should not be surprised if we are always discouraged by our inability to develop the sympathetic outlook required by or expected from dialogue.

One must begin by bracketing his own beliefs and attempting to understand the alien perspective as a perspective which can be lived and accepted as a total religious vision, and not simply as an imperfect fragment of our own. Otherwise, there is no over-

142. See, for instance, the papers by Benz and Heiler in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. by M. Eliade and J.M. Kitagawa, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1959.



coming the apologetic circle. The Christian will make no progress in communicating with the Hindu or the Buddhist, for he will continue to see, for instance, their emphasis on mystic culture as escapism, or as only the imperfect reflection of self-denial in the cross of Christ. The Hindu, on the other hand, will continue to preach his all-encompassing “tolerance” by effacing what is uniquely Christian by means of a “hermeneutical” procedure that calls—not wholly unlike Christian apologetics—for all alien religious phenomena to be interpreted in terms of his own beliefs.

The quotations from Christian authors that we have had so far in this paper should suffice to convince Buddhist readers; but perhaps Christian readers may better understand, intellectually and emotionally, how destructive of dialogue is the approach that is under criticism in this paper if he only reads a fragment from a passage in which a Hindu apologue engages in this type of “exegesis”:<sup>143</sup>

[Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount] struck a new note...; that not only the kingdom of heaven is at hand, but that it is within us—not outside; and that we can realize it. This was a revolutionary conception, that spiritual realization was to be had there and then, in this very life, not after death...

143. Swami Ranganathananda in “The Christ We Adore,” as quoted in a letter from the International Students Foundation, Inc., South Point Plaza, Lansing, Michigan 48910. For a Buddhist example of the same practice, the reader is referred to the work by Suzuki mentioned above in footnote 82. Other reductionist approaches should be mentioned here—and discussed in a deeper analysis of the conditions for dialogue. For instance, there are the common “Buddhist Interpretations of the Gospels” (as those of R. H. Blyth). I do not consider this enterprise as self-contradictory as a “culinary approach to nuclear physics”, yet, insofar as these “interpretations” are made with the sole purpose of erasing differences, not in order to understand them, I cannot see how they can be considered of any value in promoting interfaith dialogue or understanding. For a criticism of this approach, see Küng, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

The comparison of isolated concepts across the boundaries of religious systems leads to similar results, despite the claims that this approach is based on a strictly scientific methodology. This type of comparison was particularly popular in the last century and the beginning of the present one. It has been revived recently by Roy C. Amore in *Two Masters, One Message*, Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1978.

...here we have his unique message, the message of a spiritual religion of inward realization.

We are reminded of the ringing proclamation of the Upanishads:—the Self, O dear, must be realized...

The farthest that Judaism had gone till then was to make man hear the voice of God; the idea of seeing God was thus an innovation which,...was the main point of departure from the prevailing tribal god and faith.

This is clearly not the most effective way to generate communication. At worst it will create mistrust and at best it will win a few converts, but neither mistrust nor conversions should be the goal of dialogue. The purpose of dialogue is, presumably, to contribute to the peaceful coexistence of diverse creeds, to foster cooperation and friendly communication among them, and to explore the possibility of mutual enrichment. Whenever the necessary conditions for dialogue arise, it is an auspicious event for all religions. It should be seen not as a threat to the self-identity of any group, nor as an opportunity for gaining more converts. Our present historical circumstances have made dialogue among religions not only more likely, but also, in more than one sense, more necessary. There is, of course, the truism that sees inter-faith dialogue as an important contribution to international understanding. But we should not deceive ourselves by ignoring the clear message that the secular age has for religion. It is now obvious that it is possible for societies to organize themselves under the "faith" of the secular state. What this means to traditional religions is not only that their existence can be and often is threatened and attacked successfully by forces that are not "religious" in the traditional sense. The secular state has also forced us to face the fact that there may be more in common to religions that before seemed worlds apart.

Thus, two religions may be more willing today than they were in the past to talk about their common ground. That is, today we may be more willing to take notice of what is common to two disparate doctrinal systems such as the ones examined above than were our forefathers when they only thought in terms of "rival religions." In other words, in revising the style of apologetics, we respond better to a very real political and social situation, a *krisis* and a *kairos*. It is a crisis for all religions, and they all should

become aware of the danger, but also of the unique opportunity they are facing, if they are truly convinced of the validity and the relevance of their message for the present age.

### *Appendices*

The following schematic analysis represents only a first attempt at formulating the infrastructures I have chosen to call “matrices”. However, despite their preliminary nature, I have tried to make them as complete as possible, including many dimensions that were not mentioned in the main body of the paper. In this way, the reader will have a more complete notion of the type of rigorous and exhaustive comparisons that are necessary in establishing a fruitful dialogue.

Each of the matrices is to be considered independently, although some comparative *suggestions* have been provided in the right-hand column as an aid to the reader of this paper. One should not lose sight of two important points emphasized throughout the paper: (1) “Parallelisms” are functional or contextual; that is, the parallel concept occupies a similar position or serves a similar function in the matrix of the other religion. The parallelism very seldom indicates a conceptual or doctrinal equation. (2) The set of elements listed in the column to the right does not constitute the matrix of the other religion.

The Buddhist matrix has been divided into three columns—constituting three different, though closely related, matrices. This has been done in order to reflect accurately some of the internal discrepancies which separate Buddhists among themselves. The analysis of these differences, as well as the study of similar cleavages in Christianity, and, perhaps, their historical explanation, are still other important steps in establishing fruitful dialogue.

Elements within a matrix interconnect in ways that cannot be accurately represented in outline form. There are also tensions and variations that cannot be taken into account in simple diagrams as the ones that follow. The only subtlety recognized in these schematic outlines is the difference between highly problematic or very weak parallels (in parenthesis), and those that seemed obvious or well founded (preceded by a hyphen).

I. *Christian Matrix*

A. The Human Situation	<i>Buddhist "Parallels"</i>
1. Creation	—O—
2. Fall	
Original Sin	—Beginningless misapprehension, thirst and becoming, (pāpa)
State of Sin (Man not Responding to God)	
B. Program of Salvation	
1. The Reality of Divinity (As a Basis for Salvation)	—Emptiness/No-self
Trinity	(Trikāya?)
Logos-Son of Man	(Dharmakāya-Nirmāṇakāya??)
2. The Economy of Salvation	
Incarnation	—O—
Kenosis/Kenome	(Nirmāṇa/Tulku)
Patheia of the Cross	(Bodhisattva as "Suffering Servant"??)
Resurrection	
Redemption	—O—
Justification	(anubhāva, adhiṣṭhāna, bodhicitta, Buddha-
Grace	darśana, etc.)
Freedom	—O—
C. Practice and Resolution	
1. The Christian Life	—The Path/Bodhicaryā
Decision for Faith	—Bodhicitta
Decision for Christ	—O—
Works	
Merit	—Merit (puṇya)
Merit vs. Grace	(See Polarities in the Path)
Agape	(Maitrī, Karuṇā, etc.)
Harmony in the Church	(Saṃgrahavastu)

“Charity”	—Dāna
Social Gospel	—O—
Sacraments	(Tantric Abhiṣekas)
2. Salvation Realized	
Liberated for this Life (from the Law)	—Bodhi/Apratiṣṭhita-nir- vāṇa
Liberated for Eternity (from Judgement)	—Nirvāṇa
Eschatology: Restora- tion of All Things in Christ	—Leading All Beings to Nirvāṇa; Purification of Buddha-fields
D. Institution	
1. Ministry and Priesthood of Christ	—O—
Gospel and Kerygma	—Turning the Wheel/ Sūtras
2. Tradition	(Abhidharmas/Śāstras; “Oral” Traditions)
3. The Church (Ecclesia) in History	—O—
The Suprahistorical Church	—O—
Kairos and Gradual Revelation	(Turnings of the Wheel)
Ministry/Priesthood	—O—
Apostolic Succes- sion	(Spiritual Lineages)
Ministry of the Church and Ministry of the Faithful	—O—
Sacramental Role of the Church	—O—

## II. Buddhist Matrices

	<i>(Hīnayāna (Sarvāstivāda)</i>	<i>Mahāyāna (Bodhicaryāvatāra)</i>	<i>Mahāyāna (Ratnagotravibhāga)</i>	<i>Christian "Parallels"</i>
<b>A. The Human Situation</b>				
1. Beginningless Misapprehension .....				—State of Sin
2. Saṃsāra .....				—O—
<b>B. Program of Liberation</b>				
1. The Misapprehended Reality				
Impermanence				
Sorrow		Emptiness .....		—O—
No-Self			Buddhatva	—O—
			Permanence	
			Bliss	
			True Self	
2. Liberating Reality Present in Saṃsāra				
(???)		Identity of Saṃsāra	Beginningless	—O—
		and Nirvāṇa	Nirvāṇa	
		Bodhicitta	Innate Buddhahood	(Grace)
		The Bodhisattva in Saṃsāra .....	} (Incarnation ??)	
		Upāya and Nirmāṇakāya .....		
3. Liberation (Vimukti)				
In This Life:				
Sopadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa		Bodhi .....	} (Freedom in this Life)	
		Apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa .....		

## C. Actualization of Liberation

Ideal Being			
Arhant	Buddha/Bodhisattva .....	(?)	
Liberating Knowledge			
Vision of the Truths	Vision of Emptiness .....	—O—	
Liberating Conduct			
Sambhāra	Sambhāra of the Bodhisattva .....	—O—	
Bhāvanā	Śūnyatā-bhāvanā .....	—O—	
State of Liberation			
Nirvāṇa	Apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa and Trikāya .....	(Beatific Vision ?)	
—O—	Bodhisattva's Career after Bodhi .....	—O—	

## D. Institution

## 1. Buddha

As Founder			
Rūpakāya	(Nirmāṇakāya .....	(human Christ)	
As Refuge			
Dharmakāya	(??) Dharmakāya	(Incarnate Logos)	
As Object of Worship			
(Rūpakāya ?)	(Sambhoga- and Nirmāṇakāya? .....	(Transfigured Christ)	

## 2. Dharma

As Refuge .....		—O—	
Realization .....		—O—	
Teaching .....		—O—	
Turning(s) of the Wheel .....		(Gospel; Kairos)	

3. Saṅgha			
Constitution			
Catuḥpariṣad	Bodhisattva-saṅgha	Triyāna-saṅgha	("Four Orders"; Ecclesia ?)
Ritual Process			
—O—	Vows. ....		(?)
Samvara	Bodhisattva-samvara .....		(Law ?)
Vinaya .....			(Law ?)
—O—	Bodhisattva-vinaya .....		(?)



# **The Second Self is a Gift: An Essay in Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

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## **Editor's introduction:**

Professor Fisher sees bondage as the starting point for a mutual understanding between Buddhism and Christianity in that the desire for any notion of eternal being or independent being is the major human problem. However, what the two different traditions seek to offer as the solution to this human problem differs drastically. In Paul's thinking (here representing Christianity) the grace of Christ frees the believer from this bondage, whereas in Buddhism the bonded self must be seen as illusion from the beginning. Fisher argues that the problem for Buddhism is that given the determinism apparent in the causation of Buddhism—how does the breakthrough to freedom actually occur? Or, can it occur? Another notion in this essay is the reaffirmation of Paul's anthropology not being really soul versus body, but body as a whole, entire unit seeking liberation from this human condition of bondage. And, Fisher argues convincingly that transcendence is a real 'difficulty' for Theravāda Buddhism. Obviously, this is a gulf that Mahāyāna sought to fill with the notion of divine saviors, but this is beyond the scope of this essay. This article is well reasoned and it is with pleasure that the editor has been able to include it in this volume. Knowing the essayist for many years, it is my personal hope that this leads him to further work in this difficult and thankless area.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

Oneself is one's own protector (refuge); what other protector

(refuge) can there be? With oneself fully controlled, one obtains a protection (refuge) which is hard to gain...! All states (*dhamma*) are without self, when one sees this in wisdom, then he becomes dispassionate towards the painful.

The Dhammapada, 160; 279

A religious statement...includes 1. an awareness of the deficient character in human existence and...2. the means to transform this deficiency.

Frederick J. Streng, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*

### *Bondage As Deficiency*

Buddhism and Christianity share a common perception, in Streng's terms, of "the deficient character in human existence"; for both religious traditions the human condition, apart from illumination or grace, is one of bondage. They differ, to be sure, in their respective accounts of the precise nature and causes of that bondage, and they differ in a more significant way as to the "means to transform this deficiency". In the present essay, it is my intention to illuminate some of the shared perceptions of the human condition between the two religious traditions, and to suggest further some ways in which those shared perceptions are in accord with perceptions held among contemporary social scientists. At the same time, in moving from problem to solution, I intend also to raise the issue of the limits of dialogue by suggesting that in spite of all attempts towards mutual growth and understanding, the issue of transcendence remains a pivotal point of difference which ought not to be obscured by shared perceptions. In less indirect language, the issue is whether salvation, however mediated by the structures of community, ritual, creed, and symbol, is to be understood primarily as one's own achievement or as a gift from a transcendent source, a gift which creates a new self in place of the formerly bound self. The issue takes on additional importance when placed within our contemporary cultural context, a context in which it would seem that a sense of bondage is both a shared understanding and a shared point of revolt or denial.

Before proceeding to such a major task, a word of autobiography may be in order in the context of this collection of essays

known as *The Cross and the Lotus*. My primary understanding of Buddhism is that of an educated generalist, trained in systematic and philosophical theology but not explicitly in the field of comparative religions. Therefore I shall not pretend here that my presentation of "the Buddhist position" represents a definitive scholarly consensus on 'Archaic Buddhism', but must remain dependent on those English language sources such as Conze (1951, 1967), Rahula (1959), Robinson and Johnson (1977), and Burt (1955) for a general view. Although I have attempted to avoid the pitfall of arguing with a straw person of my own composition, I would ask my readers to take what is said with the charity appropriate to that shown to any scholar of one relation seeking to understand another. My aim here is to suggest a point which the Christian faith may wish to raise for Buddhism, open always to corrections which may be offered by those of deeper understanding and more scholarly exposure to the varieties of the Buddhist traditions.

### *Bondage and Revolt As Contemporary Cultural Phenomena*

Before turning to the explicit understandings of human bondage offered by classical Buddhist and Christian visions, it is important to stress the cultural context within which such an investigation occurs. On the one hand, even the most casual perusal of the history of the natural and social sciences from the 19th century to the present suggests a growing consensus towards determinism in one form or the other. Given the premise of universal causation and the scientific imperative to reduce complex phenomena to causal laws or events, this trend should not be surprising. The combined effect of work begun by Darwin and Freud and carried through to contemporary research in sociology suggests a picture of the individual human organism as the product of unconscious forces, genetic drives, and the principle of natural selection. At the same time, the cumulative effect of social, historical, economic and political theories from Marx to the present provides a parallel picture of individuals as given identity and action possibilities from a complex of external forces, including language, class, and socially determined roles, as well as the broader forces of historical epochs and common cultural assumptions. Existentialist revolts against the resulting conflation of these pictures, from Nietzsche to Sartre, have been more of the nature of literary

protest than of sustained dialogue with the picture and successful critique of its pervasive arguments.

Yet at the same time, in spite of this apparently widespread cultural wisdom which would picture the human person as less agent than result, there is widespread evidence for a revolt against what "everyone knows". Peter Berger, for example (1967, 1973), having traced the collapse of a shared "sacred canopy" of religious meaning within our culture, has also produced a picture of "homeless minds" seeking meaning in private lives and in the articulation of "life-plans", as if these plans could somehow substitute for the loss of a sense of common destiny and purpose in the religious realm. Philip Rieff (1966) likewise produces a picture of our culture as one dominated by the "triumph of the therapeutic", a picture which suggests self-actualization apart from all connection with communities of concern as the current telos of the intellectually aware. Even Christopher Lasch (1979), who has no sympathy with Rieff's optimism about "the therapeutic", agrees that ours is an inwardly-directed culture of narcissism, in which a loss of any sense of common purpose has been followed by a heightening of the pursuit of value in the personal sphere. Together, these and other analysts of our contemporary culture suggest a fundamental ambivalence. On the one hand, the determinism implicit in many biological and social scientific models of the self seems to have become common currency. On the other hand, in spite of, or perhaps because of this determinism, there seems to be an equally strong denial of it in attempts to create meaning externally through life-plans and/or internally through various therapies and strategies of self-actualization.

From the perspective of the Christian tradition, one could suggest that this ambivalence simply confirms the general human resistance to the Christian doctrine of sin as an explanation for behavior. Although it is clear that one can no longer assume the interiorization of this doctrine as an explanation for behavior, it seems equally clear that the secular correlative to it, determinism, is also difficult to accept. Whatever the cause for the ambivalence the fact of it can establish a context in which to re-examine the traditional messages of the two religious visions under discussion concerning human bondage.

### *The Images of Bondage*

The primal cause of human bondage in Buddhism is ignorance (*avijjā*), and specifically ignorance about the three characteristics of existence, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and no-self (*anattā*). Although it is desire (*taṇhā*), and the resulting appetites and attachments to which desire leads which produce the misery attendant on human life, desire is itself the result of ignorance of the true nature of things. So long as this ignorance is not overcome, both by right concentration and morality, as well as by the right wisdom about reality, one will continue to find himself caught in the universal process of *Kamma* (Sanskrit: *Karma*) and its attendant results of suffering and rebirth.

According to Kalupahana (1976), the central doctrine discovered by the Buddha is in fact nothing other than his understanding of causation, expressed in the following formula:

When this is present, that comes to be;  
 from the arising of this, that arises.  
 When this is absent, that does not come to be;  
 on the cessation of this, that ceases.

As presented by Kalupahana, this doctrine proposes four characteristics of causation: (1) objectivity (*tathatā*), (2) necessity (*avita-thatā*), (3) invariability (*anannathatā*), and (4) conditionality (*idappaccayatā*). Kalupahana suggests that this doctrine provides the Buddha's response to the views of the Substantialists, who accepted the reality of a permanent *ātman* or self; to the views of the Naturalists, who denied the existence of the self and proposed, like the Stoics, a concept of 'inherent nature' (*svabhāva*) to explain physical and human events; and to the views of the Jainas who attempted to combine both of the other views, (1976, Kalupahana, pp. 26, 27). Without the fourth aspect of causation, conditionality, which Kalupahana discusses at length and to which we shall return, the human condition would seem to be totally determined by the effects of past karmic action. Thus, apart from the middle Path, the human condition would seem to be one of inevitable suffering due to a persistent desire for life, and an equally persistent desire to avoid death and seek for such gratifications as may be had within this world.

In Paul's anthropology, the metaphors and images differ sharply, yet the common theme of bondage is present. According to

Paul, the human moral agent, apart from grace, is under the triple bondage of law (*Torah*) which demands total obedience, sin (*hamartia*) which as an integral reality makes such obedience impossible, and therefore also—and decisively—of death which is the “natural” result of human failure to obey the law. All of this is well known, and requires no further comment.

What is not as well known, however, is the extent to which Paul’s anthropology shares, with the Buddha’s anthropology, an understanding of the self as *anattā*! The reasons for this lie less in the apostle’s language, which borrows heavily from prevailing philosophical metaphors for the person (for example the discussion in Romans 7:22 of an ‘inmost self’ subject to the power of sin which yet has delight in the will of God), than in the traditional interpretation of anthropology initiated by Augustine, Origen and other Christian Platonists. Augustine’s plea, in the *Soliloquies*, to know nothing but God and the soul, has cast a long shadow on Christian thinking about the self!

Recent Biblical scholarship, by contrast has shown that Paul’s concept of death and resurrection, anchored in the Christ event, is incompatible with the Greek belief in an immortal soul (Stendahl, 1965). More specifically, Ernst Käsemann (1971) has demonstrated with some precision that Paul’s familiar contrast between spirit (*pneuma*) and flesh (*sarx*) has nothing to do with the familiar Neoplatonic or Gnostic concept of a pure spirit trapped in an impure body which is viewed as the cause of all evils. Paul rather picks up traditional Jewish usage :

In Greek, flesh is a substance which one can *have* but not *be*, let alone be possessed by; whereas in the Old Testament and pre-Philonic Judaism flesh denotes the creature that perishes, but is not a hostile, active power, opposed *per se* to the divine Spirit and struggling against it. (Käseman, 1971, p. 26)

Paul’s concern, by contrast with prevalent dualistic notions of the self, was for the whole person, and the person, for Paul, is “always himself in his particular world; his being is open towards all sides and is always set in a structure of solidarity” (Käseman, 1971, p. 22). Indeed, the central metaphor for Paul is that of the body, a term which suggests no separate soul or spirit apart from the total context of a world, but rather a participation in a “sphere of sovereignty whether under the insignia of creation,

the insignia of sin, or the insignia of the redemption which can be experienced today as well as that which is to come.” (Käsemann, 1971, 27-28)

The attempt to establish oneself as an independent entity apart from the world, in Paul’s view, is the major manifestation of sin, and an ontological as well as an empirical impossibility. One is never a self apart from a world—the only question for Paul is: to which world does one belong?

It should be evident, then, that both Paul and the Buddha begin with an understanding of the human condition as one of bondage. Indeed, to the extent that the desire for independent and eternal being is imaged as the major human problem, both agree as to the common reality. Nor is this all. Paul would agree further that apart from the message of salvation, humankind is ignorant of its true status, and condemned to the consequences of that ignorance. The differences are not over the problematic of the human condition, but over the possibility and the means of transforming it.

### *Images of Transformation*

Neither Paul nor the Buddha would deny the importance of mediating structures of community for individual salvation. The Three Refuges common to all Buddhists (Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha) suggest this from the Buddhist perspective. Whether one stands within the Theravāda tradition, in which the goal is *nibbāna* (Skr. *nirvāṇa*) as an arhat, or in the Mahāyāna tradition, in which the goal is the status of a compassionate Bodhisattva, it is clear that the mediating role of the community is essential. To be sure, in the Theravāda tradition it is stressed repeatedly that however important the *dhamma* and its institutional vehicle may be, illumination is ultimately one’s own work, as the passage from the *Dhammapada* cited at the beginning of this article suggests. I shall leave it to specialists to argue whether or to what extent this central insight is diminished in Mahāyāna sects such as Pure Land, in which it would seem that faith is more important than individual work. I will assume here that even in such forms, individual assent and insight remain central. The question then arises: if there is no self, how is this insight achieved?

It is clear, in the first place, that the achievement of insight is not the work of a self. As Conze notes (1962): “Our responsible

actions are not the works of a 'self', but of the constituents of the fourth skandha" (karmic dispositions, or *saṃskārāḥ*). In Buddhism, or at least in archaic Buddhism, the central insight does not concern a transformed identity, but rather the understanding that there is no permanent identity to be in bondage to *karma*. It is this realization which causes an end to attachments and desires in the present, and an end to rebirth in future lives. As Kalupahana suggests:

According to the causal process it would seem that development of right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which would replace ignorance (*avijjā*), and the elimination of craving (*taṇhā*), which results in nongrasping (*anupādāna*), would put a halt to this process of becoming.

The problem is that given either the classical Upanishadic or the Buddhist understanding of *karma*, the development of right understanding would seem impossible. If causation is objective, necessary and inevitable, it is hard to see how or to what extent it can also be conditional, how it can allow for the freedom required to break through the determinism which binds that which is bound to *saṃsāra*. In an important citation from the *Anguttara-nikāya*, Kalupahana seeks to show the Buddhist solution to this apparent impasse:

...the Buddha says that if a person were to maintain that "just as this man does a deed, so does he experience its consequences," then the living of the holy life would be rendered meaningless, for there would be no opportunity for the complete destruction of suffering. But if one accepts the theory that "just as this man does a deed whose consequences would be experienced in a certain way (literally, 'a deed whose consequences would be experienced in a certain way'), so does he experience its consequences," then the religious life would be meaningful and there will be opportunity for the complete destruction of suffering. The distinction drawn here is clear: In the first case, there is a complete *determinism* between *karma* and consequence; in the second, recognition of the circumstances in which the action is committed, and so on, makes the effect *conditional* upon the circumstances.

Conze makes substantially the same point, albeit with less techni-



cal precision, when he suggests that “The Buddhist doctrine of the multiplicity of conditions seems to make a decision on the ‘freedom of the will’ unnecessary. If the total number of conditions is unlimited, and most of them are unknown, it is impossible to say which condition of necessity brings about which event.” (1962, p. 146)

These arguments are designed to show that one need not postulate a substantialist theory of the self, or even a Cartesian “ghost in the machine”, in order to make sense of the concept of moral responsibility for action. Even if, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as “own being (*svabhāva*), one can speak of responsibility as a relationship within a nexus of causation. But none of this really meets the central problem of how to account for a break-through such as is alleged to have been achieved by the Buddha, or such as is alleged to be possible for those who follow the Eight-Fold Path in his name. At least in archaic Buddhism, there is no transcendent source which breaks through the nexus of causation to present novel possibilities. Indeed, it is difficult to account for novelty at all within the classical understanding of *karma* and karmic processes. Although Buddhists believe *that* such novelty occurred in the life of Siddhārtha Gotama, and can occur in the meditation of the arhat, references to a “multiplicity of conditions” does not really resolve the problem of *how* such novelty can occur. By contrast, early Christianity in the person of Paul attempts to provide such a resolution.

Paul, no less than the Buddha, manifests a continual concern for the organization of the empirical community he names the “Body of Christ” or “the people of God”, and extensive sections of his authentic epistles are dedicated to issues of organization, polity, and moral behavior within the context of the community. He also shares with the Buddha a functionalist understanding of the community’s role—but there are levels of functioning.

One function of the redeemed community does have to do with the passing on of right teaching, a clear analogy to a major function of the *Saṅgha*. Even this function, however, is differently understood by Paul than by other writers in the New Testament. Where the Johannine literature shows a consuming preoccupation with continuing to bring to mind the words and deeds of Jesus as Logos made flesh, or where the synoptic traditions are preoccupied with Jesus’ preaching in Parables, Paul’s concern

lies less with preservation of what Jesus said and did during his earthly ministry than in the proclamation of his sacrificial death and resurrection. In Bultmann's well-known phrase, in Paul as in John, the proclaimer becomes the proclaimed. The only basis for a really strong analogy with the Buddhist Saṅgha in Pauline thought would rest upon Paul's parenthetical discussions of the church as a people of God, where the image builds parallels between Moses as the founder of one community and Jesus as the founder of another. Even here, however, most of the references are critical ones, and in the Pauline context it is evident that the image of a "people of God" is used primarily in negation of Jewish claims rather than constructively to found the identity of a new religious group.

Paul is not primarily concerned with the church *per se* as a religious group at all! Rather, as Käsemann (1971) argues, Paul is:

Only interested in it insofar as it is the means whereby Christ reveals himself on earth and becomes incarnate in the world through his Spirit. The human body is the necessity and reality of existential communication; in the same way, the church appears as the possibility and reality of communication between the risen Christ and our world, and hence is called his body.

Unlike the deutero-Pauline literature of Ephesians and Colossians, or the liberal theological tradition inaugurated by Schleiermacher, there seems to be little interest for Paul in the concept of the church as the means by which Christ's teaching is prolonged, as if the church somehow replaced or substituted for the presence of its absent Lord. "...according to Paul it is the risen Lord alone who confers the spirit, grants the sacraments and, through spirit and sacraments, incorporates believers in his body. The church is the place of his presence only insofar as the spirit remains the medium of that presence" (Käsemann, 1971). As I have argued elsewhere, (Fisher, 1976), there is a clear sense in which a Pauline Christology can account for the abiding power of the Christian community only by reference to the continued and active life of the Risen Lord in three connected senses: as present with the Father, as present to the community in its corporate acts of worship, and as present in the lives of the members of the body who respond to the Lord's offer of obedience.

What happens in the context of the Body of Christ, according

to Paul, is a double event of death and rebirth. One cannot read the Pauline literature, especially his discussion of baptism in Romans 6 and 7, without understanding the reality of the death of the self as a central Pauline conviction. Unless there is a real, total, utter annihilation of the old self, there can be no birth of a new self, a self which is a social rather than an individual reality. As John Cobb suggests:

For Paul the constituting agent of his personal "I" was the salvation occurrence of Jesus Christ. Paul experienced himself as most fully what he will to be as the conformation to Christ constituted his personal selfhood. Thus all the conflicting fields of force emanating from his own past, his body, and his world were experienced as alien to what he truly was, namely a bearer of Christ's life. As a bearer of Christ's life, he was open to being continuously creatively transformed by the Logos. (1975, p. 12)

To be sure, Cobb also notes that this radical sense of Christ as the constitutive center of a new self did not become normative for other New Testament authors or for the emerging tradition. The Pauline model does, however, suggest a necessary point for those concerned with theological anthropology: to the degree that bondage is pictured with a maximum degree of intensity, as in Paul, there can be no easy move from that reality to a new creative alternative without intervention from beyond the causal chain. Paul's response to the experienced determination of bondage to law, sin, and death was the experienced determination of his life by the person of the Risen Lord.

This drastic solution has nowhere more vividly been portrayed than in Luther's famous analogy of man as a horse ridden by either God or the devil, and one could say that this sense of double bondage remains a central preoccupation for all Pauline Christianity. This does not mean that one need remain fixed within the limitations of Paul's solution in order to appreciate the full force of the human problem as Paul understood it. What it does mean is that the "easier" solutions of the problem, proposed by thinkers such as Pelagius and Erasmus, may not be as viable as some moderns believe them to be. The problem remains that of understanding the possibility of freedom within the context of an understanding of bondage.

One such proposal has been that offered by process theology. Where Paul and the Pauline tradition have understood the divine sovereignty as absolute and all-determining, a process theological model of the divine power understands that power as both the basis for relevant novelty and as operating persuasively, through attraction rather than through compulsion. In anthropology, process theology locates freedom within the ultimate constituents of reality. All actual entities, including those which make up the historical thread of entities known as the person, are said to be free in two ways: free to determine what elements of the past world shall be positively included in the constitution of the entity, and free to determine with what intensities of feeling those elements are to be included. Cobb's *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, as a representative of this genre, offers one example which has the merit of sustained dialogue with Buddhism.

Here, however, it is not my concern to present an alternative proposal for understanding the relationship between freedom and bondage, but to stress the central difference between the Buddhist and Christian understandings of the problem and its solution. For even in the process theological model suggested above, there is a strong element of transcendence involved. God transcends the world, in process thought, in two ways. As the primordial ground of possibility, God provides the sole basis for relevant novelty, containing as he does the infinitude of possibilities or eternal objects. As consequent, God receives the totality of what has been achieved in the world and transforms that achievement into a maximal intensity of feeling, bringing good out of what may have been experienced as suffering or evil. At least within most process theological writing, neither the provision of novelty as an aim for actual entities nor the saving transformation of their achievement can be accounted for without an understanding of God. One of the major values inherent in a process theological perspective is the degree to which that perspective makes talk of transcendence meaningful and possible.

This is not to suggest that talk about transcendence is easy, or that it need necessarily follow the conceptual pattern offered by process theology exclusively. Recent research in parable, myth, and metaphor suggests alternative formulations for the imaging of transcendence. No single formulation seems able to resolve all of the problems, however, given the reductionistic and secular-

ist context of our culture, and one can understand why the "Death of God" theologians were moved towards a secular version of the Gospel. Buddhism, by contrast, seems to have no necessary commitment to talk about transcendence, as Kalupahana's essay and other proposals to talk of Buddhism as a therapy suggest. In such a situation, it is not hard to understand or to appreciate why Buddhism is growing in the West.

The conviction out of which this essay has been written, however, is that in spite of all of the difficulties of contemporary talk about transcendence, Christian theologians are committed to make such an attempt. The alternative has been clearly mapped out, with different emphasis, by both Peter Berger and Robert N. Bellah. Berger has suggested, until recently, that the future of Christianity lies in the status of a cognitive minority, one willing to accept a certain degree of isolation and social ostracism for the sake of maintaining its classical claims in the face of modern relativism and secularism. Such a position seems to amount to nothing more or less than a schizophrenic posture, one which requires its adherents to live simultaneously in two radically different and contradictory worlds, in one of which meaning is given by a transcendent source while in the other meaning is strictly the creation of private affirmation. A study of the rise of religious fanaticism in the West suggests that such a solution is bogus, and, in the long term, impossible to maintain: sooner or later most human beings will opt for simplicity over complexity and jettison that part of their vision which receives the least social support.

Bellah, by contrast, has raised what seems to be the essential issue for this essay. In his discussion of "Transcendence in Contemporary Piety", Bellah suggests that "Religious symbolism is necessitated precisely by the inadequacy of all partial symbolisms. It has its irreducible *sui generis* nature. Without it man would not be human. We believe in it seriously, we believe in it willingly, we believe in it if we follow (Wallace) Stevens, knowing it to be a fiction" (1970). Having argued thus, however, Bellah goes on to ask "whether the growth of consciousness itself can be expected to eliminate the need for religious symbols, the functions of transcendence." Although Bellah provides no final or definitive solution to this issue, he suggests the importance for theology of attending to ongoing work in the social sciences.

It would be inappropriate here to discuss at adequate length

the evidence for Bellah's suggestion about religious symbolism. Here we shall assume its cogency and note the issue posed by the reference to Wallace Steven's concept of a "supreme fiction"; the parallel notion would be Kant's concept of acting "as if". It is obvious that it is possible for human beings to plan, act, and live with some form of awareness of the fictive status of their belief systems. As Bellah notes, however, a theory of religious symbolism that recognizes its fictional quality "can no longer differentiate between religion and the highest and most serious forms of art"; or, we would add, the highest and most serious forms of therapy. The problem is whether, given the nature of bondage as portrayed in our two religious visions or their contemporary secular equivalents, such belief in likely stories can be sustained without any hints of transcendence? My suggestion is that such is not the case. Absent some reference beyond the empirical, religious reference systems face the same destiny as those earlier reference systems we now designate "primitive mythologies". One might add that the first victim of the lapse of such reference systems may well be the kinds of individual values which such reference systems in their historical development have maintained.

Honest dialogue between alternative religious visions ought to begin with a mutual willingness to learn from one another and to search for such identities of understanding as are available to visions derived from different cultures and histories. If such dialogue is to continue, however, there must be an equal willingness of the visions to confront one another in difference as well as identity. If our contemporary cultural context has made it difficult to believe that there is, as Paul believed, a second self given in the Body of Christ, it ought at least to be clear that such a belief sharply differentiates the Christian understanding of salvation from that of archaic Buddhism. Both visions recognize, in Steng's words, a deficiency in human existence, an awareness shared with contemporary culture, but they differ in important ways on the means of transforming the deficiency.

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# On Temptation and Evil

by

Travis L. Rogers, Jr.

Editor's introduction:

Mr. Travis L. Rogers, Jr. lends insight into one Christian-Buddhist parallel, namely the "temptation" event. Both Christ and Buddha became paradigms of faith for their later followers: Christ by his death and resurrection and Buddha by his enlightenment. But prior to this, both experienced temptation in one massive, concentrated onslaught from the Evil One. The question appears moot as to whether the evil comes from inside and is projected outwardly, or comes from outside to begin with. Either way evil must be acknowledged and defeated by anyone who is seriously on the path of spiritual perfection. Rogers asks his readers to look, not at all the particulars of the two religions in their later developed and confused forms, but rather to examine the founders. And, we look not at any primordial form of teaching, but at the people involved: Jesus the Christ and Gautama the Buddha.

## I

An intriguing study, although admittedly beset with difficulties beyond the superficial, in the Buddhist-Christian area of dialogue is that concerning temptation and evil, the natures and roles of these two. And, there is a striking similarity in the temptation sagas of Gautama the Buddha and Jesus the Christ.<sup>1</sup> The lessons learned by these two were passed on to their disciples and their remembered lives now serve as paradigms, as religious ideals to be imitated.

The temptation story of Buddha begins with him sitting under the *Bodhi* (illumination) tree where he has vowed not to move until he has attained Enlightenment. Previous to this scene, he had already left his father's palace, left his wife Yaśodharā, and son, Rāhula ("the fetter"). Aśvagoṣa relates a speech made by

1. Henceforth, the Buddha to whom we refer will be the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama.

the new mendicant, justifying his departure into asceticism which became eventually the “middle path” as fidelity to a higher *dharma* (duty, norm). After he had left the palace he had studied under Ārāḍa Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra and mastered their disciplines quickly, but, later, he “forsook the dharma of the two teachers because it did not conduce to ‘aversion, dispassion, cessation, tranquility, superknowledge, enlightenment, and *nirvāṇa*’.”<sup>2</sup>

Following his period of learning, so the story goes, Gautama entered a period of austerities, sojourning eastward to Uruvela. Here he fasted in a most severe manner, induced trances, and performed other austerities. He was then joined by five other ascetics. He continued on in these austerities with the others until six years after the “Great Renunciation” (i.e., his departure from the palace). After this period of time he realized that this way did not lead to *mokṣa* (liberation) and the sublime knowledge. He recalled a moment in his childhood that he had sat under a tree and spontaneously had entered into the first *dhyāna* (stage of meditative trance). So, Gautama again sat under a sacred tree, this time called the Bodhi tree. Then a maid of Sujātā’s, who took a yearly offering of rice milk to this tree, came here and mistook the Bodhisattva for the spirit of the tree. She reported the incident to Sujātā, who then came and offered food to Gautama. The five mendicants who had been with Gautama left him in revulsion when he accepted the food. They declared that he had given up spiritual striving. But, the Bodhisattva abandoned his austerities when he realized that there was absolutely nothing wrong with happiness, and that health was necessary to pursue wisdom. Hence, came the central doctrine of his *Dharma*: the “Middle Path”. One must reject the two extremes of mortification and sensual indulgence, and accept happiness as good.<sup>3</sup>

He sat under the Bodhi tree, not moving, until he would later obtain Enlightenment. But, prior to his obtaining Enlightenment, Gautama dreamed five dreams that he was about to become a Buddha or Enlightened One. He had these dreams on the fourteenth day of Vaiśākha (April-May). But, fearing the loss of Gautama from Death’s realm, Māra, the Evil One (also called

2. Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion* (Encino, CA: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1977), p. 25.

3. *Ibid*, p. 27.

Namuci, the name of a Vedic demon) besieged the Bodhisattva. Māra's first action was to try and seduce Gautama by means of his three daughters: Discontent, Delight, and Desire. Each, in turn, tried to sway the Bodhisattva from his vow. Each one failed. Then, Māra deployed his host of demons, shrieking, "seize him, drag him, slay him, good luck to the troops of Māra". But the Bodhisattva was protected by good *karma* (accumulated religious merit) and *maitrī* (compassion). Māra's army, so well arrayed, was hurled back. The tempter then invoked his own merit, wanting to convert it to magic in order to topple the Bodhisattva. Māra called on his troops to witness and testify to his merit. But the Bodhisattva, having no witness for his superior merit, stroked his head thrice and called upon the earth as his only witness. As Gautama touched the earth, the ground rumbled and gave a thunderous reply. Māra's troops fled in total disorder. The good *karma* of the Bodhisattva had enabled him to repel Māra, the force of evil.

Many stories are told of Buddha's karmic deeds of previous lives, while he was bound still in *samsāra* (the closed cycle of re-birth). And, this *karma* is described by the venerable U. Thittile as: "a man's actions do not spring causeless into existence, nor his decisions that produce the actions. They are rooted in surrounding circumstances and, most importantly, in a series of thoughts, decisions, and actions stretching chainwise, with absolutely no breaks, into the infinite past of infinite previous lives...his states of mind, his emotions, his moral character, are thus affected."<sup>4</sup> Or, as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* iv:5: "As one acts, as one behaves, so does one become." And, Raimundo Panikkar puts it: "To discover how karma works, how it acts, is the acme of wisdom; it is realization."<sup>5</sup>

But, to return to our story of Buddha's enlightenment—by dawn the Bodhisattva, having ascended the four stages of *dhyāna* (meditative trance), attained illumination and uttered this *udāna*:

"Through worldly round at many births  
I ran my course unceasingly,

4. Winston L. King, *Buddhism and Christianity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 42.

5. Raimundo Panikkar, "Action and Contemplation as categories of understanding" in *Contemplation and Action in World Religions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), p. 94.

seeking the maker of the house :  
 Painful is birth again and again.  
 House builder! I behold thee now,  
 Again a house thou shalt not build;  
 All thy rafters are broken now  
 The ridge-pole also is destroyed;  
 My mind, its elements dissolved  
 The end of cravins has attained.”<sup>6</sup>

At hearing this, Māra knew that Gautama had become the Buddha.

Having lost his hold on the Buddha, Māra attempted to stop the threat of Buddha’s influence through teaching (*dharma*). Buddha had discovered that, in this phenomenal world, there is suffering, there is a cause of suffering, there is a release from suffering, and there is a way of release known as the eightfold path. These four statements are called the Four Noble Truths and form the basis of the Buddha’s teaching. Having been released, Buddha was now ready to die and leave *saṃsāra* for *nirvāṇa*. This was the way Māra would have wished it. But, in his supreme compassion, the Buddha decided to delay his entrance into *nirvāṇa* so that he could perpetuate his message of deliverance. From this wonderful act of selfless love later Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the Bodhisattva ideal, shifting the ideal from the *Arahant* of Theravāda Buddhism. The *Arahant* is the sage who is “solitary, self-contained, and self-dependent. He journeys ‘lonely as a rhinoceros’ upon the religious quest.” The Bodhisattva, on the other hand, is one who has attained the sublime knowledge of release (*mokṣa*), but chooses to remain in the material world in order to aid other sincere seekers. While the Theravādins admire such compassion, their primary goal is personal liberation.

## II

The account of the “Temptation of Jesus” began after he was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist.

“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,  
 returned from the Jordan, and

6. Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), p. 75.

was led by the Spirit for forty days  
in the wilderness, tempted by the devil.  
And He ate nothing in those days...”<sup>7</sup>

So, too, Jesus began the period of his temptation by a period of austerities, in this case: forty days of wandering in the desert with a complete fast. It was by using Jesus’ hunger that Satan, the Evil One, began his assault. Satan taunted Jesus’ divinity by saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” Jesus replies, according to our source, by quoting *Deuteronomy* 8:3, saying, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus rebuffed, the Devil soon tried again. Taking Jesus to the summit of a high mountain and showing Him a panoramic view of the kingdom of the world and the splendour of it all, Satan offered,

“To you I will give all this authority  
and their glory: for it has been delivered  
to me, and I give it to whom I will.  
If you, then, will worship me,  
it shall be yours.”<sup>9</sup>

Again, in response to this temptation, Jesus quoted *Deuteronomy* 6:13,14, saying, “It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.”<sup>10</sup> Again defied, Satan returns to taunting, perhaps sneering at, Jesus’ divinity. Taking Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem, he said to him (quoting from *Psalms* 91:11, 12):

“If you are the Son of God, throw  
yourself down from here; for it is  
written, ‘He will give His angels  
charge over you, to guard you’, And  
‘on their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”<sup>11</sup>

7. The Gospel according to Luke 4:1, 2; unless otherwise stated, Biblical passages will be taken from the Revised Standard Version.

8. *Ibid*, 4:4.

9. *Ibid*, 4:6, 7.

10. *Ibid*, 4:8.

11. *Ibid*, 4:10, 11.

Now Jesus changes his rebuttal. He rises in authority and power, declaring, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."<sup>12</sup> Satan, no match, flees until "an opportune time".

In my opinion, the number of days in the venture of Jesus in the wilderness is significant in his whole life and ministry. The number forty is symbolic of separation, almost as a rite of passage. The Dispensation of Conscience ended when Noah and his family were saved from the flood that rained for forty days<sup>13</sup>; following this was the beginning of the Dispensation of Human Government<sup>14</sup>. The Dispensation of Promise ended when Moses spent forty days atop the mountain during the Theophany at Mt. Sinai,<sup>15</sup> beginning the Dispensation of Law<sup>16</sup>. So the forty-day period of austerities and temptation of Jesus can be seen as the conclusion to the period of Mosaic Law. His forty days of ministry after His resurrection is the beginning of the Dispensation of Grace. More importantly, the period of temptation is a rite of passage in his own personal life and ministry. We see Jesus transform from the carpenter's son to the Christ, the anointed One.

The "opportune time" that Satan had awaited came at Gethsemane. Although the Four Evangelists do not mention Satan, Christ was, more likely than not, aware of his presence. At Gethsemane, Jesus confronted the choices similar to those given Buddha five-hundred years earlier, in this case: whether to live or die. For the Gospel of Jesus to be made known, he knew that he must die. Had Jesus not died, and death not been conquered, then the incarnation would have been of no avail. The crucifixion and resurrection were integral in the cosmic conquest of Christ. The necessity of his death became central to all later Christian tradition.

### III

In both the Buddhist and Christian traditions similarities in the way the temptation is handled can be found. There is, especially in Buddhism, the internal, personal, source of temptation. The inherent cause of suffering (*dukkha*) and source of temptation is

12. *Ibid*, 4:12 which quotes Deuteronomy 6:16.

13. Genesis 7:17.

14. Patricia B. Gruitts, *Understanding God* (Detroit: Whitaker Books, 1973), pp. 60-63.

15. Exodus 24:18.

16. Gruitts, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

found in those sensual desires of life: *taṇhā* (craving), *trṣṇā* (thirst), and *kāma* (desire). These cause men and women to love life and, ultimately to remain locked within *samsāra*. The result of these desires is traced in the twelve stages of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* (conditioned genesis):

1. As a result of ignorance, volitions;
2. As a result of volitions, consciousness;
3. As a result of consciousness, mental and physical phenomena;
4. As a result of those phenomena, the six faculties (five senses plus mind);
5. As a result of the six faculties, contact (engaging with the world);
6. As a result of contact, feeling;
7. As a result of feeling, craving;
8. As a result of craving, clinging;
9. As a result of clinging, the process of becoming;
10. As a result of becoming, again becoming;
11. As a result of again becoming, arise;
12. decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering.<sup>17</sup>

Christianity concurs, "...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death."<sup>18</sup> Hence, we find agreement, with more emphasis from the Buddhists, on the temptations of personal lusts and desires. Yet for the Christian the primary root of temptation lies within an external force: that of Satan (*Māra* for the Buddhist). But several viewpoints may be taken in regard to Satan/*Māra*.

The first, and most easily accepted viewpoint on the Evil One by the Buddhists, is that temptations are perceivable projections of the unconscious. Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson put forth that as "the seeker...sets to work...this conjures up the demons of fear from the unconscious. All the habit-hardened dispositions protest against their coming destruction".<sup>19</sup> The New Testament tells of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness as "he was

17. John Bowkar, *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 246.

18. The Letter of James 1:14, 15.

19. Richard Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

with the wild beasts".<sup>20</sup> Perhaps these "wild beasts" are His desires screaming out as He subjugates the will of His carnal body. Modern theology tends to find this a most palatable suggestion.

A second viewpoint would place Satan/Māra as nothing more than "symbols". As symbols, they are functional (i.e., "they work", following here the thinking of G.W. Houston's article on Mandalas, op. cit.). As Paul Ricoeur would say, "*le symbole donne à penser*". He further comments that man testifies to the existential reality of evil by means of this symbol and therefore there is a reference (at least symbolically) to the existence of evil. Hence, evil is real. As G. W. Houston states: "a symbol...is the reality".<sup>21</sup> Thus, it matters little if something exists "in fact" because as a symbol it will exist—therefore, it is.

The third viewpoint is the traditional Christian viewpoint, although if pressed, modern theologians might give ground. This belief is that of the *reality* of Satan/Māra. Perhaps modern theology has attempted so diligently to soften the dogmatism of the likes of Karl Barth, that it has conceded traditional dogma. As James Lee Beall states, "If he (Satan) can deceive a man into thinking that he (Satan) does not exist, that the idea of a devil is a lot of superstitious nonsense, he has blinded that mind in a very vulnerable area."<sup>22</sup>

For some Buddhists, according to Robinson and Johnson, Māra is only a myth. Yet Ricoeur's thought says that myths *testify to the reality*. The problem of a "just" God, apart from evil became a reality for many thinkers during the period of the Lisbon earthquake. How could God allow such evil, many wondered? C. G. Jung suggested that God is the source of good and evil; that Jesus is the right hand of God and Satan, his left.<sup>23</sup> But, how did Lucifer become "evil" if evil had not previously existed? Again Ricoeur quotes Kant that "this inclination to evil...must

20. The Gospel according to Mark 1:13.

21. G.W. Houston, "Mandalas: Ritual and Functional", *The Tibet Journal*, I, No. 2 (1976), Dharamsala, India, p. 4.

22. James Lee Beall, *The Devices of Satan* (Detroit: Evangel Press, 1975), p. 4.

23. For further study of Jung's position see C.G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, pp. 365-470, vol. 11 of the Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1958.



be imputed to us".<sup>24</sup> Paul Tillich feels that evil is in God "potentially, not actually", and that "evil must be potential in the divine ground (God); otherwise it never could become actual".<sup>25</sup> Therefore, even though evil finds its source in the potential evil in God, there is no actual evil in God.

Unavoidably, the question will continue, What is evil and how is it made manifest? For Paul Ricoeur evil is a "violated relation", which he discusses in *La Symbolique du mal*, which is volume two, part two of *Philosophie de la volonte*.<sup>26</sup> He concurs with Augustine that evil is not a harmful substance but a *defectus*. It is a violation of two relationships, first with God. Sinful man has "forgotten God" and "gone away from God". The original departure was, of course, found in the Garden of Eden. Then and now man has had the choice of obedience to God or disobedience. The second violation with which the Buddhists may agree, is his relationship with himself. Ricoeur analyzes that it is man's "disproportion" with himself that breeds moral evil. Paul Tillich once explained to Hisamatsu Shin'ichi that evil is "the acting against one's essential being".<sup>27</sup> Thus, whether one is led away by personal lust or by Satan/Māra as an external, or as a projection, symbol, or reality, evil and sin is a breach of the normal and healthy relationship, and is manifested in many diverse forms.

Perhaps one should use the term *evil passions*. To the Buddhist, this "depicts man's involvement in the passions and bondage to the world which prevents him from attaining the high Buddhist ideals revealed in Śākyamuni...guilt is derived not from a feeling of rejection by a deity, but by a self-rejection".<sup>28</sup>

In Buddhist thought, there are three basic evil roots called *Akuśala hetus*, these are: *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hate), and *moha* (delusion). The Japanese call them *sandoku*, "the three poisons" that

24. Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", trans. Denis Savage, *IPQ*, 2 (1962), 212-213.

25. "Dialogues, East and West", *The Eastern Buddhist*, v. 2 (1972), p. 116.

26. Both volumes of *Philosophie de la volonte* are available in English translation: Volume I, *The Voluntary and Involuntary*, trans. E.V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966); Volume II, part I, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Chicago: Regener, 1965); Volume II, part II, *Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

27. "Dialogues, East and West" *op. cit.*, p. 112.

28. Anthony Bloom, "The Sin of Sin and Guilt and the Last Age in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism," *Numen*, vol. xiv. n. 2 (July, 1967), p. 10.

poison a man's good roots, *akusala cetanā* (bad volition) resulting. Hence, evil is avoided by knowledge and differentiation of actions. Aśoka proclaims in his Pillar Edict III, "...a man must say to himself, 'ferocity, cruelty, anger, arrogance, and jealousy lead to sin; I must not let myself be ruined by these passions'. He must make a clear distinction among actions..."<sup>29</sup>

Evil is also seen through its effects. "One can rightly see a similarity," says Heinrich Dumoulin, "between the suffering (*dukkha*) which...is tantamount to human existence, and the sinful human condition which for Christians results from 'original sin' and personal fault."<sup>30</sup> As the Christian "inherits" the sinful condition, so does the Buddhist "inherit" his suffering according to his *karma*. And, the doctrine of *karma* comes close to St. Paul's words, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."<sup>31</sup> But that suffering is not entirely inclusive of pain and death. As Kant states that pain does not diminish the worth of a person, so does the Buddhist feel that death is no defeat, but, may lead to victory.

However, here let us turn back once more to the temptation stories themselves, here noting more closely the role of evil. Buddha and Jesus both underwent separations. Buddha left his family and his wealth in order to pursue his mission. Jesus seemingly renounced his physical family when he said that those who do his heavenly father's will were his true family. Buddha became separated from his past nature by entering into asceticism and purging himself. Christ abandoned his carnal life at baptism. Both entered into austerities after beginning their mission. Gautama undertook severe fasting for six years in the company of the five mendicants. Christ fasted completely for forty days. As they ended their austere experiences, then the tempters began their assaults. The onslaught of the Evil One is similar in both cases.

Māra dispatched his three "daughters": Discontent, Delight, and Desire to sway the Bodhisattva. The three seductive daughters of Māra are parallel to Satan's devices. These devices have been called "the lust of the flesh", "the lust of the eye", and "the pride of life".<sup>32</sup> And, the Bodhisattva faced Discontent, tired of

29. *The Edicts of Asoka*, ed. N.A. Nikam and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 48.

30. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Christianity Meets Buddhism* (Lasalle, Ill.: Open Court Publ., 1974), p. 121.

31. The Epistle to the Galatians 6:7 (King James Version).

32. From an unpublished sermon by the Reverend Travis L. Rogers, Sr.,

his years of fasting and self-denial, Discontent sought to turn his heart from his destination. Christ was hungered and Satan approached with bread, or the suggestion to make bread. Satan tried to bring discontent into Christ's mind. Discontent at waiting on God, with fasting, with thirst, (the lust of the flesh) yet the Bodhisattva and Christ both quelled these first attacks. Māra's daughter Desire was the next enchantress to try the Bodhisattva. Sensual pleasures she offered, perhaps promises of warmth for his cold limbs. Satan offered Christ a chance to take refuge in the ministering spirits of heaven if he would but cast himself down (the pride of life). Delight promised the weary mendicant happiness, or fame, wealth and things of this world. Satan showed Christ the wealth of the kingdoms (the lust of the eye). Both Buddha and Christ stood firm in refusal. Māra forced the Bodhisattva to present witnesses to his merit and all nature attested to his good *karma*. Christ called upon his divine heritage telling Satan that "you shall not tempt the Lord your God."<sup>33</sup> Both Buddha and Christ were given opportunities of life or death. Both had a chance to abandon their respective missions. But Buddha knew that he must live in order to fulfil his destiny and Christ knew that his way was the way of death.

Evil has played a leading role in the development of the saviours. As Jung said, evil is the "left hand of God". Evil has served as a tool to mould, shape, and prepare the two lords. Without evil, good would lie dormant. It was evil that brought the catalyst for realization to Buddha and Christ of what they were about in this world. Buddha found support of his good *karma* and Christ found support of his divinity in the combat against the tempter. For the good to make itself known in a man, perhaps it must be ignited first by a confrontation with evil. For the Buddha and the Christ to save a world from suffering, they had to experience suffering themselves. As G.W. Houston once explained, "you can not lead someone out of suffering unless you have once suffered yourself".<sup>34</sup> Kierkegaard also proclaimed, "you must suffer!".

In their different ways the two saviours conquered sin, death,

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delivered at Word of Truth Temple, Fort Pierce, Florida, 1975.

33. The Gospel according to Luke 4:12.

34. From an unpublished lecture delivered at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, December 8, 1979. See also, Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1972).

and evil. For Buddha, good cannot overcome evil, nor life death. Victory comes only when one is released by one's own efforts from the battlefield. *Samsāra* abandoned; *nirvāṇa* achieved.

Contrarily, Christ overcame death by resurrection. Life conquered death. He proved, for many, that in him and through him there is liberation from evil. But did he conquer and vanquish evil? Can evil ever be conquered? Paul Tillich offered: "In eternity we anticipate a victory that does not abolish evil, but reduces it to mere potentiality. We can say that in God...evil is conquered not by being annihilated, but by not being actualized. It is actualized in finitude—in the finite world, but not in the infinite ground of being—insofar as we participate in eternity, we are beyond evil." To the Christian neophyte this may stand as a *petra scandali* or serve to diminish hope. But he must realize that although evil is preserved in potential, it is non-existent in the eternal fact.

Through their victories, Buddha and Christ have become religious paradigms. In the life of the Buddhist and Christian alike, the life of their lord is to be emulated. "The Buddha not only taught the saving doctrine but set a powerful example." And "if He (Jesus) was to help man, who is flesh, He had to take upon Himself the whole temptation experience of the flesh." If a Biblical passage may be used to describe the models of Buddha and Christ in temptation, it would be Hebrews 4:15: "...in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin".

As the disciples will follow in temptation, so will they follow in glory. In the *Lotus Sūtra* ix, page 211, Buddha predicts that the disciples before him will become Tathāgata Buddhas. In 1st Peter 2:5 the believers are called a "royal priesthood". Again in the *Lotus Sūtra* viii, p. 200, the monks who stand before Buddha in his honor shall likewise have a part in his realm and shall become "chiefs, supreme among men". Revelation 1:6 states that Christ has made his believers "kings and priests unto God". But the fundamental difference in the disciples' participation in the lord's glory is that the future Tathāgatas will participate in the Buddha knowledge and the Christian will take part in the very life, the very existence of Christ. The Buddhist follows the principle which was demonstrated in Buddha, pointing beyond Buddha to the eternal knowledge. Whereas, the Christian looks beyond doctrine to the person of Christ declaring, "*Ecce homo!*" (Behold the man!).

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2	22	yoga	yogin
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7	12	religions	religion
8	7	destory	destroy
10	7	contact are	contacts were
12	22	Turan	Turfan
12	22	likeOlo n	like Olon
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109	FN line 3	pp. 99-106	pp. 55-63
110	FN 3	Rodrigo, <i>op. cit.</i> pp. 103-104.	"Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Sri Lanka," B & C, pp. 103-104.
113	FN 14 line 1-2	the <i>Journal of International Buddhist Studies</i> , (forthcoming)	<i>Buddhist-Christian Studies</i> , 1983.
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