

THE BUDDHA'S GOSPEL

**A BUDDHIST INTERPRETATION OF JESUS'
WORDS**

Lindsay Falvey

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**Institute for International Development
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DEDICATION

*To Mum -
who*

*by ensuring a Sunday school
education, by indulging a
teenage obsession with the
church, and by providing a book
on comparative religions at a
critical time, stimulated my
sporadic yet life-long search for
life's essence.*

*The world is imprisoned in its own activity,
except when actions are performed as worship of
God. Therefore, you must perform every action
sacramentally and be free from all attachment to
results.*

Krishna to Arjuna in the
Bhagavad-Gita (c.100 BCE-200 CE)

*... simply perceived as all the same,
until investigated,
then they differ, so look again,
see all things integrated.*

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PREFACE

This book is intended for three groups; Western Buddhists, that bulk of West that have no religious affiliation yet know there is something more to life, and Buddhists in Asia who follow the encounter of the dharma with the West. It will be of interest, and most likely criticized by, Christian theologians and even some involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue, for it is not, nor is it intended to be, a novel scholarly work. It is more a means of highlighting the pervasive similarities in the teachings of Jesus and Buddha unprotected by their respective religious institutions. Compiling the book has been extremely beneficial to my own quest, and I earnestly hope that it will likewise be of value to readers.

Why did I undertake such an obscure task? It is hardly a routine subject in my profession of agricultural science! Yet in many ways, my professional and other life has contributed to my interest in the subject through genuine scientific reasoning, as well as though the unsatisfactory nature of the answers provided in popular secular and scientific reasoning, and in conventional Christianity. It began with reading and successively re-reading the words of the 'Q' document, to which I refer extensively in the book, during the same years that I was reading widely on Buddhism – and finding such similarity that I determined to seek more detail. A reappraisal of life stimulated me to pursue this personal project further, and it grew to cover some historical and doctrinal matters in addition to the simple comparison of teachings.

The book is set out in six chapters and an appendix. The first chapter deals with the two great teachers, the Buddha and Jesus, and the emergence of interest in comparing these persons and their teachings as a product of inter-religious dialogue. Chapter 2 briefly charts the process of the work and introduces the documentation of experts that has produced words that may be more readily attributed to Jesus than the many others that surround them in the Gospels, and which fuelled my quest towards a 'personal gospel'. Then follows what I have styled as a Buddhist imitation of Jesus' words, which is my own eclectic representation of the meaning of Jesus' possible words in the hypothetical 'Q' document. This 'Q' document is one theologian's distillation of his own and colleagues' work to compile Jesus' possible words known as the 'Sayings of Jesus', as presented in Chapter 4. The next chapter discusses the implications of the high levels of congruence between the Buddha's and Jesus' teachings and expresses my sentiment that this provides a welcome explanation of the intent of sometimes confused teachings – in this way, for me, this is not just the good news, but better Good News! The final chapter offers a modicum of balance in a Christian interpretation of Buddhism, and introduces some essential aspects of those teachings as they are found in Christianity. An appendix re-presents the Buddhist imitation of Jesus' words as a continuous text.

This presentation of the 'Sayings of Jesus' in Buddhist language began as a personal project for my personal benefit, to reduce logical inconsistencies and to remove cultural biases from texts and interpretations. It has served that purpose well. Sharing it, albeit with trepidation, I acknowledge the almost

certain errors of interpretation from both Christian and Buddhist perspectives. There are also dangers in equating rational concepts across the cultural differences of everyday religion, let alone the inevitability of misinterpreting the allegories of mystical insights. The multi-layered meaning of scriptures, described by Origen in the third century as literal, moral and allegorical, produce numerous permutations of possible commonalities between the religions. Indeed, this is also an area of difference between the religions – Christianity has a tendency to document everything so that there may be ‘an unconscious translation of the inexpressible into familiar symbols’¹ whereas Buddhism, while possibly doing something similar in different cultures within the Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tantric) traditions, primarily concerns itself with personal experience that may vary from person to person. So, the words presented on the following pages are just one possible composite. It has been personally revealing, and in common with all such undertakings, opens new questions, such as the meaning of the central Buddhist concept of interdependence in Christian terms, and the reliance placed on creation in Christianity in place of the causes and conditions of interdependence in Buddhism. Such questions are not elaborated here.

This work has been enhanced by the wise comments of informed colleagues, whom I wish to formally and gratefully acknowledge. In particular, I thank William Johnston, Dharmachari Siladasa, Andrew Liston and Jerry Murray for their sensitive suggestions and corrections. Of course I remain responsible for all remaining errors, but rather than the usual false humility of such acknowledgements, I remind you of the personal nature of this work. This is best expressed in the stoic words of L’Estrange from his, in many ways a relevant bridge between Buddhism and Christianity, *Seneca’s Morals by Way of Abstract*, published in 1673:

‘Some other Man, in my place, would perchance, make you twenty Apologies, for his want of Skill, and Address, in governing this Affair, but these are *Formal*, and *Pedantique Fooleries*: As if any Man that first takes himself for a Coxcomb in his Heart, would afterwards make himself one in Print too. This *Abstract*, such as it is, you are extremely welcome to; and I am sorry it is no better, both for your sakes and my own: for if it were written up to the Spirit of the *Original*, it would be one of the most valuable Presents that ever any private Man bestow’d upon the Publick:

Books, and Dilhes have this Common Fate; there was never any One, of Either of them, that pleas’d All Palates. And, in Truth, it is a Thing as little to be With’d for, as Expected; For, an Universal Applause is at least Two Thirds of a Scandal. So that though I deliver up these Papers to the Prefs, I invite no Man to the Reading of them: And, whosoever Reads and Repents; it is his Own Fault. To Conclude, as I made this Composition Principally for my Self, so it agrees exceedingly Well with My Constitution; and yet, if

¹ Lawrence Cunningham (1992) Page 411.

*any Man has a Mind to take part with me, he has Free Leave, and Welcome. But, let him Carry this Consideration along with him, that He's a very Unmannerly Guest, that presses upon another Bodies Table, and then Quarrels with his Dinner.*²

Also, a word of caution! Before entering this amorphous world where words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and even our imaginings simultaneously have multiple meanings, we do well to recall the compounding compromises of our capabilities to understand such matters that arise from conceptual thought, words themselves and the unknown prejudices of our minds. For example, it is easy to talk and speak of such nouns as 'spirit' and 'god' and to thereby give them credence as realities in our minds – they are not the names of precisely definable realities, they are at best simply words being used as means of conveying an approximation of something. It is for such reasons that all spiritual traditions have used concepts (including the language I use in this work) as well as parables, metaphor, allegory and imagery to convey spiritual truths that are ultimately impossible to represent in non-spiritual communication. We are restricted to an analogue of the message.

I am conscious that we each have our own Path to understanding, which is easily confused by advice from others. For, as Jesus said (see 'Sayings of the Lord Jesus' - Q66, in the chapter 'The Sayings of Jesus')

Stumbling blocks are sure to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes. It would be better for such a one if a great millstone were hung around the neck and that person were cast into the sea than that one of these little ones should be caused to stumble.

Or as Buddhism might teach,

the Path to Insight is subject to set-backs and is not easy, and as it is the prime purpose of human life, no-one should discourage another from pursuing it; to do so will only lead to great regret at some later time.

If 'the truth will set you free', then I invite you to examine, and according to the advice of the Buddha, 'test the following in your own experience'.

Lindsay Falvey
Melbourne, November 2002

² Sir Robert L'Estrange (1673).

CHAPTER 1

TWO GREAT TEACHERS

'Jesus speaking the Buddha's words' exudes audacity and ignorance, yet this work essentially wrote itself as a product of my socialization and a modicum of Christian theological study and its explication through three decades of casual association with Buddhism, particularly Thai Buddhism. As my appreciation of Buddhism blossomed into a heightened awareness of its approach to the Truth, subconscious knowledge became conscious, and I noted, as many others have before me, the similarity of the Buddha's teaching with that of the Christian Gospels. Around this time there came to me a distillation of the type of words that Jesus may have used, stripped of contentious sections that had possibly been added by others in the creation of the subsequent religion; the product of detailed theological study, that succinct document was entitled 'Q: The Sayings of Jesus' – I describe it in more detail later. The congruence of these 'Sayings of Jesus' with the essential teachings of the Buddha impelled me to simply render them into Buddhist language. Initially done for my own purposes, the project grew as I sought meaning in the congruence. The process has caused me to develop an appreciation of Jesus separate from Christianity, and has encouraged my confidence in seeking the Truth.

Works such as this are often better begun with a conclusion. One conclusion that I have drawn from it is that these two great teachers – the Buddha and Jesus – may relate more closely to each other than to their own or each other's subsequent traditions, notwithstanding the commonalities evident across the two traditions themselves. As Johnston observes,³ 'Christianity has diverged in more elaborate, not to say spectacular, ways from the lifestyle of Jesus than Buddhism has from that of the historical Buddha', a factor which he associates with the fifty year career of the Buddha compared to Jesus' short period of public interaction, and with the Buddha's development of codes of practice compared to Jesus' silence on matters related to the church. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which predate the Gospels in some cases, now inform us of a Jesus who is 'far more psychologically subtle and in many ways nearer to Buddha'⁴ than the one presented to us in the censored documents that were allowed into the New Testament.

Cutting away the tatters and patches that are the accretions of time and power, Ockham's Razor reveals that the striking similarity of the two teachers may well be a seamless cloak of congruence beneath the mantle of culture and lore, in the tailored spiritual practices that scriptures support as they weave parables, guidelines, stories, and aphorisms into one fabric. Claims of irreconcilable differences between the two traditions – such as Christianity relying on a God while Buddhism denies the existence of a God – soon become facile upon investigation. Some insightful thinkers have even generously used the language of Christianity to interpret Buddhism, and found

³ Will Johnston (2002).

⁴ Colin Spencer (1993) Page 109.

the very concept of God within Buddhism in the form of Conditioned Co-production – as is discussed more fully in the final chapter. So, this work is concerned much more with commonalities than differences.

I have been intrigued by the possibility of contact between spiritual traditions across India and Greece in the early centuries before Jesus' birth, as evidenced in such forms as sculptural art of the era; in Alexander the Great's assigning of his leading general to maintain the integrity of a functioning Buddhist community on the Indian subcontinent where the general lived out his life impressed with and documenting the religion; in the sea and land trade routes across the region; and the peripatetic scholars who roamed in search of spiritual knowledge. One instance that particularly impressed me was the deciphering of the rock and cliff edicts carved for King Asoka, the great Buddhist king of the third century BCE. Among Asoka's inscriptions, in what are now referred to as the Second Rock Edict at Girnar and the Thirteenth Rock Edict at Kalsi,⁵ are indications of the contact between his Buddhist Empire and that of the West, among other neighbours. These edicts both refer to the 'the Yona king named Antiyaka (spelled as Antiyoga in the Thirteenth edict)' referring to Antiochus II Theos of Syria (261-246 BCE), while the Thirteenth edict also mentions to 'Tulamaya', 'Antekina', 'Maka', and 'Alikyashudal', which corresponds to Ptolemy, Antigonas, Magas, and Alexander – all of whom were apparently aware of the Buddhist dharma promulgated by Asoka.

The multilineal evolution of cultures produces such common outcomes that it is easy to assume diffusion across cultures.⁶ As Thomas Merton wrote; 'in all the great world religions there are a few individuals and communities who dedicate themselves in a special way to living out the full consequences and implications of what they believe.'⁷ However, such common outcomes need not tip the scales toward multilineal evolution of religious insights because the Middle East of Jesus' time interacted not only with Greece, Rome, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, but also with India, both directly and through contact between each of those countries. Whether the dharma of Asoka and that of Jesus was once the same cultural Truth, or whether the similarities in the founders' teachings may suggest a 'perennial philosophy'⁸ I am not qualified to speculate. Nevertheless, I will share my own thoughts on the uncanny similarities in the hope that this subject will be of inspiration to others, as it has been to me. If forced to state an opinion, I find it plausible that the essential truth understood by the insightful persons across the region stimulated their communication and travel, and the evolution of those codified cultural practices that aimed both to preserve the integrity of society and to provide a base from which spiritual growth might occur. As the Indian traditions evolved through the second and first millennia BCE culminating in the Buddha's teachings, that culture's sophisticated spiritual practices provided a practical means of teaching more broadly to spiritually inclined persons across a wide area. As the message and method encountered other

⁵ E. Hultzsch (1925) Pages 3-4, 47-48.

⁶ F.J. Murray, personal communication, 14 July 2002.

⁷ Thomas Merton (1968) Pages 309-310.

⁸ Aldous Huxley (1947).

cultures, they were modified to build on the existing religious practices. Therefore, I have little difficulty in accepting the teachings of Jesus as an expression of those essential truths modified to suit the possibly narrower perspectives of his culture. This accords with the inter-religious tolerance expressed in an Asokan Edict two centuries before Jesus, which records that 'the growth of the essence of the matter assumes various forms, but the root of it is restraint of speech, to wit, a man must not do reverence to his own sect or disparage that of another without reason'.

Reason, informed by wisdom, as implied in Asoka's actions and words leads the scientific mind to Ockham's Razor, that pithy aphorism – *non sunt multiplicanda entia praeter necessitatem*, which means that in intellectual and rational aspects of spiritual logic 'entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity' or, more colloquially, 'the simplest explanation is most probably correct'. William of Ockham was a forward thinking Franciscan monk philosopher, often in trouble with the church, yet revered for his incisive logic. Now more a tool of science than theology, Ockham's Razor provided me with a metaphor for the approach that underpins this short book. Rather than discuss similarities between Buddhism and Christianity, and in particular the Buddha and Jesus, in detailed etymological and theological theory disguised as misguided respect for a tradition, it seems more logical to me to investigate similarities as such. If two historical figures apparently said the same thing in very similar words and there was known to be contact between the areas in which the two figures lived, it may very well be that they were indeed saying the same thing.

The reasoned approach that I take draws heavily on a limited number of interpreters of Buddhism, thereby reflecting my own path, which was fostered by living and working in Thailand for various periods over the past 25 years. My initial appreciation of Thai Buddhism grew into inquiry and eventually to participation – hence my emphasis on Thai Buddhist scholars, such as the Venerable Prayuth Payutto and the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, for explanations directly from the Pali canon and correction of popular misconceptions within Buddhism. In reading transcriptions and listening to tapes of the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu I gained an appreciation of the broader Buddhist tradition, usually excluded from the Theravada form of Buddhism practiced in Thailand; this caused me to seek out an authority who wrote in the English language. So I came to appreciate the insights of Sangarakshita, whose masterful integration of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism suited to Western mind-sets confirmed, for me, the intent of the Thai scholars and the original texts. As a comparison of East and West, I relied on the Revel father-son dialogue as convenient and authoritative proxies for, in that case, Western philosophy and Tibetan Buddhism.

Interpreting Jesus' words in Buddhist terms includes its own inherent bias, which derives from the use of language from the whole ongoing tradition of Buddhism rather than the words of the Buddha himself. I consider this to be an acceptable bias that is, in any case, inevitable because the actual words of the Buddha are as difficult to define as those of Jesus – but at least the latter task has been conducted already, on the basis of probabilities. I find the bias

acceptable because Buddhism is experientially based and thus constantly reverts to its initial teachings, which are used in conjunction with mental training and development through meditation and ethical behaviour. I do not wish denigrate in any way the scholarly, monastic and other Christian traditions, but I do see an essential difference between the institutional approach of the Christian church and its reliance on theistic concepts, and the personal development through experience advocated and, in the main, practised, in Buddhism. Such an explanation may suggest the reason that I have not attempted to render the words of the Buddha in Gospel-based language. Focusing on Jesus rather than Christianity might also be seen to be consistent with the observation of William Johnston that, 'when the Buddhist looks at Christianity, only the founder matters'.⁹

So, my task has been to isolate the Jesus of the 'Q' document and the Buddha as co-equal teachers. It is not a product conjured from the ether, but in fact builds on the extensive prior discussion between informed specialists in inter-religious fora. The Buddhist-Christian dialogue of the last three decades has, as one might expect, centred around encounters between monastics of each tradition; perhaps the best known of these derives from the Bangkok meeting during which Father Thomas Merton died in December 1968.¹⁰ In more recent times, a more general Western perspective is indicated in such collations as the report from an inter-monastic conference in 1996.¹¹ Some parties might observe that inter-religious dialogue must have matured in recent years in order to entertain such discussion of the founders of Buddhism and Christianity; they might even suggest that further maturity will lead to, for example, Buddhists expanding their interest to historical Christianity and such critical personalities as St. Paul and the Church Fathers. I do not perceive such a continuum, but then, I have focussed my attention on the two founding figures.

In any case, such positive dialogues can lead only to more productive outcomes than have the defensive responses of the past. The pioneer of inter-religious enquiry, Bede Griffiths illustrates this when he says 'it is by returning to the source of each tradition that we discover the basic unity which underlies all religion'.¹² Tillich describes the personal spiritual transition that may accompany such realization as the point 'at which the religion itself loses its particularity',¹³ and this has provided the cornerstone that supports searches such as that for the essential words of Jesus. It has also fostered other important collations, such as the recent publication, *Buddhist Perceptions of Jesus*,¹⁴ which I find of special interest as it focuses on the pivotal figures of the Buddha and Jesus, two itinerant teachers accessible through their sayings and actions recorded by their disciples, and who share characteristics that I discuss in a later chapter.

⁹ Will Johnston (2002).

¹⁰ Anon (1970).

¹¹ Donald W. Mitchell and James Wiseman (1997).

¹² Bede Griffiths (1989) Page 104.

¹³ Paul Tillich (1965) Page 97.

¹⁴ Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2001).

One paper in *Buddhist Perceptions of Jesus*¹⁵ concerns the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's perennial distinction between 'dharma language' and 'people language' as a means of highlighting the impenetrability of spiritual insights by minds focussed on everyday actions, motivations and interpretations of words. Buddhadasa felt that it was the inherent lack of equivalence in these two 'languages' that leads to inter-religious disagreement, and that we can render key terms as having sufficient equivalence in two 'people languages' to enable translation of one tradition's teachings in those of the other. In my own attempts, I have therefore simplified some words in the following glossary, which is expanded on in a later chapter:

Buddhist Terms	Gospel or Christian Terms
Insight &/or Enlightenment	Heaven or the kingdom of God
Stress, frustration, anxiety, pain or suffering	Hell
Truth, Natural Law (the real nature of all things)	Omnipresent cycles (God)
The spirit felt in moments of Insight	The Divine; heavenly love
Awareness	Realisation of the possibility of the Truth

The Buddha's Parable of the Raft illustrates that language is one of the mental conceptions that hinder our relationship with reality; it tells of a traveller encountering a river between himself and his objective. Being resourceful, the traveller readily gathers nearby sticks and grass to form a makeshift raft and thereupon floats across the stream. Now across the obstacle and impressed with the utility of the raft, the traveller considers carrying it on the rest of the long journey. The Buddha points out that this is ridiculous – the traveller should discard the raft after it has served its purpose, as carrying it will only add to the burden of the remaining journey. He concludes, 'even so, monks, is the Parable of the Raft dharma taught by me for crossing over, not for retaining'.¹⁶ Thus even the word of the dharma is not sacrosanct. This must be especially so for my 'imitation' – to borrow Thomas Merton's word for his rendering of the Taoist master Chaung Tzu into English.¹⁷ At best, it is a raft.

The Buddha also offered advice to seekers of the truth. 'Do not go just by what is said – what your people and your traditions maintain. Nor can you rely solely on reason, inference or argument [or acting] out of respect, thinking that a holy man must be deferred to. But when you know, from your own experience, that a set of teachings, condemned by the wise, when put into practice conduce to loss and suffering, then reject them.'¹⁸ The Buddhist-style imitation of the words of Jesus that I offer herein may be rejected for various reasons, from scholarly criticism to institutional heresy, but it's utility can ultimately only be determined by persons on their individual paths; such an exercise has been personally helpful in my own journey.

¹⁵ Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2001).

¹⁶ Majjhima-Nikaya I.135. Page 173.

¹⁷ Lawrence Cunningham (1992) Page 399.

¹⁸ Kulanada (1967) Pages 73-74.

Any exegesis of scripture is a personal and error-prone undertaking that is easily miscommunicated. Perhaps these words will be a raft in this 'new age' where the enduring insight that all spiritual advice must be tested personally gains a special poignancy. The common elements of the 'Sayings of Jesus' and Buddhist teachings, when stripped of religious, institutional, and cultural trappings, are open to personal testing. To better understand the common elements, a few words on the orientation of this work and the essence of Buddhism is useful, and this forms the basis of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS A PERSONAL GOSPEL

This representation of the teachings of Jesus from the perspective of Buddhism attempts to reconcile mystical teachings transcribed to everyday language in both traditions. It does not claim complete commonalities of the religions; each may offer Paths to suit different psychologies and cultures. Rather than the institutionalized versions of the respective religions, I am more concerned with the 'wonderful natural wisdoms that came before Christ and cried out for fulfilment in the Gospel',¹⁹ as Thomas Merton expressed it, and the path between Buddhism and Christianity in the terms of Grimm²⁰ that 'a Christian can find the footbridge leading to the teaching of the Buddha in the Christianity of his mystics'. In that Indian mystical age so difficult to imagine today, but which we may glimpse in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita as well as the Buddhist, Jainist and other scriptures, prophetic teachers may well have influenced development of all great religious traditions, which themselves have evolved from mystical insights translated into moral codes and dogma that originally aimed to guide the practitioner toward insight.

Of course, the language of the mystics is not the language of those of us who live in the secular world, even though the words may be the same and seem to have conceptual meanings; they are a mere approximation of experiences that themselves are probably impossible to relate to those who have not shared something of a similar experience, in much the same way as one might try to describe a colour to a blind person. As we read any of the spiritual texts, we do well to remind ourselves that apparent meanings may in fact be metaphors, allegories and poetical expressions that seek to approximate a meaning beyond the reader's experience. Nevertheless, bound as we are by this gross limitation, the following is cast in the mode of seeking commonality rather than the more usual approach of highlighting differences between religious traditions.

The choice of Buddhist language to interpret the essential teachings of Jesus in the following chapter, while reflecting my own experience and interest, also accords with the rising understanding of Buddhism in the West as an intelligible and philosophical approach to the mysteries of life. Religions other than Buddhism might equally have been chosen to interpret Christian teachings; for example, the opening quotation of this book encompasses much of the morality of both of these traditions, yet it is more often seen as Hindu in origin. Having said this, there do appear to be special reasons for the similarities between Christianity and Buddhism that provide this basis for dialogue.

The essentially similar messages of Buddhism and Christianity, which may have been obscured by cultural separation and institutional bias, are matched by other commonalities, many of which may not usually be recognised.²¹ Both

¹⁹ Lawrence Cunningham (1992) Page 399.

²⁰ Georg Grimm (1928) quoted in Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2001)Page 28.

²¹ Peter Oldmeadow (2001).

religions are universal in so far as they do not espouse a chosen race or limit membership to a particular land, as have, for example, parent religions of each, Judaism and Hinduism respectively. Unlike other traditions, both have monastic components that are assumed to provide a beneficent influence to the wider community, and both are based on love and compassion enriched from an inner spiritual life more than reliance on formal laws for definition. Each uses provisional indicators of the Truth because Enlightenment or the kingdom of God is recognized as impossible to communicate in everyday or theological language, although both recognize theological study as a component of spiritual development, together with the first steps of meditation, contemplation and prayer. The personal discipline of meditative practices is expressed as 'be a lamp unto yourselves' in the words of Buddhism that encourage practice, and 'be still and know that I am God' in the words of Christianity that encourage calming meditation or other means as a preliminary to 'knowing' God, or perhaps, insight. The effort implied in Buddhist practices in fact aims to allow the practitioner to concentrate, release effort and 'be still' and may in this way be seen as similar to the Christian approach. Both religions also have ethical dimensions; the Noble Eight-fold Path of Buddhism is often conceived in the three groupings of ethics, mental discipline and wisdom, that combine in an Enlightened person acting with love for everything, which accords with the Christian expansion of Judaic commandments as love of God and neighbours.

With these similarities, and others drawn out in later chapters, an important basis for comparison with Buddhist teachings is a text that contains the essential elements of Jesus' message. Scholars of original teachings have postulated the possible existence of the written teachings of Jesus. The resulting synthesized text (named 'Q' – discussed below) is obviously shorter than any of the Gospels, and is thought to be similar to that once possibly compiled by Jesus' immediate followers. Its essential message rendered here into the passive, intellectually acceptable style of the West and of essential Buddhism, is straightforward, logical and enduring. Nonetheless, practising the message of 'Q' remains at least as difficult to embrace from a materialist lifestyle as it has ever been.

Buddhist concepts and terms are based on those of the scholars of the original Pali language texts prepared a few centuries after the death of the historical Buddha. Prepared by a Council of Elders who had maintained an oral and memory training tradition from those who had lived, learned and taught with the Buddha, the scriptures are said to preserve the Buddha's original words. These texts, the Tipitaka, are the basis of all denominations of Buddhism, albeit often taught in conjunction with elaborate and often confusing cultural embellishments.

Buddhism is seen from many perspectives. In Western terms, it may be understood as 'a very simple and natural elaboration of the implications of Buddha's own experience of enlightenment' – not a belief system, not a theology, not an ideology, yet at times including aspects of these and more.²²

²² Lawrence Cunningham (1992) Page 402.

Another conception of Buddhism is as an interpretation of human psychology, which portrays the mind as sorting information about its environmental stimuli and the apparently associated physical and emotional states in order to perceive desirable and undesirable acts, objects, and circumstances. The natural tendency of the unenlightened mind is to seek those stimuli that produce desirable feelings. Such conscious seeking for personal good, which can even be expressed in some cases as well-being of loved ones, global equity, and so on, reflects attachment to a desired outcome, which if not achieved, produces frustrations, anxiety, stress, and sometimes physical pain, all of which are usually grouped in Buddhist writings as 'suffering'. Buddhism thus considers everyday unenlightened human life as a cycle of suffering perpetuated by desire for positive stimulation and an ignorant striving to alleviate that personal suffering. It then teaches that the cycle is readily transformed into a spiritual development path once it is truly recognized. This salvation teaching includes practice of Awareness to recognize the cycle through disciplining of the mind, which results in insight or understanding of the overall action of the real nature of all things, and the futility of not living within that natural rhythm.

The equanimity that results from living within the real nature of things is termed 'nirvana' or 'nippān'. When used by the Buddha, the term 'nirvana' seems to have meant 'cooled down' and embodies some equivalence with the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Heaven in Christian teachings. The Buddhist law of karma meaning 'acts' is a simplified explanation of the real nature of all things: that every action, including thoughts, creates conditions or effects that will vary according to circumstances. Karmic reward or retribution across reincarnations may not be an essential component of Buddhism, according to some scholars who explain reincarnation as a belief inherited from the cultural mores of the Buddha's time. Nevertheless, ignorance is never a basis for discrediting knowledge and, at the implied deeper meanings of reincarnation, as well as at simpler levels, its allegorical meanings are clearly useful to spiritual development within many cultures. This is similar to the popular Christian belief in a post-death heaven. For both Buddhism and Christianity, the Gospel message may be interpreted more closely with its original intents as means of cultivating insight and the kingdom of God or Heaven as a personal state.

The essential teachings of Jesus, on which the following chapter is based, are those translated by Father Ivan Havener, from Father Athanasias Polag's compilation, and published as 'Sayings of the Lord Jesus', in 'The Text of Q'; a subsequent chapter introduces a version of Havener's translation with the kind permission of Liturgical Press. 'Q' is an assumed common source document from which the Gospels of Matthew and Luke have possibly been partly derived. Polag and Havener used form-criticism, textual commonalities, and convergence of scholarly opinion to reproduce a version of such a possible common source. Havener proposes his English working text of 'Q' as the essential teachings of Jesus, and readily acknowledges continuing unresolved differences between scholars. Even if such a 'common source' really existed, its re-creation is, of course, necessarily a speculative exercise. Reference to the same historical events need not indicate a common source, and different

versions of those events will have changed substantially as they 'radiated forth, separately and together, across the Middle East and Europe through different oral and written traditions, were translated and re-translated back and forth, and were edited for the orthodoxy of the day'.²³ Nevertheless, for the purposes of contemplating the essential similarities between these teachings of Jesus and expressions of Buddhism, this consolidated attempt to construct 'Q' was a godsend to my initial exploration.

The terminology that I have used in the Buddhist presentation has been simplified to approximate Christian terms, for example: Insight or Enlightenment approximates heaven or the kingdom of God; stress, frustration, anxiety, pain or suffering approximates hell; Natural Law (the real nature of all things) approximates the description of omnipresent cycles; the Divine or Truth approximates the spirit felt in moments of Insight or heavenly love, and Awareness approximates the realization that these matters are the only Truth. Samples of other similarities between the two religions that do not appear in the 'Q' compilation of Jesus' words are mentioned in later chapters.

With these few words, a Buddhist version of the 'Sayings of Jesus' is presented in the following pages. Readers without a background in Buddhism may well find it platitudinous and repetitive. This arises for at least two reasons; the teachings of Jesus used multiple means to emphasize essential Truths, and the standard practice of using English words to describe Buddhist concepts defines many words differently from common usage – it is a language in itself, or as the Thai scholar-monk Buddhadasa has insightfully taught, it is dharma (dhamma) language²⁴ not our everyday secular language that is spoken in these scriptures. Each 'saying' in the following chapter (represented in the appendix as a cohesive text) holds multiple meanings requiring repetitive reading and contemplation, and comparison with Jesus' words in the subsequent chapter.

²³ F.J. Murray, personal communication, 14 July 2002.

²⁴ Buddhadasa Bhikku (1992).

CHAPTER 3

A BUDDHIST IMITATION OF JESUS' WORDS²⁵

1. Persons who have renounced worldly pursuits, and gained a degree of Insight of the way to the Truth, teach of the truly Enlightened persons who can show the way which all should pursue.
2. Yet the majority of persons, while sometimes attracted to the forms of rituals recommended for practice for such spiritual development, remain firmly committed to their worldly lives, and trust in popular modes of behaviour and belief for their happiness. But in so doing they produce their own suffering.
3. Just as ritualistic acts like baptism or merit-making ceremonies must be ineffective without heart-changed commitment, so must be chasing after the teacher without practicing the teaching. To seek the peace of a great teacher whose face shines with holy Enlightenment of that realm where suffering is lost, is to practice the teachings; but to follow without commitment is to experience recurrent stress, frustration and anxiety.
4. Pure-hearted seekers who practise with commitment may learn from other seekers and attain Enlightenment even while the others remain in their search. And, once gaining an experience of Enlightenment, they may well seek seclusion to further practise their meditation, to confront past desires and anxieties, and to refine their Insight. They will also see the true nature of routine desires for food, shelter, fame, wealth, power and other human concerns with an Insight that clarifies past confusions and overcomes all desires through understanding of the operation of the true nature of reality, which is Natural Law.
5. From Awareness of such experiences comes the overarching teaching that Enlightenment is more easily approached by those unconcerned with material and other attachments and who acknowledge their spiritual needs, and within this condition; that those who practise Awareness and act morally as a training practice for Insight will find that Insight, that those who realize that their suffering is caused by their own actions will learn more of the first step toward Awareness, and that being ostracized by worldly persons for spiritual practice in pursuit of the Path to Enlightenment should not concern them for it has ever been thus, and Enlightenment is of immeasurably greater value than social acceptance as it is beyond that world of desire and suffering.

²⁵ This chapter renders the 'Sayings of Jesus', as presented in Chapter 4, into a form consistent with the teachings of Buddhism.

6. Teachings also translate Enlightened Insights into moral guidelines to assist seekers of the Path to Enlightenment to behave in a skilful manner as an essential part of their spiritual practice. Such teachings include maintaining a non-violent attitude to all beings, returning good acts for bad, showing loving concern for those who create opposition, responding generously to requests for gifts and loans of all things from material possessions to personal time, so far as it does not compromise spiritual practice, for what we give away was never ours in the first place. The Enlightened know and teach that our enemies can take nothing of value away from us, that our everyday reputations are always transient and not part of our true selves, and that attachment to material items, fashion, calm, or time causes stress, depression, or a sense of loss when we feel a threat of their being taken from us. Yet when we are detached from these, no one can take anything from us. This Natural Law that is the true nature of reality extends to all persons and things, so seek to act in accord with it.

We should show compassion and generosity not only to those whom we judge worthy, or only welcome our own kind, for even the least aware of persons do this! Observing the moral teachings will lead towards the intuitive knowledge that, just as suffering comes to all persons in the human world, so can Awareness.

7. Show mercy and forgiveness at all times and do not form negative opinions about others because everything is the result of prior actions and cannot now be different, for every one of our acts creates conditions or effects, which depending on circumstances, produces necessary outcomes under the aspect of Natural Law described as karma, both good and bad, both acts and thoughts. In this way, our desires and acts are the source of our own suffering. Practice of moral behaviour encourages us to reduce desires as an initial step to Awareness.
8. One simple personal guideline is to be Aware of the acts of others that make us feel calm and peaceful, and to act in the same manner.
9. The teachings of the Truth are the Truth, and your teacher should be one who is Aware, Insightful and has experienced or strives for Enlightenment, and you should retain your respect for your teacher throughout your life. Those who teach without experience can easily bias the teachings, unwittingly or otherwise.
10. In pursuing your practice, do not compare yourself to others for it is far easier to notice faults or comment on another's practice or behaviour than to be Aware of yourself. Focus on your own spiritual development so that you may develop Insight, for this is the best means to then guide another person.

11. For the fruits of Enlightenment are only good, and acts conducted with the Insightful Awareness of the Enlightened produce only correct results, while acts conducted without Awareness easily conduce to suffering, as such human actions embody selfish desires and intentions.
12. Many persons follow the rituals and outward forms of religious teachings but do not practise the spiritual development of the Path to Enlightenment. Those who follow the practices of spiritual development are resilient to the tempers of the world, but those who hear of the Path and do not follow it actually increase their stress, frustration and anxiety.
13. These teachings are not for a selected few of a particular religion, for there are many Paths that lead to the Truth. All who have faith in the teachings and the practices that lead to the Truth receive their reward from that moment onward.
14. The proof of Enlightenment is in actions and their fruit, not merely physical healings and miraculous happenings, but understanding and explaining the true nature of reality and the universal availability of Enlightenment, while ever maintaining goodwill to those unwilling to understand.
15. And yet, the heraldic voice of this deliverance from suffering is ever present, albeit not in fashionably acceptable clothes or the guise of popular prophets. Some worldly teachers may represent the pinnacle of worldly human intellectual and emotional achievements, yet all pale against the least of the Enlightened.
16. This generation, like all before it, ignores and scornfully rejects Aware messengers on the basis of their social nonconformity, and even derides the Enlightened for not conforming to popular notions of Enlightened teachers and for failing to transform into fantastic images of sanctity devoid of human foibles.
17. To follow the Path, you must realize the essential restlessness of the human spirit while we act against the true nature of reality and therefore remain separated from nature, and resolve to continue on the Path despite hardship and beseeching from uncommitted friends, congregational colleagues, and family.
18. For there are many who search and would experience the true nature of reality if they had the opportunity, yet there are so few true teachers.
19. And so, be true to and share this news, even if it appears to place you in severe personal danger,

20. beginning with those closest in your everyday life and those who know something of the basis of the Truth.
21. Proceed with the peace of reality that is omnipresent love, teaching it where it is welcomed, and retaining your own peace where it is rejected. Do not concern yourself with sustenance for it will be always be provided wherever you travel. Where people are Aware and seek understanding, encourage them on the Path, but where the Truth is rejected depart immediately before the karmic consequences of their past and ongoing thoughts and acts impinge on your peace. Do not be attached to apparent success or failure in response to your teaching, for it is sufficient that those who know the Path share this with those who seek it.
22. For stresses, frustrations, and anxieties in everyday life are perpetuated in those who refuse to hear the teachings, even more so than in those who have never heard that there is an alternative to popular views of reality, who have never heard the Truth.
23. And this Truth is the one universal Truth of all the Enlightened, regardless of sect or person.
24. This Truth of the nature of reality is inherent in little children, yet is unknown to philosophers, and it unites the Enlightened in their experience of the true nature of reality, with its essence in all things,
25. as has been sought across millennia by many informed teachers and powerful rulers whose very attachment to worldly education and power precluded their spiritual progress.
26. Your constant meditation should be ... 'I honour the Truth that unites all life, hoping that its peace may pervade human understanding and action and, trusting that it provides my everyday needs, I regret my own incorrect actions and regard those of others as past and inconsequential, as I continue to practise for spiritual development'.
27. For earnest seekers of the Truth surely find it
28. as the true nature of reality that is Natural Law reveals itself to whomever seeks to be one with it.
29. Insight of the reality may include powers of healing, clairvoyance, and other miraculous forms that the unknowing may ascribe to superstitious causes when in fact they are simple manifestations of Natural Law understood by those existing within its cycles;
30. for as the only true force, the Natural Law that is reality is surely the strongest.

31. There are only those who seek and know Insight and its opponents; in this matter, no middle path appears.
32. But beware that once you have committed to practice, habits of attachment through friends and reactions will regularly return and, if entertained, easily entrench themselves more firmly than before.
33. Those who seek proof before committing to the Path should note the separateness, equanimity, and peace of the Enlightened, which is an ever-available proof, yet only personally provable by experience;
34. this has been sufficient for great persons over countless centuries, though their Insights were often misunderstood.
35. The Enlightened are not hidden but shine as they live their daily lives among those who would see if not blinded by their own dark karmic cycles.
36. Ritual observance alone cannot influence karma for it is the motivation of the heart that determines the purity of a thought or act that then sets in train its own conditions and consequences. Similarly prestige, influence, and education bring suffering unless applied with morality consistent with the reality of Natural Law, and used for your own and others' spiritual development. Yet those attached to worldly desires and possessions will deride and exile the seeker of the Truth and some who know of the Truth's existence will override their own true nature as they pursue their desires, thereby directly and perhaps inadvertently increasing their own suffering;
37. for all thoughts, words and deeds produce their own consequences.
38. So there is no need for the Aware and Insightful seeker to be concerned about pain or death because, for the Enlightened, everything that happens to them, just as every thought, word, and deed, is consistent with reality, with Natural Law.
39. When you state the Truth, through experience, or through faith, that the moral guidelines and spiritual practices will lead you to the Truth, this reinforces your development, but failure to act and state the Truth when among others is denial of your developing Awareness and will retard your spiritual development.
40. You may constructively and with Awareness criticize teachers who introduce the Truth, as they are only human, but denigrating the Truth itself, once you learn of it, leads only to great anguish of spirit.
41. When you are called to publicly teach or justify your belief, speech, and actions to powerful persons and institutions, do not worry or overly prepare clever intellectual presentations, simply retain Awareness and you will speak correctly.

42. This will not be well received by some groups, and you should cease to associate with them, and rather seek out those who know and act in accordance with Natural Law.
43. The Enlightened are unconcerned about where their food or clothes will come from, as they know the natural cycles will always provide necessities. They therefore do not need to hoard anything for their future. Such beauty of the Enlightened, existing in complete accord with the true reality, exceeds the highest beauty ever known to worldly persons who worry about all things, even though worry accomplishes nothing, and is itself a karmic outcome of selfishly seeking after beauty, status, security, power, wealth and fame; and even if a desire is attained in some form, attachment to it produces fear for its loss. Your first and highest seeking should be to know the true nature of reality and to live within that realization; achieving this produces all that is required for life - food, clothing, basic medical needs, and shelter - just as all other living forms have their needs met in nature. For, your pursuit of the reality described in Natural Law produces Insight that accelerates union with the Truth as if the Truth in all things is also seeking to reunite with you.
44. Seeking worldly possessions causes only distress as they deteriorate or are stolen. Rather seek to know reality, the Truth, because whatever you seek to possess will govern your heart and mind, and hence your actions.
45. This requires practice of the most constant Awareness that leads to Insight so that moments of Enlightenment may be experienced and become more frequent,
46. for such experience cannot be planned, but relies on the heart and mind being well prepared.
47. Practice for focused Awareness and its correct actions facilitates such experience, while neglect of practice and reversion to incorrect actions in frustration of unfulfilled spiritual expectations will produce even further regret when some Awareness returns.
48. Contrary to the peace that experiencing the perennial single Truth of reality embodied in Natural Law imbues, exposing this Truth of personal well-being does not automatically produce peace in the world. In fact, it divides those attached to the perceived world from those seeking Enlightenment about its true nature; it even divides family and close friends.
49. Even though all worldly persons have experienced the karmic law of cause and effect through such everyday processes as weather prediction, they continually fail to apply the same logic to their

actions, motivations, and understanding, and so continue in their cycles of self-induced suffering.

50. Do not be emotionally attached to your worldly rights, and avoid disputation by quick settlement even if you are in the right, for becoming embroiled in argument diverts your heart and thereby hampers your spiritual development.
51. The loving kindness that emanates from you acting in Awareness is of benefit to the unaware, even if they do not seek it, and eventually some will later seek Awareness.
52. Enlightenment begins with small glimpses and grows to encompass all of your life and all things with which you come in contact,
53. although it is difficult to appreciate amidst the distractions of the world, and few do find the essential Path of Awareness that leads to Insight and Enlightenment.
54. So most persons remain subject to recurrent stresses, frustrations, and anxieties, which when severe, may cause them to crave relief through Enlightenment as if it is one more thing to be obtained or possessed; but such flawed motivation and lack of commitment serves only to further increase their woes.
55. Enlightenment is more accessible to the humble than the proud, the pure-hearted observer than the status-oriented ritual performer, and is unpredictable,
57. for the Path is ever available to all, and its rejection increases the stress of worry and doubt. In some cases, those who never knew of such teachings, yet experience an Enlightened glimpse and then continue to practise, may find their own Path to personal peace and Enlightenment.
58. Practicing Awareness leads to detachment from worldly possessions and selfish loves, including the closest of personal worldly relationships, as pervasive loving-kindness transcends past selfish emotions.
59. It requires diligence in spiritual practice rather than hollow ritual, non-committal prayers, unfelt acts, which may be only obedience to the letter not the intent of laws,
60. for righteous acts may often involve contravening social conventions or even the letter of a law.
61. Even though a person may be wealthy and exercise authority in a moral manner, the highest human fulfilment is Enlightenment. Its pursuit leads such persons to act with so much wisdom in their

worldly duties that they are performed with efficiency and effectiveness, and are pervaded with a loving-kindness that seeks to share the Path with others, and to rejoice in their spiritual progress.

62. The true nature of reality that is Natural Law exists everywhere and has always existed, and it has been interpreted by Enlightened persons in each generation and place, even where the excesses of unenlightened human acts may seem to obscure it.
63. And it will always exist.
64. Moral laws, derived from the Insights of Natural Law by Enlightened persons, support spiritual development if observed in conjunction with meditation, yet by themselves they concern acts and therefore cannot deal with the individual intent or motivations behind acts, and so omit the critical consideration of incorrect intention affecting a person's relationship with the Truth at least as much as an incorrect act.
65. Commitment of the heart and the mind to the Path to Enlightenment cannot include continued attachment to worldly delights, whether thoughts or acts.
66. This Path is subject to setbacks and is not easy, and as it is the prime purpose of human life, no one should discourage another from pursuing it; to do so will lead only to great regret at some later time.
67. These Insights of the Enlightened, simplified to human moral codes, include responsibilities to guide friends in the correct Path, and to forgive them all and any regretted error or act, for these are all in the past which is no consequence to the eternally present Aware person.
68. Faith in the Path to Enlightenment can itself accomplish anything, for Insightful actions are always in full accord with the reality described by Natural Law and thus not limited to human understanding nor hampered by contingent karmic effects.
69. Alternative and easy paths will always be propounded and attract many persons, but they serve only to distract from the Truth.
70. Such persons go about their everyday worldly lives clinging to worldly desires and unheeding of the true nature of reality and so remain in cyclical suffering until they die, although some on approaching death
71. may reflect and recognize the cause of their life's anguish, and even, from such an Insight, become Enlightened.
72. Those who are Enlightened are indifferent about worldly attachment and retain their equanimity about events and circumstances.

73. Some will be so Enlightened, while others in the same group will not be
74. and those who are Enlightened will understand the true nature of reality in the world in a way that surpasses the knowledge of those who are clever and intelligent in worldly terms.
75. Those who glimpse this Truth, and pursue Awareness as the Path to Enlightenment, will achieve it, while those who do not pursue it will lose even the benefit of that glimpse and will continue to experience recurrent stress, frustration, and anxiety throughout their lives.

CHAPTER 4

THE 'SAYINGS OF JESUS',²⁶

1. In those days John came, preaching in the wilderness a baptism of repentance; as it is written by the prophet Isaiah, "A voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" And he went into all the region about the Jordan.
2. And he said to the multitudes coming for his baptism, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit therefore that befits repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."
3. And Jesus came to John to be baptized by him, and when Jesus had been baptized, the heaven was opened and the Spirit descended upon him as a dove, and a voice from heaven came, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."
4. And Jesus was led up by the Spirit in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, and he ate nothing for forty days, and afterward he was hungry. And the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered, "It is written, 'You shall not live by bread alone.'" And the devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'on their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" And the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will worship me." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him.
5. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and seeing the crowds and his disciples, he said, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who hunger now, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are those who weep now, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are you when people hate you and exclude and revile you and utter evil against you on account of the son of man. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven: for so their ancestors did to the prophets."
6. I say to you, love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you. To whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other as well. And let whoever would sue you and

²⁶ The 'Sayings of Jesus' are re-presented from the chapter entitled 'The Text of Q' in Ivan Haverer (1990) *Q: The Sayings of Jesus*, which is included with kind permission of the Liturgical Press, Minnesota. It is an attempt to reconstruct a postulated source document for some of the Gospels.

take your coat have your cloak as well. And let whoever forces you to go one mile, go two miles with that one. Give to whoever begs from you, and do not refuse whoever would borrow from you. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even sinners do the same? And if you salute your own, what reward have you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? I say to you, love your enemies, and you will be sons of God, for he makes his sun rise on the good and evil.

7. You must be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. And judge not, and you will not be judged: and condemn not and you will not be condemned: forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give, will be the measure you receive.

8. So what you wish, that others would do to you, do so to them as well.

9. Can one who is blind lead another who is blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? The disciple is not above the teacher: it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher.

10. And why do you see the speck that is in your friend's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your friend, "Let me take that speck out of your eye," when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your friend's eye.

11. For no good tree bears bad fruit; nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit. Are figs gathered from thorns or grapes from a bramble bush? One who is good brings forth things out of the good treasure and one who is evil brings forth evil things out of that which is evil, for the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart.

12. And why do you call me, "Lord, Lord!" and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what each one who hears my words and does them is like. Such a one is like someone who built a house upon the rock, and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears my words and does not do them, is like someone who built a house upon the sand, and the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell and great was the fall of it.

13. And when Jesus finished these sayings, he entered Capernaum. And a centurion came forward to him beseeching, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." And the centurion answered him and said. "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority with soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another 'Come', and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this', and he does it." When Jesus heard him, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." And his servant was healed at that very moment.

14. Now when John heard in prison of all these things, he sent two of his disciples to the Lord saying, "Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you see and hear: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them, and whoever takes no offense at me is blessed."

15. As these went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way before you'. I tell you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he".

16. To what then shall I compare this generation and what is it like? It is like children sitting in the market place and calling to their playmates - they say, "We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and you say, "He has a demon." The son of man came eating and drinking and you say, "Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet wisdom is justified by her children.

17. And along the road someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to that person, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head." But another said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to that person, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead". But another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." But Jesus said to that person, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

18. And the Lord appointed seventy-two and sent them two by two into every town. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

19. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

20. Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

21. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house!" And if a child of peace is there, let your peace come upon that one, but if not, let your peace return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide; for the laborer deserves a wage; do not go from house to house. And whenever you enter a town and they receive you, heal the sick and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, as you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet. I tell you, that it shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

22. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been done the works done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

23. Whoever hears you hears me, and whoever rejects you rejects me; and whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.

24. At that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for so it was well-

pleasing to you. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, no one the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

25. Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, and did not see it and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

26. When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation."

27. I tell you, ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and whoever seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

28. Which of you, if your child asks for a loaf, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.

29. And he was casting out a demon, and it was dumb. And when the demon had gone out, the person who was dumb spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he casts out demons." But knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and every house divided against itself will not stand. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

30. When a strong man guards his own palace, his goods are in peace, but when one stronger than he enters, he will overcome him; he takes away his armor and divides his spoil.

31. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

32. When the unclean spirit has gone out of someone, it passes through waterless places seeking rest but finds none; then it says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.

33. Some said, "We wish to see a sign from you." But he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the son of man be to this generation."

34. The queen of the south will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The people of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

35. People do not light a lamp and put it under a bushel but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when your eye is not sound, your whole body is full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how

great is the darkness! If your whole body is full of light, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.

36. Woe to you, Pharisees! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but the inside is full of extortion and rapacity. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? Cleanse the inside, and the outside becomes clean. Woe to you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Woe to you, Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. Woe to you, Pharisees! For you are like graves which are not seen, and people walk over them without knowing it. Woe to you, lawyers, also! for you bind heavy and hard to bear burdens and you lay them on people's shoulders, but you yourselves will not move them with your finger. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets and your ancestors killed them. So you witness against yourselves, that you are children of those who killed the prophets. Therefore also the wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required of this generation." Woe to you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in.

37. Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, hidden that will not be known. What you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered into the ear shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

38. But I tell you, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the one who, after having killed, has power to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear that one! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them will fall to the ground without God's will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

39. But I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before others, the son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.

40. And whoever says a word against the son of man, will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, will not be forgiven.

41. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the councils, do not be anxious how or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you are to say.

42. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the son of man comes.

43. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the ravens, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to your span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, that not even

Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. But if the grass which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, is so clothed by God, how much more will he clothe you, who are of little faith? And do not be anxious saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

44. Do not make for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but make for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

45. Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like those who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants!

46. But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

47. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom the master, when he comes, will find doing so. Truly, I say to you, he will set that servant over all his possessions. But if that servant thinks, "My master is delayed in coming," and begins to beat the other servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not expected and at an hour that is not known, and will punish that one and place that one among the unfaithful.

48. I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to bring peace on earth? I tell you, not peace but a sword. For in one house five will be divided, three against two and two against three they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

49. When you see the cloud rising in the west, you say, "A shower is coming;" and when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat." You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but why can you not interpret the present time?

50. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with that one on the way to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

51. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not! Behold your house is

forsaken. I tell you, you will not see me until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

52. What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches. To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

53. Enter by the narrow gate; for many will seek to enter and few will find it.

54. When the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." And he will answer you, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." And he will say to you, "I do not know where you come from; depart from me, you workers of iniquity!"

55. I tell you that many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you will be thrown into the outer darkness. These people will weep and gnash their teeth.

56. Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

57. A man gave a great banquet and invited many, and sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for all is now ready," but they would not come and the servant reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, "Go out into the thoroughfares, and compel people to come in." And the house was filled with guests. I tell you, none of those invited shall taste my banquet.

58. If any one comes to me and does not hate father and mother and son and daughter, that one cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not take up one's cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

59. Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; people throw it away. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

60. Who among you who has one sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?

61. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go in search of the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." I tell you, just so, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Or what woman, having ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma which I had lost." I tell you, just so, there is joy before God over one sinner who repents.

62. The law and the prophets were until John; since then the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

63. Truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not a dot will pass away from the law.

64. Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
65. No one can serve two masters; for either you will hate the one and love the other, or will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
66. Stumbling blocks are sure to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes. It would be better for such a one if a great millstone were hung around the neck and that person were cast into the sea than that one of these little ones should be caused to stumble.
67. If your friend sins, give a rebuke, and if the friend repents, grant forgiveness; and if the friend sins against you seven times in the day and turns seven times, and says, "I repent", you must forgive that one.
68. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, "Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea", and it would obey you.
69. If they say to you, "Lo, he is in the wilderness", do not go out; "Lo, he is in the inner rooms", do not believe it. For as lightening comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will the son of man be in his day. Where the corpse is, there the vultures will be gathered together.
70. As were the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and destroyed them all. And as it was in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So will it be on the day when the son of man is revealed.
71. On that day, let whoever is on the housetop, not go down to take what is in the house; and let whoever is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife!
72. Whoever finds one's life will lose it, but whoever loses one's life will find it.
73. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and one left. There will be two women grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.
74. You who have followed me in the kingdom will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
75. When a man was going on a journey, he called his servants and gave to them his property. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And the first came, saying, "Lord, your talent has made ten talents more." And the master said to that one, "Well done, good servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much." And the second came, saying, "Lord, your talent has made five talents more." And the master said to that one, "Well done, good servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much." And another came, saying, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man; you reap what you did not sow and you take up what you did not lay down, and being afraid, I hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." The master said to that one, "You wicked servant, you knew that I reap what I did not sow and I take up what I did not lay down? Why then did you not invest my money with the bankers? And at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest." And he said, "Take the talent from this one, and give it to the one who has the ten talents." I tell

you, that to everyone who has, will more be given, but from the one who has not, even what that one has will be taken away.

CHAPTER 5

'Q' BETTER GOOD NEWS?

The Buddhist-style interpretation of the reconstructed 'Q' document, as presented in Chapter 3, may appear bland and incomplete compared to the rich metaphor of the New Testament. Its emphasis on morality, spiritual development, and Enlightened understanding of reality lacks the supernatural aspects of an omnipotent God and the comfort of a posthumous heaven. Yet Buddhism itself admits the supernatural, and indeed records many miracles emanating from spiritually advanced persons, and also retains teachings of reincarnation. The reason for these differences from the New Testament teachings is simply that the 'Q' document, as an interpolation of the 'Sayings of Jesus' and his immediate followers, is not concerned with these themes. In fact, it may be that many of the stories of Jesus were written into the Gospels decades after the death of Jesus. The theologian Ernst Kasemann expresses this dearth of New Testament references to Jesus as 'shattering [in] how little can be described as authentic'.²⁷ Setting aside other implications of historical inaccuracy, use of the 'Q' document to express Buddhist ideas provides a clear and more valid basis for comparison of both sets of teachings in terms of their original spiritual intent.

This chapter introduces the differences between 'Q' and the Gospels, the social context of 'Q', and its use as a source for Matthew and Luke. From this approach, similarities between the content of 'Q' and Buddhist teachings emerge around the themes of the figure of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God.

The evangelist (Greek for '[bringer of] good news') authors of the Gospels may be understood in terms of Christian emphasis on the resurrection; they either seek prophetic linkages from the Old Testament or look forward to the resurrection, rather than report historically. The Gospels differ according to the intended audience and the available source materials. Drawing from oral Aramaic sources, the Gospels were written in Greek, with Mark being the earliest. Matthew probably wrote about 100 CE for a selected Jewish Christian audience. Greek was not a new language for the 'Hebrew' scriptures, which Christians refer to as the Old Testament; the Septuagint existed in a Greek translation with some late additions being written originally in Greek for the populous Jews of Egypt between 200-100 BCE. Mark is commonly dated around 65 CE and is oriented to non-Jewish and recently converted Christians. Luke, traditionally considered to have been a doctor and follower of Paul, probably wrote sometime after 70 CE, and claims (Luke 1:1-3) a research base from oral histories and reports about Jesus. Matthew and Luke are postulated to have used versions of 'Q' and Mark for their compositions. As all gospels appear to have been written after the critically symbolic (re)destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the need to create a new form of Messiah from a reinterpretation of the sacred texts confounds any search for the person of

²⁷ Der Spiegel (1966).

Jesus himself, let alone his teachings. Evidence in support of this conjecture exists, it seems to me, in the apparent fact that the New Testament was not standardised until the fourth century CE and was associated with a reordering of the books of the Hebrew scriptures to create an Old Testament that more conspicuously anticipated the arrival of a messiah. For these and other reasons, the postulated 'Q' document is a convenient base for considering Jesus' teachings, and this makes its origins and audience relevant – and even if, as is likely, it did not exist at all – rather analogous to the convenient concept of God as a means for discussing transcendent matters.

'Q', unlike the Gospels, is restricted to teachings of Jesus himself and his close followers. As a source for the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, 'Q' possibly represents orally related 'Sayings of Jesus' maintained within a loyal group from about 30 CE. Committed to writing before 65 CE to preserve their accuracy, the Sayings would thus have become a record of more readily remembered sayings, consistent with the worldview of those concerned. That the Sayings include socially unpopular sections suggests that the group maintaining them was marginalized from the bulk of the society. Some of these potentially offensive aspects of the Sayings include:

- choosing to be homeless ('Q' Chapter 17)
- placing commitment to Jesus ahead of family ('Q' Chapters 17, 58)
- eschewing common manners ('Q' Chapter 21).

The followers of the Sayings may well have been living such a separate lifestyle based on the teachings and thus may have sought to record specific 'Sayings' as the essence of their community. These early followers of Jesus may thus have been mobile, assetless prophets, who mimicked Jesus as the ultimate prophet, with his blessing ('Q' Chapter 23). As the lineage of the Jewish prophets is confirmed in the 'Q' document, its audience was probably Jewish ('Q' Chapters 2, 5, 6, 20, 25, 36, 41, 42, 43, 51, 60, 62, 63). However, this small and faithful group of Jesus-following Jews experienced scant success within their own culture, and the message of Jesus was consequently offered more widely (Chapters 13, 33, 55), although probably by conversion to the way life of the followers with its attendant basis in Jewish law and ritual.

The relationship of 'Q' and the synoptic Gospels is conjectural, and is inferred from their literary consistency and assumed references to such a document as 'words of the Lord' in Acts 20:35, which is considered to have been written by the same author as Luke's Gospel. Mark uses less of the 'Sayings' than Matthew and Luke, thereby suggesting that these two later Gospels used both Mark and 'Q' as sources, albeit possibly in differing forms. 'Q' relates Jesus' teachings of the immanence of the kingdom of God as its primary focus, compared with the Gospels' retrospective approach of writing the resurrection into prior events. It is the focus of 'Q' on immanence that renders it an interesting basis for comparison with Buddhism, which focuses on realization of the immanence of Enlightenment as the ultimate human purpose.

'Q' also differs from the Gospels in being comprised mainly of proverbs and allegorical statements that have traditionally been regarded as prophetic ('Q' Chapter 73), although they may not have intended anything more than the

essential description of spiritual life, as in the Buddhist perspective offered here. Sayings about one's personal behaviour and the law ('Q' Chapters 64, 67) may similarly offer a non-traditional teaching about intent or motivation as being more important in karmic terms than one's deeds. The message of 'Q' is inseparably integrated with the life of Jesus and his immediate followers in a manner that parallels the inseparability of dharma from the Aware life as taught in Buddhism.

Minor variations between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke have led theological analysts to suggest that these Gospel authors had access to slightly different versions of the hypothesized 'Q'. But it is worth recalling that it may never have existed at all. If it did, evidence is as obscure as its appellation; Father Ivan Havener O.S.B., whose analysis has influenced this chapter, notes that while some consider 'Q' an abbreviation of the German word 'Quelle' meaning 'source', it is more likely a variant of the mathematical convention of using a letter of the alphabet to refer to an unknown entity. In any case, Father Havener confirms a German origin for the concept. The surmised oral origins of 'Q' incidentally suggest another parallel to Buddhists' reverence of the original teachings of the Buddha in the Tipitaka, which were documented from disciplined oral repetition.

The content of 'Q' differs from the synoptic Gospels, particularly by its omission of the resurrection, and its focus on Jesus' teachings. As with all sacred texts, the Gospels may be interpreted literally, morally, and allegorically to differing instructional ends. Literal meanings sometimes confuse deeper meanings, as may be the case in the Christian belief in Jesus as the exclusive manifestation of the Truth and his resurrection as the promise of an afterlife. In fact, 'Q' does not seem to claim any such exclusivity of Jesus; rather Jesus is portrayed as one expression of the Truth being realized, as it may be in all persons. The resurrection appears to become a central tenet of Christianity from Paul's later efforts. Nevertheless, by acknowledging that humans' major fear of death is illusory, the resurrection can teach of deeper insights of the true nature of reality, or realizing the Truth, as humans' highest role. Buddhism might perceive Jesus as an Enlightened person and thus worthy of the highest respect; it may also observe similarities in the cycle of causal dependence, with reincarnation and resurrection serving to illustrate the perpetual rebirth of suffering in the ignorantly lived life, and the salvation of living in profound peace through re-unification with Natural Law.

In a similar manner, the use of a mantra is assumed to be a Buddhist or an Eastern phenomenon, yet seems to have been part of the practices of fourth century followers of Jesus' teachings. The inspiration of St. Benedict, John Cassian, introduced it to Western monastics as a practice derived from the Desert Fathers, who claimed its origins in the time of the apostles. The mantra is understood from Jesus' statements of the efficaciousness of the repetitive prayer of humble man, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner' compared to the self-serving eloquence of the Pharisee, as told in Luke 18:9-14. Its association with meditation is further seen in the Matthew 6:5-8 teaching to pray alone in

a quiet place rather than 'go on babbling like the heathens'.²⁸ In fact, it appears that contemplation or meditation declined with mysticism in the church as a product of the Quietist controversy after the Counter-Reformation.²⁹ This loss of a critical tradition in a bitter division of the church seems a far less fortunate outcome than that of Buddhism when it faced a similar division; the Theravada and Mahayana schools were sufficiently tolerant of each other's approach to allow diverse spiritual practice around a common objective.³⁰

The content of 'Q' may be discussed from perspectives of the figure of Jesus, the Holy Spirit that pervades all things, and the kingdom of God/Heaven. This may be seen as congruent with Buddhist analysis of the integrated teachings and life of the Buddha, the inherent interconnectedness or potential divinity of all things, and the release from suffering that is nirvana. Beginning with John the Baptist, Jesus is introduced as a person of special Insight that exceeds that of the ascetic prophet who preaches a Jewish version of the law of karma. As Jesus' teaching progresses, its integral association with his life confirms his holiness in the manner of a person of Insightful wisdom whose combined words and actions demonstrate salvation from the everyday suffering of hell through following the Way to the kingdom of God/Heaven. The absence of references in 'Q' to salvation related to Jesus' death or resurrection, or to 'the Christ' or 'Messiah', bring the sayings of Jesus closer to the moral and Insightful teachings of Buddhism. Somewhat similarly, Jesus' self-designation as the 'son of man', an expression hardly used outside the Gospels, may derive from the Aramaic language, which Jesus probably spoke, and may simply mean 'someone', or even an egoless version of 'I'. He may have simply used it to emphasize his humanity in the same way that he addresses his first two disciples as 'sons of storm' in reference to their personalities.³¹ The only other titles used for Jesus in 'Q' are 'the Son of God/the Father' and 'Lord'; Havener informs us that 'Lord' may be understood as a respectful form of address such as 'sir' rather than 'Exalted One' as later used by St Paul. 'The Son of God' might be interpreted in Buddhist terms as a person at one with all things, one who is Enlightened.

The Holy Spirit in 'Q' is the presence of the Truth linking the person Jesus to all things, expressed as God. The Spirit emanates from the Father/God and moves Jesus to actions that accord with the nature of reality. The words of 'Q' Chapter 24, 'At that hour Jesus rejoiced in the spirit', might be read by a Buddhist as a momentary Enlightenment; in addition to a permanently transformed state, Enlightenment in Buddhist terms also may be understood as momentary, with spiritual practices such as meditation aimed at disciplining the mind to be receptive to such moments more frequently. The ox-herding pictures of Zen Buddhism provide an analogy of Enlightenment as the realization of the self; from our usual state of ignorance – when the ox is sought, to some realization – when the ox is found and then disappears, and ultimately to the herder returning to everyday life riding on the tamed ox, thereby symbolizing that the taming of the mind allows one to operate in full

²⁸ Christian Meditation Community.

²⁹ Aldous Huxley (1947) Pages 78 and 316.

³⁰ Aldous Huxley (1947) Page 78.

³¹ Jack Miles (2001) Page 34.

accord with reality in the everyday world, associating with, yet untainted by, 'sinners, prostitutes, publicans or tax-collectors' in the manner of Jesus.

A further parallel exists in 'Q' Chapter 40 where disagreeing with the man Jesus is possible, just as one may disagree with the man who was Buddha or a holy teacher today, but conflicting with the essential Truth must lead to the conditions and effects conducive of suffering as described by Dependent Origination and its corollary, the law of karma. The Truth's messenger is the message of the Truth, yet retains human elements inferior to the message. The reference to the spirit providing the words for the person who lives in the spirit ('Q' Chapter 41) is likewise reminiscent of the Awareness of the disciplined and Insightful mind in Buddhism.

The kingdom of God is a recurring theme throughout 'Q'. The literal Christian tradition of a personal heavenly afterlife seems to conflict with most³² Buddhist concepts of nirvana, which more closely approximates the meaning of the kingdom of God in many 'Q' references. The centrality of a heavenly state in both 'Q' and Buddhism provides a context for understanding the figure of Jesus as an exemplar of the Spirit in all things, and of the human quest to realize the true nature of reality. Likewise, traditional Christian eschatology may be a misinterpretation, and the consequences of immoral actions may not be God's judgment on who may enter the kingdom of God after death ('Q' Chapter 2). Rather these may be a partial teaching of the law of karma, which observes that one's actions, if not in accord with dharma, inevitably produce unforeseen and undesirable consequences and conditions that interrupt one's Path to Enlightenment.

Jesus' life exemplified a person living in the kingdom of God and his life is inseparable from his teachings. In 'Q' Chapter 52, the analogies of both a mustard seed and bread leavening with the kingdom of God teach of small beginnings leading to large results, and echo Buddhist encouragements to persevere on the Path to spiritual development and maintain the practices without concern for results, for they will surely be as significant as they are unpredictable. The mustard seed is curiously the focus of one of the stories of the Buddha, although with a different message, the universality of death and suffering. The kingdom of God is the specific subject of the Beatitudes ('Q' Chapter 5); in beginning with the 'poor', a Buddhist interpretation can mean a person unencumbered by possessions and ego. The reference in 'Q' Chapter 26, which forms part of the Lord's Prayer, has usually been interpreted to refer to a future day of judgment. However, to be consistent with the kingdom of God as an experience rather than a time or event, the prayer may be understood as a personal reminder for spiritual development towards Enlightenment, and an expression of loving-kindness that yearns for others similarly to know it. Descriptions of the opposite of the kingdom being various punishments emerges from this perspective as a description of the self-

³² An exception may be *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, a Buddhist document that apparently provides indications of the stages one's consciousness passes through during the 49 (seven times seven) days after physical death in which some commentators find similarities with the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

created hell of suffering common to worldly life, referred to as 'samsara' in Buddhism.

Much of traditional Christian teaching concerning heaven and hell has been oriented to an expected end of the world; whether or not Jesus taught within such a conception has consumed volumes of theological theses to little benefit, as the arguments for and against seem equally matched. Which party is right? Huxley in his deliciously double-edged language answers – 'goodness knows',³³ perhaps intending to imply that goodness would also find the matter irrelevant. Such an answer is also reminiscent of the routine answers of the Buddha when asked to resolve philosophical viewpoints – such matters are unimportant within the central spiritual teachings.

So far, the discussion has followed the theme of 'Q' and its presentation of Jesus as a spiritually advanced person in touch with the Truth, and who taught about the nature of, and Path to, knowing that Truth. The Truth itself was expressed as the happy state that is the kingdom of God. This overall message appears in many ways to sit more easily with Buddhism than Christianity.

Buddhists may easily conceive Jesus as a Bodhisattva, an active enlightened being, as there is no assumption that all Bodhisattvas are within the Buddhist traditions; however, the exclusive claims of Christianity, as distinct from the contents of 'Q', that Jesus is 'the messiah', or in Buddhist terminology, 'the *only* Bodhisattva', do not accord with the teachings. At the most fundamental level, Buddhism would appear unable to accept Jesus as the incarnation of the only God because no such God exists (though Buddhism can accommodate the concept of God – as discussed later). Even if Jesus is seen as the physical body of an enlightened being, a *nirmanakaya*, this does not allow Jesus to be unique.³⁴ In its approach to spiritual development, Buddhism teaches that all persons are responsible for their own suffering as well as their own development toward enlightenment, which does not rely on any particular historical event or personality; this further appears to conflict with the Christian teachings. Thus Buddhists might say, as has Cabezon that 'Jesus may have been an extra-ordinary human being, a sage, an effective and charismatic teacher, and even the manifestation of a deity, but he cannot have been the messiah that most Christians believe him to have been.'³⁵ It is such claims of uniqueness and exclusivity that separate Christianity from Buddhism³⁶ at the fundamental and institutional levels, although both are concepts that appear to be transcended by the Insightful. And this is the crux of the teachings of both traditions – the myths, parables and concepts are just attempts to represent an inexpressible Truth, and contesting and comparing their validity is a diversion from their intent. The 'Q' document might be viewed as one more theological exegesis that can assist spiritual understanding

³³ Aldous Huxley (1947) Page 59.

³⁴ An exception to this statement may be the conception of the *dharmakaya* (spiritual body) forms of archetypal bodhisattvas, which are considered to be a single *dharmakaya* as a means of emphasizing teachings of non-duality.

³⁵ Jose Ignacio Cabezon (1999) Page 28.

³⁶ Rita Goss (1999) Pages 32-51.

– it certainly performs that role for me – but it makes little sense to ‘believe’ in its existence as a real ‘source’ that must be understood literally.

If the ‘Q’ document did exist at all, it was concerned with the teachings of Jesus and his immediate followers. Its omission of overt references to the Christ, Messiah, and resurrection, and the associated concept of saviour, suggests their later addition as Christianity developed its own mysteries. However, these very mysteries were probably added as allegories of Jesus' message and not meant as literal beliefs or dogma. Salvation from sin and its hellish consequences could be the same message as release from the suffering of the unskilful life in Buddhism; the skilful life of Jesus, like that of Buddha, personified the teachings. Belief in Jesus as the vehicle of salvation obviously motivates many Christians to further spiritual development, and is thus beneficial; however, it does not follow that this is the only or the deepest meaning. In fact, it may be better understood as one of many Paths of spiritual development. In the same way, the Gospels' records of Jesus' acceptance of death, while not present in ‘Q’, may be seen as complete detachment, which is the cessation of suffering taught in Buddhism. Likewise, the Buddhist Bodhisattva ideal of an Enlightened person acting to lead others into spiritual development may be seen in Jesus' teachings and life. No doubt there are countless similar examples of allegorical and mystical parallels between Christianity and Buddhism that extend far beyond the limited focus of ‘Q’.

This is not the place for a detailed listing of concordance between the teachings of Jesus and the Buddha – rather, some examples are presented to indicate the constructive approach that is developing among informed researchers. The task is more easily approached from the Bible than the Buddhist scriptures because it is so much shorter and is better known to Westerners. Foremost among its contents in Buddhist eyes is The Beatitudes (Mark 5:3-10), which many see as the essence of Christianity and as completely congruent with Buddhism, especially the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Other congruent teachings include:

- loving one's enemy (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-28, 32-35);
- repaying evil with kindness and acting charitably (Matthew 5:38-42; Luke 6:29-30, 18:22);
- equanimity (Luke 10: 30-35);
- self-examination rather than criticism of others (Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:36-42; Thomas 26);
- renunciation of materialism and simplification of life with humility (Matthew 6:25-34, 19:23-24; Mark 6:8-10, 8:34-36, 9:35, 10: 23-25, 29-31, 42-45; Luke 9:23-27, 10:1-9, 12:16-31; Thomas 14, 16, 63);
- intention as the source of sin and consequences of karma (Mark 7:20-23; John 8:3-8);
- the difficult path to full Enlightenment (Mark 14:33-36);
- non-grasping and the advantages of the homeless life (Mark 8:34-35);
- disinterest in such matters as the origins of the earth compared to a focus on the ‘here and now’ (Matthew 6:33);
- oneness with the essence of all things (John 8:12, 10:30; Mark 14:36);
- the inheritance (or inherent) spiritual dimension of each individual being the essence of recommended practices (Matthew 25: 32-35);

- the path from alienation from that inherent spiritual dimension lies in kindness and compassion, (Genesis 4: 2-8; Matthew 25: 35-46), and
- joy as the ultimate outcome of the path rather than the initial perception of pain (John 16:20-22).

The Buddha's words 'whoever sees the dharma sees me' obviously resonates with 'he who sees me sees the Father' of Jesus, as does their common reference to being 'the way' or the 'the path'. Likewise, Jesus' 'seek ye first the kingdom' accords with the Buddha's repetitive emphasis on working for self-transformation. Notwithstanding their different origins, both Jesus and the Buddha:

- widened spiritual life to marginalized groups;
- chose disciples for similar roles;
- mythically, overcame three temptations symbolizing transcendence of self;
- emphasized the interior spiritual life;
- began reformist movements;
- underwent transforming mystical experiences about the age of 30;
- became teachers of a message that offended the establishment;
- based their teaching on their transforming experiences;
- lived as religious itinerants;
- are regarded as wisdom-teachers;
- chided misplaced devotionism, and
- abided penetrated by a higher reality.

The Gospel of Matthew (10:20) – 'not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you' – appears to correlate with the concept of anatta (not-self) as taught in Buddhism. In the case of the religion that grew from Jesus' insights, the same spiritual teaching, possibly attributable to Paul, indicates further congruity, such as his Galatians 2:20 'it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'. Similarly, Paul's 'seeing face to face' and 'not through a glass dimly' mirror Buddhism's many descriptions of ultimate understanding. The emphasis on meditation as a spiritual exercise parallels prayer in the Christian tradition – and as noted elsewhere, may derive from a common origin. The list of similarities continues, for example, both traditions favour monasticism, engage in mission, and both have shaped entire civilizations.

I introduced earlier the notion that the serious spiritual wanderers of the period between the Buddha and Jesus probably had access to insights from the great cultures of that wide region, which therefore suggests that Jesus may have had some knowledge of the insights and practices of India – however, speculation as whether he visited India³⁷ or received his knowledge via the Gnostics is inconsequential to this discussion. Ralph Abraham's map of the common origins of religions³⁸ includes a line of diffusion from Crete to India with a branch through the Middle East and back to Western Europe,³⁹ and suggests that the subsequent separation of these regions after the decline of the Roman

³⁷ Holger Kersten (1994).

³⁸ Ralph Abraham (1994) Page 151.

³⁹ Ralph Abraham (1994) Page 142.

Empire may have reduced our knowledge of earlier centuries. By way of illustration, he quotes that Pythagoras, a contemporary of the Buddha in an era of intellectual interaction, was said to have been the first to introduce into Greece such concepts as the immortality of the soul, its migration into animals who should be considered kindred, and that events repeat themselves cyclically, thereby negating anything being new in an absolute sense.⁴⁰ These are all variations, allowing for subsequent accretions of meanings, of concepts also found in Buddhism.

Today, seeking an essence in Christianity has prompted some theologians to consider teachings of the Buddha. For example, the Sea of Faith network inspired by Don Cupitt⁴¹ interprets an indefinable divinity, not necessarily referred to as God, as a form of 'Buddhist Christianity', although Buddhist critics note that such philosophical statements misrepresent the central tenet of Buddhist spiritual practice.⁴² In a manner that mirrors Cupitt, the Buddhist apologists appear wont to interpret Christianity on the basis of its popular modes while ignoring its traditions of contemplative spiritual practice. Comparing religions on this basis, in all their expressions and with all of their unfortunate histories and culturally inherited rituals and myths, is to wade into protected sloughs of enervating despond; it requires the breadth of all human sciences, which itself leads to the very reductionist approaches that the mystics warn against. Nevertheless, there is an alternative that I have hitherto ignored – the literary as distinct from the historical interpretation of the Bible, which Jack Miles has exemplarily demonstrated.⁴³ His approach allows consideration of the inspired literary inputs of a range of Biblical authors without the reader being drawn into literalism, or dismissal, of apparently non-historic incidents within a tradition. This richer and more effective form of interpretation may be applied to any scriptures and allows transcendent wisdom to contact the non-rational, not irrational, aspects of the world. I have taken the easier approach, but perhaps more productive for the simple purposes of this book, of focussing on the common ground of the founders of two great religions.

So, the congruity of Jesus' and the Buddha's teachings imply two conclusions. The first is that essential similarities of the two traditions indicate a single Truth of the fundamental human need to realize the true nature of reality. The second is that various Paths to realizing this Truth exist, and that different Paths suit different persons. The latter conclusion implies that striving to convert persons to one particular path is misguided, and highlights the high morality of encouraging others in their chosen Paths. It may be sufficient in many cases to simply live and teach the Truth, and allow others to act of their free will. The Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of many Buddhists, has emphasized that all major religions provide Paths to spiritual development. In fact, he goes further to suggest that a person's cultural attunement usually means that they will find a Path within the religion of their upbringing. Prompting consideration of the spiritual Truth is thus a wholly useful action in the Western lifestyles of today, and the exaggerated difference between traditions

⁴⁰ Porphyry quoted in Ralph Abraham. (1994) Page.113.

⁴¹ Don Cupitt. (1995) Pp 79-80.

⁴² Kulanada (1967) 225-226.

⁴³ Jack Miles (1997 and 2001).

is already but a crumbling stumbling block to the many who today pursue spiritual development – this is indeed ‘good news’.

This chapter has focused the image of the ‘Sayings of Jesus’ viewed through a Buddhist lens. In order to provide a semblance of balance, the next chapter offers some Christian and related views of some Buddhist doctrines.

CHAPTER 6

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF BUDDHISM

The focus of this book is an interpretation of the 'Sayings of Jesus' from a viewpoint influenced by Buddhism. In order to provide some understanding of Buddhism from a Christian-influenced viewpoint, this chapter highlights some similarities that are often hidden behind theological argument at one extreme, and platitudes at the other. This range is sampled through: essential Buddhist teachings especially the concept of Dependent Origination as Natural Truth and the law of karma; some relevant writings of three Christian theologians who have explored the limits of Christianity, and a Western philosophical discourse with Buddhism.

Essential Buddhist Teachings

Buddhism has been described in various and more adequate ways than can be offered here. However, one needs to be wary of earlier Christian definitions – that is, definitions older than a few decades – which classified Buddhism as a non-religion, as impractical for worldly applications, as essentially negative, and as undervaluing human life. These views seem to have retained some popular currency in the West, and are only gradually being corrected by scholars and practitioners of this era. One clear exposition of Buddhism is presented in Kulananda's *Western Buddhism*.⁴⁴ At its simplest, it may be said that Buddhism assumes that humans are meant to be, and aspire to be, happy, and that this is achievable by understanding and acting on the causes of unhappiness; in simple Christian terms, this might be described as humans acting to unite themselves with God through a process of salvation.

The essence of Buddhism is usually expressed in the terms used by the Buddha. These may be paraphrased as: suffering exists and is experienced first-hand in all forms of unhappiness including dissatisfaction, anxiety, stress, pain, and all other unpleasant feelings; the cause of suffering is psychological attachment to ideas, possessions and persons; there is a means of removing this suffering; the means is practical measures for spiritual development. This summary, known as the Four Noble Truths, leads into the Noble Eight-fold Path, which explains moral behaviour as training for spiritual development in parallel with meditation as mental training. The moral stances would be comfortable to most Christians. Numerical appellations, such as the *Four* Noble Truths, pervade the traditional texts as an aid to memory and communication, and in fact are simplifications of deeper Insights and doctrines that explain the nature and interrelationships of all things, including the teachings of Dependent Origination and the law of karma.

Dependent Origination

⁴⁴ Kulananda (1997).

The Buddha's first and central teaching is termed Dependent Origination, also variously called 'conditioned co-production', 'causal genesis', 'causal dependence', 'universal conditionality', or 'dependent arising'. It may be seen to contain parallels with Christian conceptions of sin, hell, and salvation, and related explanations of moral actions. It is an explanation of the constant and self-inflicted cycle of unhappiness that takes place in every thought – usually occurring so quickly as to be unnoticeable.

If we simplify Buddhism to the pursuit of happiness, we must acknowledge that the word 'happiness' itself does not appear in most teachings of Dependent Origination but, it is implied by such terms as 'extinction of suffering'. Understanding the words often translated as 'rebirth' or 're-becoming' as referring to the cycle of Dependent Origination recurring at any instant, rather than as successive lifetimes, reduces the importance, for some persons, of reincarnation in Buddhist doctrine to a cultural belief of ancient India that was absorbed into Buddhism.⁴⁵ However, the fact that the deeper and super-rational understandings of the Enlightened persons add detail the concept suggests that reincarnation should not be so easily dismissed; some persons find parallels between Christian doctrines of purgatory and Buddhist teachings on reincarnation. In any case, as noted earlier, the didactic value of reincarnation remains important in Buddhism.

The Pali etymology of Dependent Origination derives from 'paticca', which may be rendered as 'concerning', and 'samuppada', which may be rendered as 'coming to be', and links the teaching to the common creation of illusory views about the nature of self, and hence the scope to dispel the illusion as contained in teachings about the non-self. Non-self is a concept that has proven difficult to translate into Western cultural terminology – it may perhaps be better understood as a non-continuous-self, thereby focusing its meaning on the illusion of the mental construct that self exists independently of external influences or across time. The esteemed Thai monk-scholar, the Venerable Prayuth Payutto, who has analysed the original teachings in his more than 1,000 paged 'Buddhadhamma'⁴⁶ explains the concept of non-self in terms of the existence of life as a continuous coming together of diverse components. Realizing this natural Truth releases the power of attachments and clinging and opens understanding to the interconnectedness of all things.

The concepts of attachments and impermanence explained within the paradigm of Dependant Origination are drawn from the original Tipitaka text known as the Abhidhamma. They are interspersed, and easily confused with, the explanation of Conditionality, which explains the law of karma and can be illustrated by the following analogy: 'the causal factors concerning the germination and growth of a plant do not only indicate the existence of a seed, but also imply that the following elements must be present; soil, water, fertilizer, air, and proper air temperature. Each of these is a casual factor, and each is interrelated and does not have to exist in any orderly process according to a certain time and place'.⁴⁷ Literal interpretations of Conditionality can lead

⁴⁵ Buddhadasa Bhikku (1992).

⁴⁶ Prayuth Payutto (1995).

⁴⁷ Prayuth Payutto (1995) Page 84.

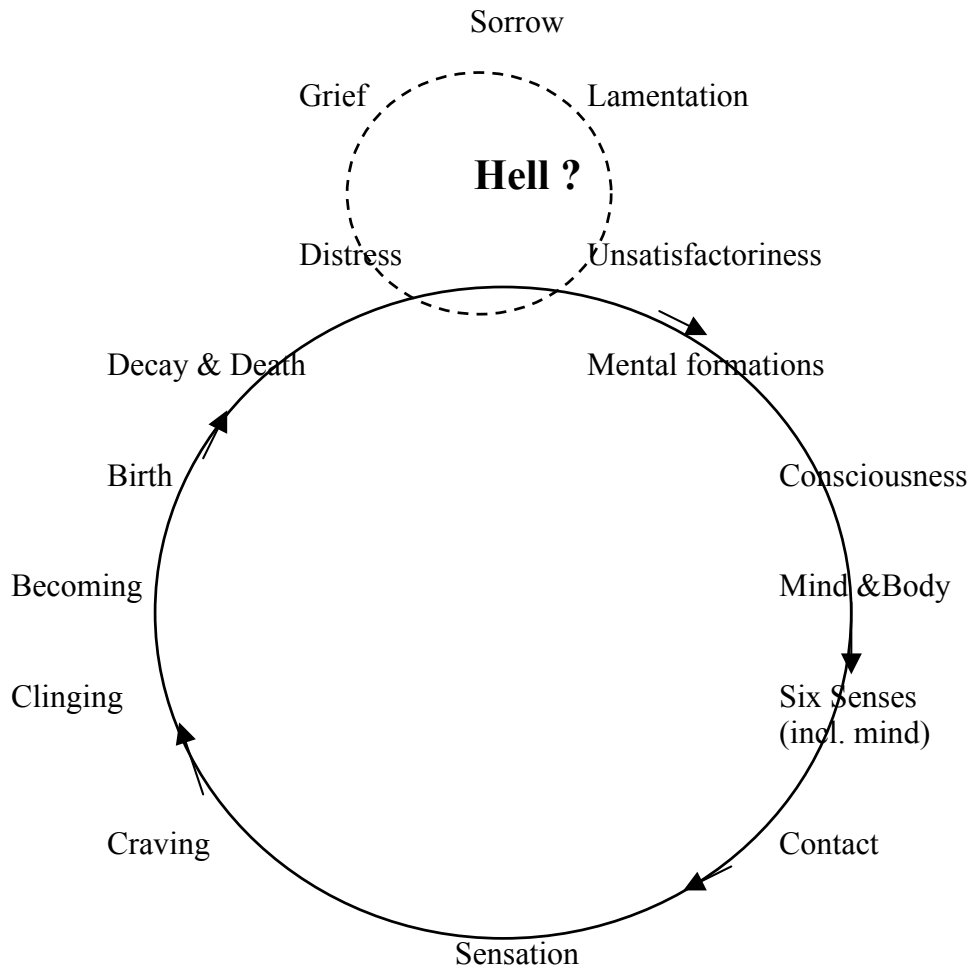
to postulation of a creator of the world, and Buddhism considers this an erroneous oversimplification. Nevertheless, as for the teaching of reincarnation, the concept of the creator in the Judaeo-Christian tradition remains a useful didactic tool when the continuous development and decline according to causal factors is not understood, or is not considered important to a particular Path of spiritual development.

So, human longing for a Creator does not accord with Buddhism,⁴⁸ which sees humans as tool makers and creators prone to conceive a higher order in terms of their own experience, and thus inclined to ascribe the first cause to a creative entity. The intent of the concept in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is an important development in human spiritual evolution,⁴⁹ but is not critical to Jesus' essential teachings of the kingdom of God.

The cycle of Dependent Origination is indicated in the following diagram:

⁴⁸ Prayuth Payutto (1995) Page 91.

⁴⁹ Jack Miles (1997).



The Cycle of Dependent Origination: The upper circle is usually described as 'ignorance' in Buddhist explanations, and may be represented in Christian terms as 'hell' in situations where ignorance of reality causes us to act in a manner that causes us suffering. However, while it may be useful to consider that hell is a result of ignorant actions, Buddhism allows that ignorance of itself may not always produce suffering if it is guided by the merits of practised skilful behaviour.

Dependent Origination is usually represented as a cycle of existences portrayed as rebirths. The cycle is driven by ignorance, the origin of which is untraceable, and is reminiscent of the Christian allegory of the fall of man. The cycle may be described as follows. *Ignorance* of natural Truth leaves one susceptible to *mental formations* such as abstractions, ideas, concepts or items based on deluded self-oriented tendencies. This predisposes one to mental constructs that one's actions can effect specific outcomes or that one owns certain things, which leads to *consciousness* of the abstraction and then its emergence as an apparently attainable reality or *mind perception*. Once consciousness of an abstraction exists, the *six sense bases* respond to external stimuli to inform the mind and *contact* is thus established as if the abstraction is a reality and this engenders *sensation*. Sensation leads to the emotion of *craving* for the fulfilment of this false-reality and for avoiding the suffering associated with its non-attainment, which produces *attachment* to the false reality as part of one's own false conception of self. So instilled with the self,

one's will stimulates action, in what is termed *becoming* that seeks to achieve the false reality, and the actions set in train assume their own karmic effects. These karmic effects determine one's own reaction as a new cycle is *born* which leads to the demise or *death* when an abstraction, idea, belief, illusion, or other false reality is shattered. This state of disappointment, or suffering, is the essence of *ignorance*, which started and perpetuates the cycle until one becomes Aware, in the words of the Buddha, that 'this whole heap of dukkha [suffering] arises according to these factors'.⁵⁰

The suffering arising from constant striving and disappointment represents human separation from natural Truth, the Divine, or God, which is experienced as hell. Perhaps Christian interpretations of hell may simply have been derived from Greek and Jewish beliefs of that era as a mental tool to contrast the release experienced as the kingdom of God with everyday ignorant existence. Similarly, the hell of attachment echoes Jesus' teachings about the extreme difficulty of entering the kingdom if one is attached to wealth (Matthew 19:23-24).

Self-induced and cyclical suffering is the normal state of the secular world. This Buddhist conception echoes the various New Testament references to secular lifestyles as 'the world', which is distinct from the state of being with God. The cyclical aspect also appears to be shared with Christianity's origins in explanations of the relevant Latin and Greek offered by Thomas Merton. He writes, 'the [Latin] "saeculum" is that which is temporal, which changes, revolves, and returns again to its starting point. The etymology of the word is uncertain. Perhaps it is related to the Greek "kuklon", or wheel, from which we get "cycle". So originally, that which is "secular" is that which goes around in interminably recurring cycles. This is what "worldly society" does. Its horizons are those of ever-recurring sameness.'⁵¹

This explanation of Dependent Origination exists within the Buddhist objective of progressive spiritual development, which advocates a 'correct view'. According to this teaching, the 'unsaved' or 'unenlightened' life can be used as a tool against itself; the example is given of performing good acts in the hope of a heavenly reward which, while being selfish, leads to increased understanding. The Buddha described this as: 'this body was born of craving and depends on craving to sever craving',⁵² which seems to parallel Christian teachings about moral behaviour improving understanding of salvation from sin and hell. However, a fuller exposition of this teaching indicates the reverse cycle of positive spiritual development that occurs from awareness of acting out of ignorance such that rapture, serenity, bliss, concentration and understanding of the true reality feed spiritual development in what has been described as an ascending spiral.⁵³

Without discussing the logic, we may observe that the doctrine of Middle Way that is used to confirm Dependent Origination offers a further similarity with

⁵⁰ Prayuth Payutto (1995) Page 105.

⁵¹ Lawrence Cunningham (1992) Page 337-338.

⁵² Prayuth Payutto (1995) Page 136.

⁵³ Subuti (1995) Page 66ff

Jesus' words. The doctrine of Middle Way deals with being unattached to fundamental or specific views, as diversely illustrated in the Buddha's responses to questions comparing extreme viewpoints. His universal response is expressed in such words as 'Enlightened persons do not attach to either of these two views and reveal the Truth in a middle way'.⁵⁴ This does not mean a compromise, but a deeper understanding of causal factors. Such sayings of the Buddha find expression in Jesus' description of himself coming not to argue or abolish the law but to complete it (Matthew 5:17).

Ignorance explains unenlightened acts producing unexpected outcomes, as described in the doctrine of karma. An English translation of the Venerable Prayuth's analysis⁵⁵ dispels the varied misinterpretations of karma in the West, as well as other misinterpretations in Buddhist countries where cultural pre-Buddhist animistic beliefs retain currency.⁵⁶

Karma

Sometimes simplistically explained as the law of cause and effect, karma is better understood as a complex description of the process of creation of conditions by an act. Its etymology of 'work' or 'action' hides its basis on intention, realization of which offers the same teaching as the Gospel story about lustful intent being the same as consummation of lust (Matthew 5:28).

The results of karma are divided into the unskilful and skilful, according to one's ability to avoid greed, hatred, and delusion. The alternation between skilful and unskilful actions in an individual can be so rapid that it is taught that only a highly trained mind may notice and understand the process. The implication that it is impossible for an unenlightened person to avoid some unskilful action is reflected in St Paul's words, 'for the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do' (Romans 7:19). Sin has also been described in terms similar to karma; for example, 'sin is what turns consciousness away from Truth. Being the consequence of illusion and selfishness, sin includes its own punishment.'⁵⁷

An example of karma in society offered by the Venerable Prayuth is: 'in this regard we can take a lesson from the situation of society in the present time. Human beings, aspiring to material wealth, holding a view that wealth of material possessions is the path to true happiness, have proceeded to throw their energies into material development. In the process they have wreaked destruction and untold damage on the environment.'⁵⁸ Such environmental examples present an interesting contrast to traditional interpretations of human relationships to the natural environment in Christianity, which have been based on 'mandated' human rights of dominance (Genesis 1). Recent re-interpretations of Christian relations with nature are remarkably congruent

⁵⁴ Prayuth Payutto (1995) Pages 136-145.

⁵⁵ Prayuth Payutto (1993).

⁵⁶ Prayuth Payutto (1993) Page 1.

⁵⁷ Father Laurence Freedman. Quoted in Jean-François Revel and Matthieu Ricard (1998) Page 238.

⁵⁸ Prayuth Payutto (1993) Page 27.

with Buddhist teachings, such as deep scriptural meanings of the spirit pervading all nature.

An action is good or evil according to its intentions and effects. The fruits of karma are experienced on mental, physical, and social levels, although it is common to focus only on the level of life experiences. While each is important, the Venerable Prayuth considers the first two levels as of prime importance as they determine our inner strength and many of the external events that we encounter. He illustrates this in referring to the Buddha's statement 'as the seed, so the fruit, who does good, receives good, who does bad, receives bad.'⁵⁹ The words have an obvious congruity with those of Galatians 6:7, 'whatever a man sows, that shall he reap'.

Buddhism holds that common worldly cravings for personal gain, domination, and protecting a viewpoint produce karmic fruit in every case. Wrong views, such as a deeply held erroneous belief about the nature of the world, cause all other matters to be perceived incorrectly and hence all actions to be incorrect. This is an illustration of the effect of the ignorance and delusion, which is referred to as 'karma- vipaka' or the fruits of actions in Buddhism, but not clearly espoused in Christianity.⁶⁰ Such wrong views may be held personally or by a society, and the Venerable Prayuth invites consideration of 'the results on society and the quality of life even if one social value, that of materialism, were to change into an appreciation of skilful action and inner well-being as the foundations for true happiness'.⁶¹ Buddhism, like Christianity, does not associate material poverty with Enlightenment; rather both traditions speak of 'attachment' (in Buddhist terms) or 'love of money' (in Christian terms, for example 1 Timothy 6:10), as preclusive of spiritual development.

The insightful Thai scholar-monk, Buddhadasa, has also commented on the similarities between Christianity and Buddhism in his three Thompson Memorial Lectures to the Thailand Theological Seminary in 1967.⁶² He saw many similarities in the higher intent of both groups of teachings; for example, he aligned Matthew 5:17 ('do not suppose that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to complete') with the Mahasihanada Sutta Majjhima-Nikaya 12/37/46 statement of the Buddha ('the Tathagata, the perfected one, appears in the world for the gain of the many, the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world'). And even the Golden Rule ('Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets') so beloved of Christians (Matthew 7:12) finds its direct equivalent in the ancient Buddhist Dhammapada 129-130, transmitted before the Gospels from oral traditions extending back to around 500 BCE. Perhaps the most graphic similarity with respect to this monograph is the Buddha's answer to a question about the truths of other religions, in which he said that if the principles that are adumbrated in the Eight-Fold Noble Path are present, there will be enlightened

⁵⁹ Prayuth Payutto (1993) Page 41.

⁶⁰ Andrew Liston, personal communication, 23 October, 2002.

⁶¹ Prayuth Payutto (1993) Page 65.

⁶² Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1967) Pp 125.

people⁶³ – and the similarity of these principles suggests a basis for further inter-religious dialogue. In fact, it was Buddhadasa again who suggested that ‘the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Matthew is far more than enough and complete for practice to obtain emancipation’, and that faith in the Christian sense ‘does in fact imply a concentrated mind’.⁶⁴

I have emphasized Buddhadasa's thoughts on Christianity here and in other sections because he made a rare consideration of Christianity in his use of a methodology that started by looking for Christian concepts that are routinely denied to exist in Buddhism; the obvious example is God. He was able to find the concept in Buddhism in the form of expressions of natural law, or Dependent Origination (Conditioned Co-Production). His thesis, which has been introduced earlier, that everyday language uses the same words as, but with different meanings from, ‘dharma (dhamma) language’, produces the corollary that each culture will express its deep truths in ways that differ in this way as well in terms of the culture itself. His disciple Santikaro explains this with the examples of: Matthew 10:39 – ‘he who loses his life for my sake will find it’, which Buddhadasa correlated with the loss of the egotistical self leading to eternal life, and 1 Corinthians 7:29 – ‘let those who have wives live as though they had none’, which expresses the concept of non-attachment. If taken literally, such Biblical statements can be grossly misinterpreted.⁶⁵

Buddhadasa's exposition of the Law of Nature or Dependant Origination or Conditionality as a Buddhist equivalent of the concept of God is an unusual, yet helpful means of communicating between religious traditions. It is similar to the mechanism used by Aldous Huxley who, when discussing the common spiritual elements of religious traditions, observed that the ultimate ‘transformation of consciousness’ relies on both immanence and transcendence.⁶⁶ In Christianity and Buddhism we see these as God and Dependant Origination respectively. Buddhadasa divides the word ‘dharma (dhamma)’ into four groups of meanings; nature, the law of nature, human duty according to that law, and the fruits of human action as a result of that law. In so doing he elucidates the aspect of human duty – probably the oldest meaning of the word ‘dharma’ – as living in accord with nature, the perfection of which is the end of suffering (‘dukkha’) that is nirvana; and this is the ‘will of God’ in the culturally different dharma language of Christianity. Conceiving nature as the will of God, even ‘acts of God’ such as devastating earthquakes may be understood as the fruits of causes and conditions in accordance with Dependant Origination – or the grace of God, and fitting in with all such events as prayer or worship of God. So he explains creation as the ‘body of God’ and the law of Dependent Origination as ‘God itself’.⁶⁷

The use of Christian terms to express Buddhist teachings is in one way the converse of the approach that I have used in representing Jesus' words in Buddhist language, although Buddhadasa's approach is far more ambitious in

⁶³ Mahaparinibbanasutta (Digha-Nikaya 160).

⁶⁴ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1967) Page 29-30.

⁶⁵ Santikaro Bhikkhu (2001) Pages 80-103.

⁶⁶ Aldous Huxley (1947) Page 31.

⁶⁷ Santikaro Bhikkhu (2001) Pages 80-103.

so far as it encounters the dogmas of institutions. I first encountered his eclectic manner of reconsidering documented spiritual insights from first principles in attempting to translate one of his taped lectures, and found his approach particularly persuasive. In the case of the current example, Buddhism's relative unconcern with creation myths, and its preference to focus on the psychological creation of the world that we inhabit as a result of our ignorance and craving, explain the confusion of past literal comparisons of the origin of the earth. I consider that Buddhadasa might well have interpreted such statements of Jesus as 'seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' (Matthew 6:33) as being related to the Buddha's disinterest in unimportant philosophical matters in comparison with spiritual matters, and even to the intent of the Old Testament's 'you shall not make for yourself an idol' (Exodus 20:4).⁶⁸

Buddhadasa described Jesus as a universal prophet offering the Truth as 'appropriate to his time, place and culture',⁶⁹ and saw all religion as aiming to free us from selfishness and thus lead us to peace. In this way, Jesus, the saviour from selfishness, unselfishly gave his life – this was consistent with his unselfish life, which demonstrated his teachings. For this reason, Buddhadasa sees that the simple interpretation of faith as belief has lost the essence of Jesus' life as an example for us. In all this he sees Jesus and the Buddha as parallel wisdom teachers using their own lives to demonstrate the teaching. Both teachers emphasized this fact in their teachings; in the words of Jesus – 'he who has seen me has seen the father' and 'believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (John 14:9,11), and those of the Buddha – 'whoever sees the dharma sees me'. In a similar manner, Buddhadasa sees the redeemer Jesus in the Buddha's words – 'one is one's own refuge' (Dhammapada 160) and sees the Buddha as one who 'redeemed himself perfectly'.⁷⁰ In dying, Jesus 'commended his spirit' which is interpreted to mean that he let go of all attachment to 'me and mine', to use another of Buddhadasa's terms, as a dramatic demonstration of his teaching of unselfishness as liberation.

Further similarities must have also occurred in Buddhadasa's disciplined reading of the New Testament and the Pali scriptures – for example, the further themes of oneness with creation (in Christian language) or nature and natural law (in Buddhadasa's explanatory language) found in such statements of Jesus as: 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30); 'yet not what I will, but what you will' (Mark 14:36); 'I am the way the truth and the life' (John 14:6), and 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12). In short, Buddhadasa has rendered an inestimable service to Christianity in expounding its teachings with a unique generosity of spirit. He followed the Buddha's advice of not trusting in the authority of persons or in the original suttas alone. This meant comparing Christian and Buddhist teachings with his own spiritual experience according to their consistency with: the quenching of human suffering; the ultimate emptiness of all forms; conditionality applying in all cases and to all

⁶⁸ Michael von Bruck (2001) Pages 158-175.

⁶⁹ Santikaro Bhikkhu (2001) Page 92.

⁷⁰ Santikaro Bhikkhu (2001) Page 95.

things; reducing clinging, bondage, defilements, and increasing contentment, solitude, energy, and ease of one's support.⁷¹

A rare Buddhist, Buddhadasa is likely to be remembered as a major source of intelligible dharma in the West. While Buddhism sometimes makes much of its different traditions, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, Buddhadasa provides a ready example of transcendence of doctrinal approaches, for much of his approach is drawn not from his Theravada culture but from the Mahayana. And often it is the Mahayana that is more appealing to non-Buddhists, with its myths and deities, with a range of practices that extend to faith-based schools and share much with Christian approaches. However, ultimately, sects and traditions are not ends in themselves and are better viewed as means of communication about modes of action. In many ways, Thich Nhat Hanh presents similar views through his Buddhist 'Interbeing' philosophy and movement, particularly reverence for Jesus as demonstrating the teachings in his life; in Christian language, he sees that we are all sons (and daughters) of God because we all have the same fundamental Buddha nature as Jesus. He interprets the Holy Spirit as faith, mindfulness, and love, which are all cultivated by conscious practices that Jesus demonstrated including meditation.⁷² However, it is the literality of some Christian interpretations that Jesus was the 'only' son of God that makes no sense to Buddhists. Increasingly, Jesus is interpreted to be an historical Bodhisattva – an enlightened being of the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism. The Bodhisattva ideal represents a powerful method of emphasizing the emotional and active aspects of Buddhahood, and it would seem that we are not far away from Jesus being seen as a Buddha – a classification that, while possibly not of concern to those delving into deep Dharmic language, would probably further interfaith dialogue.

Before leaving consideration of similarities, the formalistic approach to religion through ethics or commandments warrants brief consideration. Jesus' compression of the Ten and other Commandments into love of God and neighbours echoes the explicit precepts of Buddhism and their positive expression. Those precepts preclude killing, taking that which is not given, sensual excesses, false speech, harsh speech, frivolous speech, slanderous speech, covetousness, hatred, and false views. The same precepts are presented in their respective positive forms as loving-kindness, generosity, stillness and simplicity and contentment, truthful communication, kind and gracious words, helpful and harmonious words, tranquillity, compassion, and wisdom.⁷³ Again, these are remarkably similar to Jesus' explication as the 'new law' for what was 'said of old' in which he equates killing with anger, adultery with lustful thought, and false swearing with obfuscatory answers, and also advocates tolerance, compassion and generosity in the face of aggression, and love in the face of hate (Matthew 5:21-48). I see precepts as personal training principles that contribute to spiritual development, and which are derived from the experience of Enlightened persons and are expressed in their lives. So, why would there be any difference in these matters? Once

⁷¹ Santikaro Bhikkhu (2001) Pages 80-103.

⁷² Thich Nhat Hanh (1995) Page 35.

⁷³ Subuti (1995) Page 66-68.

again it seems to be our literalistic approaches to religious matters that distracts our focus from the original intent of spiritual teachings. And lest such sentiments be derided as a form of universalism – ‘saying that all religions teach the same thing’ – I emphasize that the overwhelming similarities are not between the two religions but between their ‘founders’.

These somewhat random expositions of Buddhist teachings and similar Christian teachings may be clarified by the conclusions of some Christian thinkers and practitioners informed about Buddhism.

Christian Theology and Buddhism

While I have always been less impressed by the exaggerated differences between religions than by the overwhelming similarities and their implications, I often find that attempts to show differences in fact illuminate similarities. For example, an informed Buddhist illustrating the dilemma of entrenched approaches of Christianity in Asia notes the repellent effect of ‘the bloody image of Christ on the Cross’. He says ‘we must possess very strong nerves to accept as the object of daily worship the image of the bloody starving Christ’, particularly when this is contrasted with radiant joy emanating from images of the Buddha, and concludes ‘I would like to see the image of a smiling Jesus more often’.⁷⁴ While probably not quite what he intended, the twin works, *Our Gods* of Liu Xiao Xian that formed part of the 2002 Buddha Radiant Awakening Exhibition of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, illustrates both his point and my own. Liu’s pathetic crucified Jesus is comprised of thousands of tiny images of a happy Buddha, and his happy Buddha is comprised of thousands of tiny images of a pathetic Jesus.⁷⁵ In other words, the imagery may be outmoded in some cases (one more than the other in this instance) but the underlying intent of teachings about suffering and eternal Buddhahood, happiness, or whatever heavenly term we use, is the same. The role of suffering in the teachings of the Buddha and Jesus has much more than this to offer, even in terms of their life stories, which in the case of Jesus emphasizes personal suffering; once again Machida offers an interesting Buddhist perspective.

It is argued⁷⁶ that the reason Jesus had to suffer physically was his own ‘original sin’, and that he foresaw this in his words of Mark 8:31-33 because, ‘if Jesus were completely transcendent, he would not have to “suffer many things”’. His suffering of the consequences of such sin represents the law of karma, or in particular karma-vipaka, which is further illustrated, according to Machida, in the story of Jesus and the women caught in an adulterous act. In that story, Jesus after stating ‘let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone’ (John 8:3-8), bends down to write with his finger in the dirt, perhaps as a sign that he too had committed sin. Thus Jesus’ love and compassion may have been fuelled by his bond with the common sinfulness of humanity – another parallel with the loving-kindness (‘metta’) and compassion (‘karuna’) of Buddhism deriving from real understanding of the

⁷⁴ Soho Machida (1999) Page 72.

⁷⁵ Jackie Menzies (ed) (2002) Pages 178-180.

⁷⁶ Soho Machida (1999) Page 61.

interdependence of all beings. The element of evil coexisting, as an essential partner, with the sacred in this explanation of Jesus also appears in Jung's 'quaternity' as the trinity plus evil. Such an explanation of inherent evil contrasts with conventional Christian approaches of external opposing forces of good and evil that have led modern society to its confrontational approach, and offers further food for thought about the essential sameness of what we think were the teachings of Jesus and the Buddha.

After decades of focusing on differences between the Christian and Buddhist traditions, a more constructive interaction has emerged that allows co-interpretation of similar teachings. Rather than forcing synergies, the newer approaches acknowledge the cultural and geographical differences that colour the approaches of Jesus and Buddha. For example, the lowly background of Jesus compared to the Buddha may have led to his use of social issues to illustrate spiritual truths – but this by no means justifies a Christian self-view of superior welfare concerns compared to Buddhism. Buddhism's actions and teachings of compassion extend from the Buddha's own opposition of the Indian caste system, to his extending spiritual development to all persons,⁷⁷ and to non-human animals through such forms as vegetarianism. In fact, it is a common criticism of literalist Buddhists that Christians show no concern for other living beings – even Jesus cursed a non-fruiting fig tree (Matthew 21:19-20), and sent evil spirits into pigs (Mark 5:11-13), which incidentally raises another literalistic criticism of Jesus' treating evil as external to a person.

Other common criticisms not necessarily based on literal interpretations include: God's apparent karmic regret at creating man being ridiculous for an omniscient being; the inauspicious birth of Christ at a time associated with slaying of the innocents; imperialistic actions in the name of Christianity; aggressive conversion approaches; a cruel God who demands sacrifice; and the excesses of the Church of the Crusades, the Inquisition, and colonialism.⁷⁸ In these, as in others instances, the intent of teachings is lost on the literalist and the oppressed – and there is no doubt that Christianity has been grossly misused to serve human ends. Much has also been made of the detail of the miracles of Jesus and the Buddha, but the intent of miracles in both cases appears to have been simply as a means of appealing to persons who expected such demonstrations.⁷⁹ Countless other examples of similarities in approach and teachings have been elicited and more are to be expected in the growing literature of constructive comparisons between the traditions. But these are not always highlighted as this is often thought to undermine one tradition or the other. In fact, all that is undermined is selfish projections and institutional attachments to particular beliefs or, in the crude vernacular parlance, a 'market catchment'.

Lloyd Geering's⁸⁰ discussion of other faith traditions, expressed as 'there is only the flux of life, the passing show of existence ... just delight in life, delight in experience, delight in the way the world continually pours out and

⁷⁷ Jose Ignacio Cabezón (1999) Pages 19-20.

⁷⁸ Heinz Muermel (2001) Pages 60-79.

⁷⁹ Jose Ignacio Cabezón (1999) Pages 21-22.

⁸⁰ Lloyd Geering (2001).

passes away. I want to shift away from the notion that only the eternal, only the unchanging is religiously valuable.' He considers that the capitalist society, with which Christianity is now associated, encourages saving for an undefined future at the expense of 'religious joy in life here and now', which was the essence of Jesus' teachings of the kingdom of God being harmony and peace in everyday human settings.

In this context, Geering sees that Buddhism assists in providing a non-theistic conception of 'God' that complements the dynamism of God working through life, which is the primary emphasis of the Jesus story. Consistently with the approach in this book of a Buddhist interpretation of the 'Sayings of Jesus', Geering's theology does not imply any compromise of the essential teachings of Jesus. Such is the nature of the evolution of faith and its various cultural and historical environments; for example, the beliefs of Jeremiah, Augustine and Martin Luther might have been mutually inconsistent, but they were 'all people of faith, great faith, and they belong to a tradition of faith'. In the same way, the Judaeo-Christian tradition has, over recent centuries, been adapting to a new cultural environment – one that is global and questioning in nature.

Don Cupitt looks beyond the scientific and bureaucratic attempts to create a stable world ruled by law to suit human sensibilities and seeks a state where one is 'content to be part of the flux from which we came and into which we will return, which has produced us and which we also produce'.⁸¹ In common with Buddhist teachings, Cupitt sees attainment of a heavenly state on earth, which is freed from conventional religion.⁸² He views the world as wider than that fashioned by humans and as much a part of humans as they are part of it, and that consequently humans should therefore feel at home in every aspect of nature. This is similar to Buddhadasa's extensive discourses on the deeper meaning of Thai word, derived from Pali, for nature – 'thammachat', in which he emphasizes an etymology of the essential laws and Truth encapsulated in the word 'thamma' (Pali rendered as 'dhamma', Sanskrit rendered as 'dharma'), and the cycles of life and life itself contained in the word 'chat'.

Considering some similar themes, the eminent theologian Jurgen Moltmann⁸³ concludes that hierarchical conceptions of a transcendent God as creator encourage humans to see themselves as independent of nature. Moltmann argues for a 'participating knowledge' that considers an object in relation to its surrounding interactions, such as a community in nature. The indwelling of God in creation, expressed in 'on earth as it is in heaven', means that all beings find bliss in nearness to God, who is in all things.⁸⁴ Buddhist concepts of skilful action being that which accords with Natural Law, or the true nature of reality, make the same observation.

The 'giver of life' in the form of the Holy Spirit is God's manifestation in all living forms and their interactions, according to Moltmann who unites theological and ecological doctrine in a manner not possible from the

⁸¹ Don Cupitt (1995) Page 8.

⁸² Don Cupitt (1995) Page 149.

⁸³ Jurgen Moltmann (1985) Page xi.

⁸⁴ Jurgen Moltmann (1985) Page 1-19.

pervasive subject-object perception and its product, mechanistic domination of nature. He argues that rather than seeing God in the world and the world in God, mechanistic perceptions sought God in human events as exemplified in the Old Testament, in which 'nature is stripped of her divinity, politics becomes profane, history is divested of fate'.⁸⁵ By contrast, Buddhism might say that nature is imbued with 'divinity', politics is the social milieu of combined personal morality, and history may be understood in terms of karmic social consequences and conditions. Christian misinterpretation of its scriptures may thus have negated the central message of a God leading his creation towards him through the Holy Spirit, as indicated in Romans 8:19-21, which coincides with the non-self and interdependence explanations of Buddhism.

The salvation message of Christianity relies on the logic that, if Christ saves all creation, then he is also the source of all creation. Salvation instills awareness of God's sustaining of the world through Christ (Hebrews 1:2) and of the indwelling of God in the human body as 'the temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 6:13-20). Thus all creation is made divine through the indwelling of the Spirit that sustains creation.⁸⁶ Omniscience, immanence, and omnipotence are contained in Moltmann's view of nature and its laws as the idea that everything is imbued with the divine – a view remarkably coincident with Buddhist teachings of Dependent Origination, karma, and interdependency if the divine is understood as the Truth.

Moltmann's arguments about the kingdom of God also reflect similar conclusions to those of Buddhadasa. He argues that if heaven is part of the created world, yet distinguishable from the visible component (as captured in early Christian creeds which refer to 'all things visible and invisible'), then it forms the means for God's immanence in the world. This original Christian understanding was incidentally congruent with Buddhist understanding of the 'sambhogakaya' (a meditative state of the body), but was changed from that interpretation of the prayer for God's will 'on earth as it in heaven' to be a hope for one's soul to migrate vertically to heaven after death.

Christian theology is necessarily associated with, and has often been an apologist for, the institutionalized church. Critics see the church as having changed an original individual Christian call to spiritual development into a standardized doctrine. This takes the form of an egalitarian network-style communion, similar to the Buddhist Sangha (the community of spiritual practitioners), being incorporated into an hierarchical institution. This explains the revisions of Biblical interpretation that pervade the independent theology of Moltmann's works. Nevertheless, even if such criticisms are accepted, as they must be at least in part, the institutionalized church provides teachings that, in the words of the Buddha, should be accepted by each of us only after testing 'from your own experience', for that is the basis of spiritual development.

⁸⁵ Jurgen Moltmann (1985) Page 13.

⁸⁶ Jurgen Moltmann (1985) Page 98.

Western Philosophy and Buddhism

Another means of understanding something of Buddhism is the emerging dialogue with Western philosophy, such as the ever-growing range of books documenting meetings between the Dali Lama and Western academics and professionals. These have assisted understanding of the psychology inherent in the ancient Buddhist teachings, and clarified its congruence with Western understanding in an intelligible language.

An intriguing dialogue between a father, the French philosopher Jean-François Revel, and his son, the experienced French-born Tibetan monk Matthieu Ricard,⁸⁷ contrasts the Christian creator God with Buddhism's laws of karma and interdependence. Buddhism might argue that a creating God, separate from creation, could not remain omnipotent, eternal and autonomous after indulging in the act of creating an ongoing world. Within the scientific knowledge of the time in which Buddhism emerged, it accepted an advanced cosmology based on a continuum of particles condensed to form the four composite elements of the universe, which are water, earth, fire and air. Mountains arose by a primordial ocean being churned by winds according to the laws of cause and conditions. This world had no beginning because Buddhism considers time as merely a concept developed by an observer to explain a succession of moments, and having no intrinsic existence of itself,⁸⁸ as also argued by Moltmann and many mystics of all traditions.

From the viewpoint of the philosopher, separation of science from philosophy and the increasing orientation of science to technology have impoverished all three fields, resulting also in a separation of inquiry and knowledge from personal morality. Greek philosophers traditionally lived according to the morality they espoused. This ethic is now rare in Western society outside monasteries, yet it forms a central component of the Sangha concept of Buddhism as the communion of practitioners of moral precepts pursuing spiritual development. The concept was once part of Western society; as illustrated by the fact that for example, the origins of the word 'ritual' – from the Latin 'ritus' – includes the connotation of correct action similar to the Buddhist emphasis on moral action as a developmental discipline.

Jean-François Revel divides Western philosophy into two eras; the period from the sixth century BCE until the sixteenth century - when it was composed of two main branches, the conduct of human life and the knowledge of nature, and the period since the middle of the seventeenth century - when the first branch was assumed by religion and the second by science. The impoverished philosophy that continued from the seventeenth century retained only metaphysics with its attendant uncertainties of life beyond nature. Thus was lost the early Greek philosophy that was dominated by practice intent on creating a thoroughly good person, which might be explained as the achievement of happiness or salvation through the living of a good life. Thus

⁸⁷ Jean-François Revel and Matthieu Ricard (1998) Pp 310.

⁸⁸ Jean-François Revel and Matthieu Ricard (1998) Pages 116-118.

philosophy was the overarching discipline for governance of behaviour and for the development of civilized society.

The absence of such an umbrella over moral and philosophical life has, according to Revel, created the opportunity for Buddhism to enter the West. As perhaps the leading philosophical respondent to the phenomenon of Buddhism in the modern West, Revel's articulation of the 'opportunity' for Buddhism stops short of acknowledging the unfulfilled spiritual need of persons apparently assured of material comforts – yet this, too, explains an attraction to the teachings that unwaveringly advocate personal development towards improved mindfulness, Insight and eventually Enlightenment. It seems to me that the transcription of that Buddhist praxis into an everyday rational language for its initial steps, sufficient to allow progress that creates confidence to proceed further, sits well with rational, and intensely sceptical, approaches of Western society, and thereby facilitates spiritual searchers to tread their own paths.

Toward a Personal Gospel

There must be as many Paths to the essential Truths as there are seekers, and the Path of which this book is part cannot suit all persons; we must each find our own. All this book does is introduce the congruity of the teachings and moral lives of Jesus and the Buddha with a clarity that is sometimes difficult to obtain within the culturally bound forms of both traditions, and the diverse denominations of Christianity and the 'yanas' of Buddhism.

Jesus taught and demonstrated that normal secular life entailed suffering that was relieved forever in the kingdom of God; the Buddha taught and demonstrated the same lessons in a cultural environment where the traditional literal concept of God was able to be considered on its merits, and discarded. Whether this offers information relevant to comparisons of the relative sophistication of religions is of little concern to me in this analysis, because it is clear that there are examples in parts of both traditions of cultural influence of the time transcending objective statement. The canonical texts of both religions contain references to such matters as women, the environment, and social hierarchy that are inconsistent with modern Western sensitivities – but why would they not, as they are products of their times and, in any case, were each concerned with more fundamental aspects of humanity. However, the simple essence remains: all persons have the capacity for personal spiritual development that will free them from the trials of ordinary life.

The religion of the ordinary person is at best an imitation of the transcendental reality related by mystics, complete with its apparent logical inconsistencies and cultural biases – for the transcendent is everywhere present and eternal, both concepts beyond our routine logic, and we can but hope for some kind of insight. Likewise, cultural differences can account for apparently irreconcilable differences across traditions; but while 'cultural and doctrinal differences must remain, ... they do not invalidate a very real quality of

existential likeness'.⁸⁹ So, in seeking this essential sameness in this exercise, I may seem to have deviated from traditional teachings, though I have, so far as I can, remained faithful to their intent. Near the beginning of this work, I emphasized that the language of the mystics differs from that of the secular world even though it may seem the same. Apparent meanings are often incorrect as we mistake metaphor, allegory and poetical expression for concepts with which we are familiar – and the intent of so many of these scriptures is to awaken us to the reality that we obscure by those false concepts.

Of course, personal qualms about the consequences of deviating from the teachings heard in a church or temple can induce 'suffering' that may seem additive to the sufferings of normal life. Some will see such suffering as caused by attachment to an idea. For others, it is important to recall that nothing in these pages is presented in place of the essential teachings, but rather as one explanation of them. This fine line is similar to that faced by Christian priests surveyed as to their belief in a personal God, who know that a truthful yet negative answer based on their own spiritual Insights may not be intelligible to their parishioners and may possibly even damage the fragile faith of those with less insight. However, by considering such views as explanatory, one may advance in one's faith. For example, the Eucharist is variously celebrated but retains its central ritualistic meaning of sharing in the unity of all things, expressed in the church as the blood and body of Jesus as an immanence of God. The ritual is a personal expression, conducted meditatively to celebrate the oneness of all things with the faith that further understanding will develop as a karmic outcome.

The Buddhist interpretation in this book has focused on the teachings of Jesus. The subsequent development of Christianity, while alluded to herein, is another matter, and as it owes so much to St. Paul's evangelical efforts and his own mystical insights, has well been referred to as Paulism. But Paul could not have been so effective, had Jesus not been 'complicitous in his own mythologization'.⁹⁰ This book does not seek a reversion to Jesusism, but rather examines his essential teaching, which is so similar to that of Buddhism – and may be part of 'the growth of a truly universal consciousness in the modern world'⁹¹ that emerges from consideration of the common intent of separated traditions.⁹² Various other enquirers have noted the hundred or more New Testament references apparently drawn from Buddhism,⁹³ and such works and future interpretations will doubtless stimulate further searching for the essence of Christianity. Perhaps that essence is retained in books rejected from the ninth century compilation of the Bible because they offended the orthodoxy of the day, such as the Gospel of Thomas which presents a Buddha-like Jesus saying 'if you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you'. Literalists and their fellow-travellers have created a

⁸⁹ Thomas Merton (1968) Page 312.

⁹⁰ Jack Miles (2001) Page 115.

⁹¹ Lawrence Cunningham (1992) Page 236.

⁹² Bede Griffiths (1989).

⁹³ 122 have been noted by A.J. Edmunds (1904).

compromised, complex and contingent Christianity that has been separated from its essence – and that essence is one further expression of the eternal Truth.

The essential teaching is simple, logical, and practical – simply following rules while maintaining our everyday lives is but empty ritual. Rather, we may embark on a self-developmental path that will totally transform our minds and hearts. And this is also daunting from any worldly perspective. But it seems more comforting than the literal teachings of modern evangelical messages that are reminiscent of the wonderful story in Anthony de Mello's insightful book *One Minute Nonsense* in which the Enlightened master and a preacher meet. “Allow me to explain the Good News my religion proclaims” says the preacher. The Master is all attention. “God is love. And He loves and rewards us forever if we observe His commandments” continued the preacher. “If” said the Master, “Then it isn't all that good, is it?” The good news, the Gospel, may not be based on belief in such contingent external offerings of the church and sought by those desirous of easy comfort. It may simply be that contained in Jesus' life and teachings, even with the embellishments that such documents as 'Q' seek to omit. It seems that we ourselves are alone responsible for our own salvation. Such a message is not be unique to Jesus, and may, for some, be understood more fully through the more comprehensive doctrine of the Buddha⁹⁴ - the Buddha's Gospel.

⁹⁴ This has been expressed in a stimulating manner by A.N. Whitehead (1996 - Page 56) as ‘The Buddha gave his doctrine to enlighten the world: Christ gave his life. It is for Christians to discern the doctrine. Perhaps in the end the most valuable part of the doctrine of the Buddha is its interpretation of his [Jesus] life’.

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Appendix

A BUDDHIST IMITATION OF JESUS' WORDS⁹⁵ (presented as a continuous text)

Persons who have renounced worldly pursuits, and gained a degree of Insight of the way to the Truth, teach of the truly Enlightened persons who can show the way which all should pursue. Yet the majority of persons, while sometimes attracted to the forms of rituals recommended for practice for such spiritual development, remain firmly committed to their worldly lives, and trust in popular modes of behaviour and belief for their happiness. But in so doing they produce their own suffering. Just as ritualistic acts like baptism or merit-making ceremonies must be ineffective without heart-changed commitment, so must be chasing after the teacher without practicing the teaching. To seek the peace of a great teacher whose face shines with holy Enlightenment of that realm where suffering is lost, is to practice the teachings; but to follow without commitment is to experience recurrent stress, frustration and anxiety.

Pure-hearted seekers who practise with commitment may learn from other seekers and attain Enlightenment even while the others remain in their search. And, once gaining an experience of Enlightenment, they may well seek seclusion to further practise their meditation, to confront past desires and anxieties, and to refine their Insight. They will also see the true nature of routine desires for food, shelter, fame, wealth, power and other human concerns with an Insight that clarifies past confusions and overcomes all desires through understanding of the operation of the true nature of reality, which is Natural Law. From Awareness of such experiences comes the overarching teaching that Enlightenment is more easily approached by those unconcerned with material and other attachments and who acknowledge their spiritual needs, and within this condition; that those who practise Awareness and act morally as a training practice for Insight will find that Insight, that those who realize that their suffering is caused by their own actions will learn more of the first step toward Awareness, and that being ostracized by worldly persons for spiritual practice in pursuit of the Path to Enlightenment should not concern them for it has ever been thus, and Enlightenment is of immeasurably greater value than social acceptance as it is beyond that world of desire and suffering.

Teachings also translate Enlightened Insights into moral guidelines to assist seekers of the Path to Enlightenment to behave in a skilful manner as an essential part of their spiritual practice. Such teachings include maintaining a non-violent attitude to all beings, returning good acts for bad, showing loving concern for those who create opposition, responding generously to requests for gifts and loans of all things from material possessions to personal time, so far as it does not compromise spiritual practice, for what we give away was never

⁹⁵ Rendered into Buddhist language from *The Sayings of Jesus* in Ivan Havener (1990).

ours in the first place. The Enlightened know and teach that our enemies can take nothing of value away from us, that our everyday reputations are always transient and not part of our true selves, and that attachment to material items, fashion, calm, or time causes stress, depression, or a sense of loss when we feel a threat of their being taken from us. Yet when we are detached from these, no one can take anything from us. This Natural Law that is the true nature of reality extends to all persons and things, so seek to act in accord with it.

We should show compassion and generosity not only to those whom we judge worthy, or only welcome our own kind, for even the least aware of persons do this! Observing the moral teachings will lead towards the intuitive knowledge that, just as suffering comes to all persons in the human world, so can Awareness. Show mercy and forgiveness at all times and do not form negative opinions about others because everything is the result of prior actions and cannot now be different, for every one of our acts creates conditions or effects, which depending on circumstances, produces necessary outcomes under the aspect of Natural Law described as karma, both good and bad, both acts and thoughts. In this way, our desires and acts are the source of our own suffering. Practice of moral behaviour encourages us to reduce desires as an initial step to Awareness. One simple personal guideline is to be Aware of the acts of others that make us feel calm and peaceful, and to act in the same manner.

The teachings of the Truth are the Truth, and your teacher should be one who is Aware, Insightful and has experienced or strives for Enlightenment, and you should retain your respect for your teacher throughout your life. Those who teach without experience can easily bias the teachings, unwittingly or otherwise. In pursuing your practice, do not compare yourself to others for it is far easier to notice faults or comment on another's practice or behaviour than to be Aware of yourself. Focus on your own spiritual development so that you may develop Insight, for this is the best means to then guide another person. For the fruits of Enlightenment are only good, and acts conducted with the Insightful Awareness of the Enlightened produce only correct results, while acts conducted without Awareness easily conduce to suffering, as such human actions embody selfish desires and intentions.

Many persons follow the rituals and outward forms of religious teachings but do not practise the spiritual development of the Path to Enlightenment. Those who follow the practices of spiritual development are resilient to the tempers of the world, but those who hear of the Path and do not follow it actually increase their stress, frustration and anxiety. These teachings are not for a selected few of a particular religion, for there are many Paths that lead to the Truth. All who have faith in the teachings and the practices that lead to the Truth receive their reward from that moment onward.

The proof of Enlightenment is in actions and their fruit, not merely physical healings and miraculous happenings, but understanding and explaining the true nature of reality and the universal availability of Enlightenment, while ever maintaining goodwill to those unwilling to understand. And yet, the heraldic voice of this deliverance from suffering is ever present, albeit not in

fashionably acceptable clothes or the guise of popular prophets. Some worldly teachers may represent the pinnacle of worldly human intellectual and emotional achievements, yet all pale against the least of the Enlightened. This generation, like all before it, ignores and scornfully rejects Aware messengers on the basis of their social nonconformity, and even derides the Enlightened for not conforming to popular notions of Enlightened teachers and for failing to transform into fantastic images of sanctity devoid of human foibles. To follow the Path, you must realize the essential restlessness of the human spirit while we act against the true nature of reality and therefore remain separated from nature, and resolve to continue on the Path despite hardship and beseeching from uncommitted friends, congregational colleagues, and family.

For there are many who search and would experience the true nature of reality if they had the opportunity, yet there are so few true teachers. And so, be true to and share this news, even if it appears to place you in severe personal danger, beginning with those closest in your everyday life and those who know something of the basis of the Truth. Proceed with the peace of reality that is omnipresent love, teaching it where it is welcomed, and retaining your own peace where it is rejected. Do not concern yourself with sustenance for it will be always be provided wherever you travel. Where people are Aware and seek understanding, encourage them on the Path, but where the Truth is rejected depart immediately before the karmic consequences of their past and ongoing thoughts and acts impinge on your peace. Do not be attached to apparent success or failure in response to your teaching, for it is sufficient that those who know the Path share this with those who seek it. For stresses, frustrations, and anxieties in everyday life are perpetuated in those who refuse to hear the teachings, even more so than in those who have never heard that there is an alternative to popular views of reality, who have never heard the Truth. And this Truth is the one universal Truth of all the Enlightened, regardless of sect or person. This Truth of the nature of reality is inherent in little children, yet is unknown to philosophers, and it unites the Enlightened in their experience of the true nature of reality, with its essence in all things, as has been sought across millennia by many informed teachers and powerful rulers whose very attachment to worldly education and power precluded their spiritual progress.

Your constant meditation should be ... 'I honour the Truth that unites all life, hoping that its peace may pervade human understanding and action and, trusting that it provides my everyday needs, I regret my own incorrect actions and regard those of others as past and inconsequential, as I continue to practise for spiritual development'. For earnest seekers of the Truth surely find it as the true nature of reality that is Natural Law reveals itself to whomever seeks to be one with it. Insight of the reality may include powers of healing, clairvoyance, and other miraculous forms that the unknowing may ascribe to superstitious causes when in fact they are simple manifestations of Natural Law understood by those existing within its cycles; for as the only true force, the Natural Law that is reality is surely the strongest. There are only those who seek and know Insight and its opponents; in this matter, no middle path appears. But beware that once you have committed to practice, habits of attachment through friends

and reactions will regularly return and, if entertained, easily entrench themselves more firmly than before.

Those who seek proof before committing to the Path should note the separateness, equanimity, and peace of the Enlightened, which is an ever-available proof, yet only personally provable by experience; this has been sufficient for great persons over countless centuries, though their Insights were often misunderstood. The Enlightened are not hidden but shine as they live their daily lives among those who would see if not blinded by their own dark karmic cycles. Ritual observance alone cannot influence karma for it is the motivation of the heart that determines the purity of a thought or act that then sets in train its own conditions and consequences. Similarly prestige, influence, and education bring suffering unless applied with morality consistent with the reality of Natural Law, and used for your own and others' spiritual development. Yet those attached to worldly desires and possessions will deride and exile the seeker of the Truth and some who know of the Truth's existence will override their own true nature as they pursue their desires, thereby directly and perhaps inadvertently increasing their own suffering; for all thoughts, words and deeds produce their own consequences.

So there is no need for the Aware and Insightful seeker to be concerned about pain or death because, for the Enlightened, everything that happens to them, just as every thought, word, and deed, is consistent with reality, with Natural Law. When you state the Truth, through experience, or through faith, that the moral guidelines and spiritual practices will lead you to the Truth, this reinforces your development, but failure to act and state the Truth when among others is denial of your developing Awareness and will retard your spiritual development. You may constructively and with Awareness criticize teachers who introduce the Truth, as they are only human, but denigrating the Truth itself, once you learn of it, leads only to great anguish of spirit. When you are called to publicly teach or justify your belief, speech, and actions to powerful persons and institutions, do not worry or overly prepare clever intellectual presentations, simply retain Awareness and you will speak correctly. This will not be well received by some groups, and you should cease to associate with them, and rather seek out those who know and act in accordance with Natural Law.

The Enlightened are unconcerned about where their food or clothes will come from, as they know the natural cycles will always provide necessities. They therefore do not need to hoard anything for their future. Such beauty of the Enlightened, existing in complete accord with the true reality, exceeds the highest beauty ever known to worldly persons who worry about all things, even though worry accomplishes nothing, and is itself a karmic outcome of selfishly seeking after beauty, status, security, power, wealth and fame; and even if a desire is attained in some form, attachment to it produces fear for its loss. Your first and highest seeking should be to know the true nature of reality and to live within that realization; achieving this produces all that is required for life – food, clothing, basic medical needs, and shelter - just as all other living forms have their needs met in nature. For, your pursuit of the

reality described in Natural Law produces Insight that accelerates union with the Truth as if the Truth in all things is also seeking to reunite with you.

Seeking worldly possessions causes only distress as they deteriorate or are stolen. Rather seek to know reality, the Truth, because whatever you seek to possess will govern your heart and mind, and hence your actions. This requires practice of the most constant Awareness that leads to Insight so that moments of Enlightenment may be experienced and become more frequent, for such experience cannot be planned, but relies on the heart and mind being well prepared. Practice for focused Awareness and its correct actions facilitates such experience, while neglect of practice and reversion to incorrect actions in frustration of unfulfilled spiritual expectations will produce even further regret when some Awareness returns. Contrary to the peace that experiencing the perennial single Truth of reality embodied in Natural Law imbues, exposing this Truth of personal well-being does not automatically produce peace in the world. In fact, it divides those attached to the perceived world from those seeking Enlightenment about its true nature; it even divides family and close friends.

Even though all worldly persons have experienced the karmic law of cause and effect through such everyday processes as weather prediction, they continually fail to apply the same logic to their actions, motivations, and understanding, and so continue in their cycles of self-induced suffering. Do not be emotionally attached to your worldly rights, and avoid disputation by quick settlement even if you are in the right, for becoming embroiled in argument diverts your heart and thereby hampers your spiritual development. The loving kindness that emanates from you acting in Awareness is of benefit to the unaware, even if they do not seek it, and eventually some will later seek Awareness. Enlightenment begins with small glimpses and grows to encompass all of your life and all things with which you come in contact, although it is difficult to appreciate amidst the distractions of the world, and few do find the essential Path of Awareness that leads to Insight and Enlightenment. So most persons remain subject to recurrent stresses, frustrations, and anxieties, which when severe, may cause them to crave relief through Enlightenment as if it is one more thing to be obtained or possessed; but such flawed motivation and lack of commitment serves only to further increase their woes.

Enlightenment is more accessible to the humble than the proud, the pure-hearted observer than the status-oriented ritual performer, and is unpredictable, for the Path is ever available to all, and its rejection increases the stress of worry and doubt. In some cases, those who never knew of such teachings, yet experience an Enlightened glimpse and then continue to practise, may find their own Path to personal peace and Enlightenment. Practicing Awareness leads to detachment from worldly possessions and selfish loves, including the closest of personal worldly relationships, as pervasive loving-kindness transcends past selfish emotions. It requires diligence in spiritual practice rather than hollow ritual, non-committal prayers, unfelt acts, which may be only obedience to the letter not the intent of laws, for righteous acts may often involve contravening social conventions or even

the letter of a law. Even though a person may be wealthy and exercise authority in a moral manner, the highest human fulfilment is Enlightenment. Its pursuit leads such persons to act with so much wisdom in their worldly duties that they are performed with efficiency and effectiveness, and are pervaded with a loving-kindness that seeks to share the Path with others, and to rejoice in their spiritual progress. The true nature of reality that is Natural Law exists everywhere and has always existed, and it has been interpreted by Enlightened persons in each generation and place, even where the excesses of unenlightened human acts may seem to obscure it. And it will always exist. Moral laws, derived from the Insights of Natural Law by Enlightened persons, support spiritual development if observed in conjunction with meditation, yet by themselves they concern acts and therefore cannot deal with the individual intent or motivations behind acts, and so omit the critical consideration of incorrect intention affecting a person's relationship with the Truth at least as much as an incorrect act.

Commitment of the heart and the mind to the Path to Enlightenment cannot include continued attachment to worldly delights, whether thoughts or acts. This Path is subject to setbacks and is not easy, and as it is the prime purpose of human life, no one should discourage another from pursuing it; to do so will lead only to great regret at some later time. These Insights of the Enlightened, simplified to human moral codes, include responsibilities to guide friends in the correct Path, and to forgive them all and any regretted error or act, for these are all in the past which is no consequence to the eternally present Aware person.

Faith in the Path to Enlightenment can itself accomplish anything, for Insightful actions are always in full accord with the reality described by Natural Law and thus not limited to human understanding nor hampered by contingent karmic effects. Alternative and easy paths will always be propounded and attract many persons, but they serve only to distract from the Truth. Such persons go about their everyday worldly lives clinging to worldly desires and unheeding of the true nature of reality and so remain in cyclical suffering until they die, although some on approaching death may reflect and recognize the cause of their life's anguish, and even, from such an Insight, become Enlightened. Those who are Enlightened are indifferent about worldly attachment and retain their equanimity about events and circumstances. Some will be so Enlightened, while others in the same group will not be and those who are Enlightened will understand the true nature of reality in the world in a way that surpasses the knowledge of those who are clever and intelligent in worldly terms. Those who glimpse this Truth, and pursue Awareness as the Path to Enlightenment, will achieve it, while those who do not pursue it will lose even the benefit of that glimpse and will continue to experience recurrent stress, frustration, and anxiety throughout their lives.