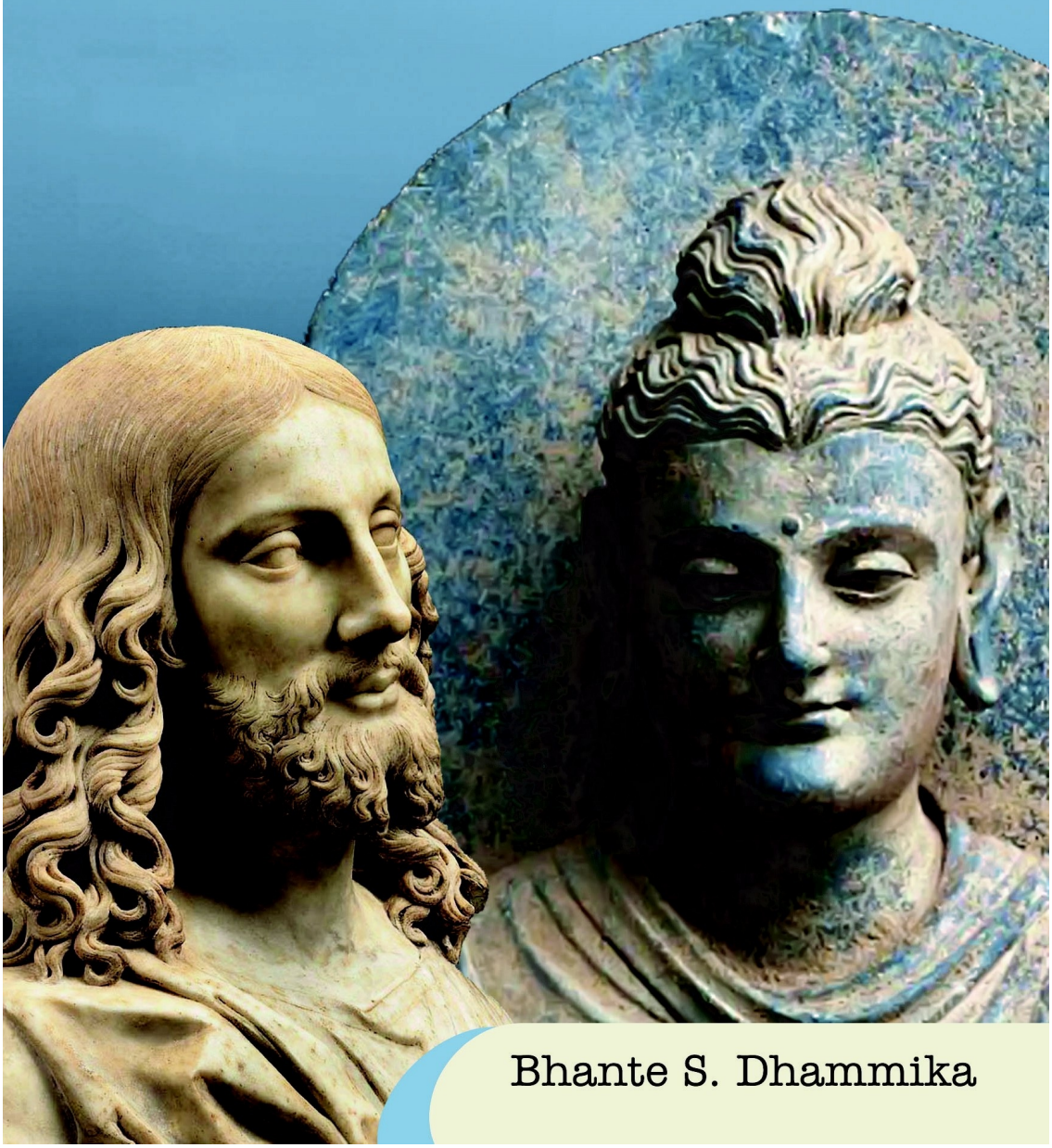
JESUS AND THE BUDDHA

A Study of Their Commonalities and Contrasts



Bhante S. Dhammika

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Cease to do evil, learn to do good, purify the mind. Dhammapada 183.

Let love be sincere, hate the evil, hold tight to the good. Romans 12, 9.

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Forward

Reflection on great personalities, those with sublime virtues, is a skillful act according to Buddhism. This book on Jesus and the Buddha is one such reflection by a Buddhist monk, teacher and writer, known across the Buddhist world particularly for his writings on various aspects of the teachings, history and culture of Buddhism, Bhante Shravasti Dhammika.

In the present work Bhante Dhammika explores the challenging and sensitive theme of a comparative study of two great religious leaders, Jesus and the Buddha. Typical studies in this genre are undertaken by people who know one religion better than the other. Here we have the exception of a writer who is familiar with both religions, one he inherited from his birth and the other he adopted subsequently. The work is testimony to the fact that he has studied both with care. Among its many virtues the most impressive is the impartiality and objectivity with which he treats his subject.

The book is meant for a wide readership, including both Christians and Buddhists, not just for the academics whose study of religion does not always form a part of their existential needs. Even though the book is for the ordinary reader this does not mean that it relies on vague generalizations, superficial research, unchecked quotes or unverified popular beliefs. The author substantiates what he says with textual and other evidence, and carefully sorts out facts from fiction. In other words, Bhante Dhammika takes the ordinary reader very seriously and helps him/her to develop a more realistic view of the two religions.

The underlying assumption of the book seems to be that one should know not only one’s own religion but also those of others. One may wonder why an ordinary believer should know other religions at all. Although it appears true that anyone who is content with their own religion does not need to care about other religions, in the globalized world of today in which physical proximity is a fact of life, one cannot ignore the other or pretend it does not exist. A knowledge of the other religions can be the starting point of understanding the other. At the same time, there can be many things different religions can share, and also there

may be things one can learn from them even though the fundamentals of one's own religion need not be open for negotiation.

It is important that one is convinced of one's own religion. This state of being convinced of one's own religion amounts to considering other religions different and even untrue in some specific sense. What should one do about what one considers to be different and false? Looking at the history of Christianity, the answer to this question has always been to replace (in this case) Buddhism with Christianity. Sustained proselytization in many parts of the traditional Buddhist world (and elsewhere), particularly by new evangelical organizations, continues to be the means to achieve this end. As Bhante Dhammika says: "proselytizing is not just an unspoken way of saying 'I cannot accept your belief", it is a demonstration of it as well." This does not mean that religious people should not share their faith with others. The point is that it has to be done with right attitudes and right motivations, compassionately and openly. Another response has been to underplay the differences and maintain that all religions are at heart the same. The concept of "anonymous Christians"

developed in 1960s by the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner is one example of this attitude. Another is the more recent development of 'dual belonging' or

'multiple belonging' in which some Christians claim that they are simultaneously both Christian and Buddhist.

The policy of replacement is not acceptable because it is based on the unhealthy assumption that what is different from my beliefs should not exist or does not have a right to exist. This can only lead to insensitivity and arrogance. The other attitude of underplaying the differences, apart from being intellectually naïve, seems to be rooted in the mistaken view that to assert and admit differences is to offend the other. Bhante Dhammika's question: "Is it not possible for people to disagree about even questions of great moment and still be friendly, accepting and respectful towards each other?" should prompt us to consider that people can still be courteous and kind to those of different beliefs and work for their well-being without any hidden motives. Finally, Bhante Dhammika gives us in summary form what may be considered the basics of genuine inter-religious co-existence: To hold and be true to one's own faith, to openly and humbly learn from other faiths, to respect other faiths by not trying to replace them with one's own.

I believe that Bhante Dhammika's monograph, in addition to being a mine of interesting information and insights, gives a positive message and much needed guidance to society on how to combine religiosity with humility, humanity and mutual respect. I enjoyed reading this work while learning from it. I hope you will do the same.

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Introduction

Gotama Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth are two of the most significant individuals in history. A hundred civilizations and countless millions of lives have been shaped by their ideas. Until recently, the meeting of Buddhism and Christianity was not a happy one. Christianity arrived in several traditional Buddhist lands in the wake of colonial armies and with a highly devoloped sense of superiority, and Buddhism was generally dismissed as empty idol worship. With a better understanding of Buddhism by Westerners in the second half of the 19th and the early 20th centuries, this stance became more difficult to maintain. The Buddha came to be regarded as a great teacher and his ethics were acknowledged to be as lofty as those of Christianity, at least by the more open-minded Westerners.1 Nonetheless, the overall assessment of

Buddhism remained; it was inferior to Christianity. Today, amongst main-line and liberal churches, there is a willingness to engage with Buddhism in an open and respectful manner and on equal terms. This new openness has led to a desire for studies comparing the lives and teachings of the Buddha and Jesus.

However, there are several obstacles which make an in-depth comparison between the two challenging, so few of the attempts done so far are of much value.

The first problem is that the Buddha lived at least 500 years before Jesus, when writing had probably not come into use in India. There are no contemporary written records of him or anyone else or of any event connected to him. There is a plethora of histories, letters, inscriptions and other texts from Jesus' time although none of them mention him, which is curious given the Bible's claim that he was very well-known. Nonetheless, the documents that are available amply fill out the background of Jesus' career and sometimes even mention persons and events connected with him.

Then there is the problem of archaeology. This discipline actually began as a Christian endeavour in the 1830s, with Edward Robinson trying to find evidence for the Bible in the Levant. Since then biblical archaeology has been a major and on-going project. As a result, a huge amount of artefacts, inscriptions and even ancient manuscripts supplementing and in some cases verifying the information in the Bible have come to light, giving insight into the milieu of Jesus. In the

second half of the 19th century, British archaeologists such as Alexander Cunningham, C.L.Carlleyle, Vincent Smith and others identified and excavated sites mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures, and since then other important discoveries have been made. However, there have been far fewer of these, and some have not been conducted or documented properly. A particularly unfortunate example of this is K. M. Srivastava's excavation of Kapilavatthu, the Buddha's hometown.

Another stumbling block to a balanced and in-depth comparison between Jesus and the Buddha is the texts preserving the latter's words. The New Testament is relatively small, easy to read, and available in almost any bookstore or library and in almost every language. The Buddhist scriptures by contrast are huge and in a form and style awkwardly unfamiliar to the Western reader. Further, whereas Jesus characteristically spoke in epigrams often punctuated with striking parables and similes, the Buddha's talks and dialogues are more like long philosophical treatises. As a result, those who write comparisons between the two great teachers are typically intimately acquainted with the New

Testament while lacking an equally deep knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures.

As a result, they rely more on secondary literature about Buddhism, which in turn is commonly based on secondary sources, usually written by academics rather than Buddhist insiders.

Related to this last problem is that many authors who write comparative studies of Buddhism and Christianity or of their founders, are unfamiliar with the school affiliations and ages of the Buddhist texts they use. There are studies explaining Buddhism or particular Buddhist doctrines using Pali text (6th-4th cent. BCE), the *Divyāvadāna*, (3th cent. CE?), the *Caryapada* (12th cent. CE) the sayings of Japanese Zen masters and the pronouncements of Tibet's currant Dalai Lama, without explaining that Buddhism has evolved during its 2500 year history. This would be equivalent to writing an account of Christianity using the Bible, the Gospel of Thomas, the *Legenda sanctorum*, the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, the *Book of Mormon* and the *Divine Principles* of the Unification Church, and presenting it as representative of standard, mainline Christianity.

Another difficulty is social and cultural. Even when a more accurate and complete knowledge of Buddhism became available in the West, it was generally still disparaged as of little worth. In 1921 the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*

acknowledged that the Buddha “may be credited with the qualities of a great and good man” but that “the fundamental tenets of Buddhism are marked by grave defects that not only betray its inadequacy to become a religion of enlightened humanity, but also bring into bold relief its inferiority to the religion of Jesus Christ.” Now the general tenor in Western society towards religions has changed from this traditional exclusiveness to a new and almost celebratory inclusiveness. Now, the emphasis is on “shared values” and

“common ground”, almost to the degree that even a polite suggestion that different religions might be at odds on some matters is considered “unhelpful”

or even “intolerant”.

The number of books now available claiming to show that Buddhism and Christianity are both pointing to the same truths is impressive. These range from popular titles such as *Living Buddha Living Christ*, *A Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus* and *Two Masters One Message*; to more scholarly works such as *Compassion and Meditation: the Spiritual Dynamic between Buddhism and Christianity*, *Jesus and Buddha: Friends in Conversation*, and *Buddhist and Christian? An Exploration of Duel Belonging*.

Such works are usually sincere and well-meaning but just as often try too hard to see similarities and downplay differences, and the result is inauthenticity.

An unhappy example of such efforts is *Jesus & Buddha, The Parallel Sayings*, edited by New Testament scholar and theologian Marcus Borg, and which has been published several times since 1997. Borg presents a large number of passages from the New Testament and from a range of Buddhist texts which he sees as parallel. A few of the sayings are undoubtedly similar but most of them are not. In some cases the only shared feature is the similes used, the meaning and purpose of the simile being ignored. So on page 105, the account of Jesus walking on the water, taken as proof of his divinity, is paired with a brief extract of a long passage in which the Buddha describes some of the psychic powers a monk, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, could develop as a result of his meditation, including walking on the water. Apart from the mention of walking on water, these two passages have nothing in common.

Again, while Borg uses only the New Testament for the Christian examples, he sometimes parallels them with Buddhist texts from very disparate traditions and

ages. Thus on more than 10 occasions2 he juxtaposes verses from the Gospels with Buddhist texts composed centuries after others he quotes. The passage on page 36 is a description of the layman Vimalakīrti, not the Buddha. The passages he quotes on pages 45 and 49 are from a literary work called *Jātakamāla*, composed more than 1000 years after the Buddha. Most perplexing are other texts which do not seem to have any connection with each other at all, or even contradict each other. On page 56, Matthew 7,15, a warning against false prophets, is paired with a saying by the Buddha disparaging rigorous asceticism rather than inner transformation. Another example can be found on page 101 where Jesus says that after his death his disciples will see him because he will actually still be alive.3 The Buddhist passage supposedly similar to this says almost the exact opposite, that although the Buddha will no longer be accessible, his disciples will have his Dhamma to guide and inspire them.

When Borg discusses parallels between the lives of the Buddha and Jesus we encounter the same problem. He says that they "both had life-transforming experiences at around the age of 30". Jesus was perhaps 29 or 30 when he was baptised and the Buddha attained awakening when he was 35, which would hardly qualify as an "impressive" similarity. Did the Buddha encounter "trouble with the ruling aristocracy" as Borg claims? He was on good terms with the four most powerful monarchs of the time, except Udena of VamLsa who had little interest in any religion. While some brahmans were hostile towards him, others had considerable respect for him, and a good number became his disciples. Jesus by contrast, provoked such strong reactions from the religious

and political authorities that they had him executed. The Buddha's single brief meeting with the courtesan Ambapāli and another with the murderer Angilimāla are, in Borg's estimation, equivalent to Jesus' frequent consorting with sinners and tax collectors. The Buddha accepted a meal from the courtesan Ambapāli as he would have done for anyone else; Jesus consorted with sinners because he believed they were more in need of salvation. Almost all parallels between the lives of Jesus and the Buddha presented by Borg are tenuous or inconsequential at best.

Because Borg is committed to the idea that Buddhism and Christianity share important features he has to ignore all the evidence that does not fit this narrative. Had he given himself the task of finding dissimilarities, he would have discovered many more and more cogent examples than those he has culled for this book.

In the 1960s, the eminent theologian Karl Rahner made the startling claim that there were Buddhists who were actually Christians without realising it, what he called “anonymous Christians”. Now some people are claiming they are fully conscious of being ‘Buddhist Christians’ or ‘Christian Buddhists’, presumably meaning that they live by and intellectually accept the tenets of both without any discordance. For example, Ross Thompson in his book *Buddhist Christianity: A Passionate Openness*, describes himself as a Buddhist Christian although curiously, his other books make it clear that he is very much a Christian, albeit an open and liberal one. One wonders also why he would ordain as and remain Anglican priest. The Catholic theologian Raimon Panikkar wrote: “I left Europe [for India] as a Christian, I discovered I was a Hindu and returned as a Buddhist, without ever having ceased to be a Christian.” However, when I read how Panikkar explanains his “Buddhism” much of it was unfamiliar to me, despite my 42 years as a Buddhist monk. Taking all these notions and claims to their logical conclusion, other theologians such as Lynn de Silva (*The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Christianity*), John Cobb (*Beyond Dialogue. Towards Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*) and Hans Waldnfels (*Absolute Nothingness. Foundations of Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*) have advocated a kind of fusing of the two religions, supposedly for the mutual enrichment of both. And of course, by bowdlerising Buddhism and asserting a Christian theology almost completely divorced from its scriptural foundations and millennia of orthodoxy, it is possible to do this.

My book takes a different approach. It accepts that Buddhism does indeed have

some interesting similarities with Christianity, particularly with its ethics, as it does with Jainism, some schools of Hinduism, Gnosticism, and the writings of Schopenhauer, Freud, Maslow, and many others. One could compare virtually any system of thought with another and find meeting points. However, to do this while papering over or ignoring fundamental differences is to rob each of their unique features and their contributions to the richness and diversity of human spirituality. It is well-meaning but it is also misleading.

One book that does not do this is Keith Yandell and Harold Netland’s *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal*, a respectful and generally well-informed look at Buddhism from a Christian perspective. Even though the authors have serious misunderstandings of certain aspects of Buddhism, I concur with their general approach and intentions. “…Christianity and Buddhism have some similarities, and there is much to be gained by both Christians and Buddhists

from listening carefully to the other. In a fragmented world in which – all too often – religion is used to sanction injustice and violence, it is crucial to find ways to bridge differences and work for peace.

Surely Jesus and the Buddha would expect no less from their followers…Thus, even as we acknowledge areas of common ground and the need for respectful cooperation, honesty demands that we recognize the basic differences between the two visions of reality and how we are to live. Christianity affirms the reality of an eternal, omnipotent creator God. Buddhism denies this. Christianity maintains that in Jesus of Nazareth God became incarnate, and thus that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. There is nothing like this in Buddhism.

Christian metaphysics entails the reality of individual souls and selves.

Buddhism has traditionally denied this. Buddhism locates the source of suffering and the problems in our world in desire/craving and ignorance.

Christian faith claims that it is not ignorance but sin against a holy and righteous God that is the root of all our problems. And so on."4

My goal is to be honest; looking at the similarities, the differences and the contradictions too. And I respect Jesus and the Buddha enough to let them speak for themselves, that is, their words as presented in the respective sacred scriptures. After all, it is the words of each that are or are supposed to be the foundation (*themelion*) and the cornerstone (*akrogoniaios*) of the two religions, more so than those of the Pope or the Dalai Lama, Matthew Fox or Steven Batchlor. For Christianity, I will use the New Testament, mainly the 1994

revised edition of the *Good News Bible*, and for Buddhism the Pali Text Society's edition of the Pāl Li Tipitaka with mostly my own translations. As the

Pāl Li discourses often contain numerous repetitions, I have abbreviated some passages. Throughout, I will refer to Jesus by his given name rather than the title Christ, but because we do not actually know what the Buddha's given name was, I will refer to him either by his clan name Gotama or by his title, Buddha.

As there is considerable disagreement between scholars and even among Christians themselves concerning what Jesus meant by "the Kingdom of God",

"the Son of Man" and "Son of God", I have avoided commenting on these

subjects. For the same reason I have left others to decide whether Jesus really thought of himself as the Messiah and if so what he meant by it, and whether or not he was divine. Besides, there are enough other ideas and beliefs to compare and examine. The reader will notice that I have given considerably more space to the Buddha's life than to that of Jesus. This is not simply because there is far less information about the former than the latter. The life of the Buddha, at least the earliest accounts of it, is so little known and so often conflated with legends that evolved sometimes centuries after his time that it deserves more detail. I have also given more space to explaining the Buddha's teaching and for the same reasons. Throughout the book I refer to "the Tipitaka", "the earliest texts"

and "the Buddhist scriptures" by which is meant the Pali Tipitaka, sometimes also known as the Pali Canon.

Sources

The Earliest Texts

Writing did not come into widespread use in India until at least 150 years after the Buddha. Knowledge, especially religious knowledge, was preserved and transmitted orally. This is why the Pāl Li word for study or learning is *suta* meaning 'to hear'. A monk would join a congregation, listen to the discourses being chanted and gradually learn them by heart. Brahmans, the hereditary priests of Brahmanism, had perfected mnemonic devices which accurately committed the Vedic hymns to memory with extraordinary fidelity. It is commonly assumed that writing down information transmits it with greater accuracy than memory, but this is not necessarily the case. Before printing, books had to be copied by hand and scribes often made mistakes as they wrote.

Over time, as one book was copied from another, mistakes accumulated to the degree that sometimes it became difficult to work out what parts of the original meant. More seriously, a scribe could delete or add passages to the book he was copying which would be included in the next copy, creating confusion when compared with manuscripts without the changes. There are several examples of

this in the Bible, the best-known being the story of the woman taken in adultery and the long passage Mark16, verses 9 to 20, neither of which are found in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. Someone added them at a later date.

Human memory on the other hand, particularly if trained from childhood, and in

a world devoid of all the distractions we are bombarded with, can be highly accurate. This is exactly what brahmans did. A brahman boy was trained to repeat the Vedic hymns over and over again until they were imprinted in his memory. During various ceremonies, congregations of brahmans chanted the hymns together so that even if one forgot a part or got it wrong, his memory would be jogged or his mistake corrected by the others. This also made it almost impossible for an individual to add or delete anything. A significant number of the Buddha's disciples were from the brahman caste and they brought these skills to their new religion.1 To help preserve the Buddha's sermons, they were edited in ways that made them even more amenable to memory. They are replete with repetitions, numbered lists, stereotyped passages, standardised terminology, rhyming verses, etc. - one of the reasons that today's Buddhists find them rather tiresome reading. Thus there is no reason to doubt that the Pāl Li Tipitaka represents an accurate record of what the Buddha taught, and most scholars aquainted with the facts agree that this is the case.2

It is often said that the Tipitaka was first committed to writing in the 1st century BCE at Alu Vihara in Sri Lanka. This information comes from the *Dīpavam1sa*, one of the ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka. However, the *Dīpavam1sa* actually only records the first time the Tipitaka was written down in Sri Lanka. It was almost certainly committed to writing before this in India, possibly during the reign of King Asoka (268-232 BCE). This king was a devout Buddhist, and very concerned that the Buddha's teachings should be preserved and disseminated. Most significantly, he made wide use of writing as a part of his public policy. Everything we know about Asoka suggests that committing the Tipitaka to writing would be the very thing he would have done. If this is correct, it means that about 200 years passed between the Buddha's death and the writing of the Tipitaka. However, another ancient text, the *Mañjusrimūlakalpa*, says the Tipitaka was actually written down during the reign of Udāyibhadda, the son of King Ajātasattu, a contemporary of the Buddha (*tadetat pravacanam1 śastu likhāpayi s 1yativistaram*). If this is correct, it means that the Tipitaka was first written only about 30 years after the Buddha's death, when people who had actually met him were stil alive. Whatever the case, even centuries after the

Tipitaka was widely available in written form, the tradition of committing it to memory continued, it being considered more reliable.

The Buddhist sacred scriptures are called Tipitaka, 'the Three Baskets'. *Ti*, means 'three' and refers to the three divisions of the scriptures. *Pit 1aka* means

‘basket’ and was used because in ancient India workers would move earth, grain or building materials with a relay of large, round, shallow baskets. Each would put the filled basket on their head, walk to the next worker, pass it to him, and he would repeat the process. So in the minds of the early Buddhists, the passing of material in baskets from the head of one person to another was analogous to passing the scriptures from the memory of one person to another.

The three ‘baskets’ of the Tipitaka are the Sutta Pit Laka, the Vinaya Pit Laka and the Abhidhamma Pit Laka. The first and most important of these contains the talks, sermons and dialogues of the Buddha plus a few by his male and female disciples. The second part contains the rules for monks and nuns and for the ordering of the monastic community. The Abhidhamma Pit Laka, the third part, is a stripped-down commentary of the major doctrinal themes in the Sutta Pit Laka.

It was not chanted during the First Council which was convened several months after the Buddha died, and is not attributed to the Buddha in the text itself although later tradition did so. The material in the Tipitaka is difficult to date but the core material in the Sutta Pit Laka probably comes from the time of the Buddha to perhaps 50 or 100 years after his passing. Even the later parts, while perhaps not the actual words of the Buddha, usually reflect his meaning.

Jesus’ teachings are found in the New Testament, the second and most recent part of the Bible. The name Bible comes from the ancient Greek *ta biblia* which simply means ‘the books’. The New Testament is made up of four sections; the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the 21

Epistles, and the Apocalypse. Almost everything attributed to Jesus and concerning his life and mission is found in the four Gospels. Tradition attributes each Gospel to Jesus’ direct disciples - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - although they are not mentioned as the authors in the Gospels themselves and no scholars accept them as such. While writing was widely used in ancient Palestine, Jesus was probably illiterate or at most marginally literate and his direct disciples, except perhaps one, were illiterate, as were almost all ordinary people at the time. Jesus delivered his teachings to individuals or during informal gatherings and nothing he said was ever directly written down during his life. The earliest existing documents mentioning Jesus are the letters of Paul, who never met Jesus although he claimed to have had a

vision of him. The earliest of Paul's letters, 1 Thessalonians, dates from about 20 years after Jesus but curiously does not contain a single quotation from him.

As extraordinary as it may seem, in all Paul's 13 letters he only quotes Jesus'

actual words twice, at I Corinthians 11,24-5 and II Corinthians 12,9, and these quotes are not found in the Gospels. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Jesus' words had still not been written down, or if they had been, that Paul was unaware of them. Despite this, Paul's letters make up nearly 25% of the New Testament. The earliest document containing the words of Jesus is the Gospel of Mark, which scholars estimate was written sometime between about 65 and 75 CE, at least 30 years after Jesus' death. The Gospel of Matthew was written between about 80 and 90 CE, Luke between 85 and 100

CE and the Gospel of John sometime between 100 and 110 CE.

Later Texts

Religions are not static; they are living entities and like all living things they grow and develop, mature and even sometimes become extinct. Buddhism, of course, began with the Buddha's Awakening experience (*bodhi*) and his subsequent 45-year mission. His teaching was committed to memory and transmitted to subsequent generations and as it was explored more deeply, thought about and commented on, disagreements inevitably arouse about how it should be understood. As a result, more discourses (Pāl Li *sutta*, Sanskrit *sūtra*) presenting new interpretations were composed, and often attributed to the Buddha himself to give them his stamp of authority. This process of composing new discourses continued for centuries. The Mahāyāna discourses, mainly written in Sanskrit, are examples of this, the earliest such work probably being the *Saddharmapun 1d 1rika Sūtra* composed in about the 1st century BCE with parts being added later. While this and most other Mahāyāna texts claim to have been spoken by the Buddha and present many ideas that he did teach, they also contain many doctrinal innovations. As time went on, these innovations became bolder and more distant from the earlier teachings. The biography of the Buddha also grew, with more and more incidents being added. An early example of this would be the *Lalitavistara* (circa 150 BCE to 100 CE) in which the Buddha is depicted as a semi-divine being performing one astonishing miracle after another.

Just as the Buddha's teachings were expanded and elaborated over the centuries, so were those of Jesus. Today's standard Bible contains four Gospels, only a small selection of the many that once existed. Luke, writing sometime between 85 and 100 CE says at the beginning of his Gospel: "Many people have done

their best to write a report of the things that have taken place among us… And so because I have carefully studied all these matters from their beginning I thought it would be good to write an orderly account for you."3 We do not know what happened to the "many" other accounts of Jesus that Luke knew and studied and the many that were composed after him, although some have survived. The Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Mary, the Gospel of Marcion, the Dialogue of the Saviour, the Gospel of the Nazarenes, the Gospel of Philip, the Prayer of the Apostle Paul, and the Gospel Bartholomew are but some of these other accounts of Jesus' life and teachings. All these works contain things Jesus taught although they present ideas sometimes radically different from those attributed to him in what became the Bible. Some of these and other Gospels were popular and influential for centuries but most either gradually lost their appeal or were suppressed by the church.

Jesus' biography also grew over the centuries just as the Buddha's did. The Gospel of Matthew says Jesus' parents took him to Egypt when he was born but gives no details of what he did or what happened to him while there.4

However, within 100 years of Jesus' death the first so-called infancy Gospels started to appear recounting his Egyptian sojourn. Some of the miracles they claim he did or which took place in his presence are as amazing and fatuous, as those supposedly performed by the Buddha according to the *Lalitavistara* and other Mahāyāna texts. There are many of these infancy gospels including the Infancy Gospel of James, the Gospel of Mary, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, the History of Joseph the Carpenter, and the Syriac Infancy Gospel. Biographies of people associated with Jesus also circulated. There are several accounts of Jesus' mother Mary as well as the Acts of Barnabas, the Acts of Peter and Andrew, the Acts of Timothy, and the Acts of the Martyrs. There is even an account of the lives of the three wise men who visited Jesus when he was born, the Revelation of the Magi. Most Christians today have never heard of these sacred texts but in the early centuries of Christianity they were considered authentic by many early Christians and widely read.

The question of the authenticity of all these later Buddhist and Christian texts is

best left to scholars and historians. Whatever the case, nearly all Christians today accept that the four Gospels of the Bible represent a true account of the life and teachings of Jesus, and all Buddhists consider the Pāl Li Tipitaka to be an actual record of the life and teachings of the Buddha. Consequently, this book will restrict itself to the life and teaching of Jesus as given in the New

Testament and the life and teaching of the Buddha as presented in the Pāl Li Tipitaka.

Their Lives

The Christian scholar G.W. Houston has written: "With Buddhism…the historical Buddha is not important. What is important is that there is a system to overcome suffering. If the Buddha had not discovered it, any yoga [sic] could have. The primary focus is not the Buddha, but what the Buddha taught. With Christianity … what is really important is not what Jesus taught, but what He did (at least to those who follow Christianity) and that is to die and be resurrected for all men. Buddhism points to a doctrine; Christianity points to a saviour. This is the real difference between the two religions in its most dramatic and condensed form."1 Like Yandell and Netland's comments quoted above, this goes to the heart of the distinctions between the two religions -

except for one thing. Although the Buddha does not have the same role or importance in Buddhism as Jesus does in Christianity, does have a vital one nonetheless. The veracity of what he taught is independent of the man himself, just as the law of gravity is independent of Newton and the theory of relativity is independent of Einstein. Each man discovered a particular phenomenon, formulated and explained it and presented it to the world. The Buddha put it like this: "Whether Tathāgatas appear in the world or not this order exists; the fixed nature of phenomena, their regular pattern, and their general conditionality. This the Tathāgata discovers and comprehends and having done so he points it out and teaches it, explains and establishes it, reveals, analyses and clarifies it and says 'Look'."2

Nevertheless, the Buddha's life and example are important guideposts for Buddhists to follow and be inspired by. They add a human dimension to the truths the Buddha proclaimed and demonstrate the transformational effect of the Dhamma. This is why a person commences his or her journey on the Noble Eightfold Path by reciting and committing themselves to the Three Refuges, the

first of which is; I take refuge in the Buddha (*Buddham1 saranam1 gacchāmi*). To do this means that one accepts the human potential for Awakening and at the same time is inspired by the historical Buddha's achievements and example and wishes to replicate them within oneself. When one starts to be transformed by the Dhamma the Buddha said: "he is near me and I am near him. And why?

Because he sees the Dhamma and seeing the Dhamma he sees me."3

Real People

Although there is wide agreement amongst scholars that both the Buddha and Jesus were real people, there is almost no direct evidence for the existence of either of them. This is not surprising in the case of the Buddha given that he lived nearly half a millennia before Jesus and in a region where writing probably did not come into use for at least another century. It is most surprising in the case of Jesus because so many documents from his time are available, in Latin and Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. The evidence for some far less significant individuals of the time is often good. Pontius Pilate for example, the Roman governor who tried Jesus, is mentioned in a Latin inscription discovered in Israel in 1961. The Jewish high priest Caiaphas, who Jesus came before after his arrest; is mentioned in an inscription discovered in 2011. But Jesus, who the Bible says was very well-known, gets no mention in any contemporary records.

The historian Josephus, writing about 60 years after Jesus' death, made two brief references to him. But most scholars consider the second and longest of these references to have been either added later or more likely to have been partly redacted by later Christians trying to create 'evidence' for the existence of Jesus. The earliest unimpeachable and independent evidence of Jesus is a brief reference to him in the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus dating from 116 CE, i.e. about 85 years after Jesus' death.

The earliest direct evidence for the Buddha dates from the year 249 BCE, about 160 years after his passing. In that year, King Asoka had a great stone pillar erected in the village of Lumbini, now situated in Nepal just a few kilometres across the border from India. The inscription on this pillar reads: "Twenty years after his coronation, Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi (i.e. Asoka), visited this place and worshipped because here the Buddha, the sage of the Sakyans, was born. He had a stone figure and a pillar erected and because the Lord was born here, the village of Lumbini was exempted from tax and required to pay

only one eighth of the produce."

Their Social Backgrounds

The Buddha and Jesus lived far from each other in both time and space. The Buddha was born in about 563 BC although the exact date is not certain.

Tradition says he was born decades before this while recent research suggests he may have been born decades later. However, there is no controversy concerning where he was born. The Tipitaka says this took place in a park or garden called Lumbini, between the towns of Kapilavatthu and Devadaha, and is confirmed by solid archaeological evidence, King Asoka's Lumbini inscription.

Lumbini is on the northern edge of what was then called the Middle Land (*Majjhima Desa*), the broad shallow valley of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers, corresponding to the modern Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Middle Land was the centre of India's newly emerging civilisation. The first cities had only recently grown up, continental trade had started and it was a time of great social change. The Middle Land was made up of about a dozen countries, large and important monarchies such as Kosala, Magadha and VamLsā, and several small chiefdoms ruled by elected councils like Kusinārā

of the Mallas, Pipphalivana, Vet Lhadīpaka, Allakappa of the Bulis, and Devadaha of the Koliyas. Within 100 years of the Buddha's passing, Magadha had absorbed most of these states and would go on to dominate almost all India.

Throughout the Bible, Jesus is referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth", Nazareth being a town in what is now northern Israel. In Jesus' time it was an obscure village in the province of Galilee, so insignificant that it is not mentioned in any Jewish sources until the 3rd century CE. Nazareth was Jesus' ancestral home; his mother and father both lived there and he grew to adulthood there.4

However, the Bible maintains that he was not born there. According to Matthew, when King Herod heard a prophecy that a baby born in Nazareth would become king of the Jews he ordered his soldiers to kill every baby boy recently born in the village, fearing that the child would grow up and replace him or his heir. Being forewarned of this by an angel, Jesus' parents fled to Egypt and on the way Jesus was born in a stable at the back of an inn in the small town of Bethlehem. This story is recounted in Matthew5 but not in the other three Gospels, nor is Herod's massacre mentioned in any historical sources of the

time. Nearly all Bible scholars consider this story to be legendary.

Centuries before Jesus, the Jewish scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament) prophesised that a great saviour, what they called a messiah, would be born in Bethlehem. Matthew believed Jesus to be that messiah and so he probably concocted the story about Jesus being born in Bethlehem to fit the prophecy. It seems much more probable that Jesus was born in Nazareth.

The horizon Jesus knew, the land the Jews considered sacred, had fallen under Roman domination, either direct rule or through proxies, several decades before his birth. The most important political divisions were Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Syria. The Romans had introduced new laws, taxes and customs, which the Jews resented, and more importantly new gods, which the Jews hated fanatically. The whole land was simmering with social, political and religious

tensions, and was often on the edge of rebellion. The Bible makes several references to these problems. Some 36 years after Jesus' death, a major revolt against the Romans finally broke out only to end in defeat for the Jews, the sacking of their sacred city Jerusalem, and the total destruction of its great temple to God.

Their Ancestries

Although Jesus' parents were humble folk, the Bible claims that Jesus had royal blood, being the descendant of the great Jewish hero King David. As this king lived nearly 600 years before Jesus, it is highly unlikely that family records going back so far would have survived and Jesus would have known his ancestry. The gospels of Matthew and Luke have geneologies of Jesus but as both of these have almost nothing in common, they are probably fanciful.6

The Buddha was born in the Sakyan country, a small chiefdom named after the people who lived there, the Sakyans. It was on the northern edge of the Middle Land situated between the much larger kingdom of Kosala and the confederacy of Vajjī. This corresponds to the north-east corner of the modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and the lowlands of Nepal just across the border. The Sakyans claimed to be descendants of the sons of the semi-mythical King Okkāka, who had been driven into exile by the machinations of his second queen. Settling down in a forest of *sāka* trees, they became known as Sakyans.7 The *sāka* is the Indian Teak (*Tectona grandis*), prized for its beautiful and durable wood. The

Sakyans also claimed to be of the Ādicca linage, which supposedly went back to the Vedic sun god. As with the claims about Jesus' royal ancestry, there is probably no basis to either of the Sakyans' claims about their origins.

Their Families and Parents

Although nominally independent, the Sakyans were under the influence of their larger and more powerful neighbour Kosala which surrounded them on two sides. The Tipitaka says: "The Sakyans are vassals of the king of Kosala, they offer him humble service and salutation, do his bidding and pay him homage."8

This explains why once the Buddha said that his homeland belonged to the king of Kosala.9 One text mentions this king being driven into Sakyan territory in his state carriage to the town of Medal Lumpa to meet the Buddha.10 It seems certain that he could only have done this because Sakya was subordinate to and a tributary of Kosala. Towards the end of the Buddha's life, or perhaps a few decades later, the Sakyan's *de jure* independence came to an end when their lands were formerly absorbed into Kosala.

The Sakyans had a reputation for pride and impulsiveness, and were considered rustics by their neighbours.11 A group of Sakyan youths are reported as saying of themselves: "We Sakyans are a proud people",12 and Upāli, himself a Sakyan who became a monk, described them as "a fierce people".13 Taking a more positive stance, the Buddha said his kinsmen were "endowed with wealth and energy".14 When the arrogant young brahman Ambat Lt Lha complained to the Buddha that during a visit to Kapilavatthu the Sakyan did not give him due respect, the Buddha defended his kinsmen: "But Ambat Lt Lha, even the quail, such a little bird, can talk as she likes in her own nest."15

Despite S. Radhakrishnan's unsubstantiated claim that the Buddha "was born, grew up and died a Hindu"16 we do not know what religion prevailed amongst the Sakyans and thus might have influenced the young Gotama. The only brahman who is reported of having visited Kapilavatthu was mocked by the youths of the clan. It is unlikely that Brahmanism, which had been slowly moving east into the Middle Land for the previous 200 years, had yet to established itself amongst the Sakyans. The only hint we have of the religious life of the Sakyans is the brief comment that Vappa, the Buddha's uncle, was a follower of Jainism, suggesting that at least some of the Sakyan elite were attracted to the new non-Brahmanical sects. The majority of the people were

probably what would now be called animists worshiping their own local spirits and gods.

The Buddha's father Suddhodana, a name meaning "pure rice", was married to two sisters, Mahā Māya, the Buddha's mother, and Mahāpajāpati Gotami, who became the Buddha's step-mother. Legend claims that Suddhodana was a king of the Sakyans although this is not explicitly mentioned in the earliest texts.

Nowhere is the Buddha called a prince (*rāja kumāra*), nowhere is he or his family said to live in a palace, and only once is his father called *rāja*. This word is usually translated as king but in the 5th century BCE it still retained its older meaning of ruler or chief without any regal connotations. Even in the very places where one would expect the Buddha to call his father a king he did not do so. For example, when asked by King Bimbisāra about his family and birth, Gotama simply replied that he was from a Sakyan family.17

It is known that the Sakyans had a body of men called ' chief-makers'

(*rājākattāro*). This assembly most probably elected their leader, either for a set period or for as long as he had their confidence.18 Once the Buddha was invited to inaugurate a new council hall (*santhāgāra*) in Kapilavatthu, the kind of place where the chief-makers would have gathered to conduct business and the chief

presided over their meetings as *primus inter pares*.19 Thus we can say that while the Buddha was from a patrician or ruling class family, he was not royalty in the sense that is understood today. It is also worth noting that Suddhodana gets only three brief references in the Tipitaka.20

The Buddha's mother Mahā Māya died seven days after giving birth and thus the Tipitaka records no other information about her. It does however tell us a little more about the Buddha's step-mother mother, Mahāpajāpati Gotami. "As his mother's sister, she was his nurse, his step mother, the one who gave him milk. She suckled the Lord when his own mother died."21 After Suddhodana passed away, the Buddha happened to be visiting Kapilavatthu and Mahāpajāpati asked him to allow her to become a nun, but he refused. Shortly afterwards, when he left for Vesāli, Mahāpajāpati and several other women who also wanted to become nuns decided to follow him. When they arrived, Ānanda saw Mahāpajāpati "her feet swollen, her limbs covered with dust and her face stained with tears" and decided to speak to the Buddha on the women's behalf.

Again the Buddha refused to ordain the women. Finally Ānanda asked him whether or not women were able to become saints (i.e. attain Awakening) like men and he replied: “Having renounced their home, women too are able to become saints.” Finally relenting, the Buddha gave permission for the establishment of a women’s monastic order.22 One is left with the impression that he did this somewhat reluctantly, but also with the impression that Mahāpajāpati Gotami was a strong woman determined to get her way.

Something that may throw more light on the Sakyans and thus on the Buddha and his family is the only two references from the Tipitaka describing what Kapilavatthu, the main Sakyan urban center, was like. In one place Kapilavatthu is called a village (*gāma*) and in another, one of its inhabitants described it as being “rich, prosperous, full of people, crowded and thickly populated” which seems to be describing something bigger than a mere village.23 The findings of archaeology can help resolve the apparent disparity between these two descriptions. In the 1980s archaeologists did an extensive survey of ancient settlement sites in the Kanpur district of Utter Pradesh dating from between the 7th to the 3rd century BCE. They found that of 99 sites 41 covered an area of less than one hectare and 40 between one and two hectares. Thus as many as 81

settlements were less than two hectares and it was calculated that these could have had a population of not more than 500 people. There were 14 settlements covering an area of between two and four hectares and these could have had a population of between 500 and 1000. Four settlements were more than four

hectares and could have had a population of between 1,200 and 1,300.24 All these population centres were much smaller than the main cities of the time and they would qualify as large villages today. If Kapilavatthu had a population of 1300 it would have been big enough to be described as bustling and crowded, especially if it was also a centre of commerce and the seat of government.

Excavations conducted at Kapilavatthu in the early 1970s confirm the impression that it was a modest place even by the standards of the time. The excavations revealed that the area it took up was small, although the whole area could not be explored because much of it was under agriculture. All structures had mud walls and the only ones made of backed brick dated from well after the Buddha’s time.25 Kapilavatthu would have been nothing like Suddhodana’s grand royal capital as described in later Buddhist legend.

As with the Buddha's father, Joseph the father of Jesus gets only scant mention in the Bible, very briefly in the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, and not at all in Mark, the oldest Gospel, or in Paul's epistles, the earliest of all Christian documents. In one place, Jesus is described as "the *teckton*'s son" thus giving us Joseph's profession. The Greek word *teckton* is usually translated as carpenter but it actually means something like a fixer or a handyman. As was the custom of the time, Jesus probably followed his father's trade.

Considering how important Jesus' mother Mary was to become in later Christian theology, it is surprising how little attention she is given in the Bible.

The gospel of John only refers to her twice without using her name26 and Mark, the oldest gospel, mentions her twice and names her just once.27 Matthew and Luke mention her a few times, mainly in relation to Jesus' birth. The only significant detail about Mary is provided by Luke, who says she was already pregnant at her wedding. When Joseph discovered this he decided to quietly divorce her until she told him that she had been impregnated by God.28

Their Siblings

The Bible tells us that Jesus was the first child of what became a large family which would have been quite typical of the time. His brothers were James, Jose, Jude and Simon. He also had several sisters although none of them are named.29

That Jesus was still unmarried when he was in his late 20s would have been most unusual, especially since his younger brothers were married. 30 Other than this the Bible provides only three other fragments of information about Jesus'

siblings. While Jesus was teachings in Galilee his brothers tried to persuade him to leave and go to Judea, apparently he was an embarrassment to them, and they did not believe the things he was teachings or the claims he was making.31

On another occasion when he was teaching to a large crowd his family tried to take him away saying that he was mad or out of his mind (*exeste*).32 By the time Jesus died at least one brother, James, and perhaps Jude too, had changd their attitude towards him, because James is mentioned as one of the leaders of the early church. 33

Early tradition says that Gotama had half-brothers and several cousins of which only three are mentioned in the Tipitaka, Devadatta, Ananda and Nanda. As

Nanda and Gotama shared a similar height and facial features this would strengthen the tradition that they were related. 34

Their Births

Matthew and Luke claim that Jesus' conception took place miraculously, God having impregnated his mother Mary.35 Strangely, the two earliest Christian documents, the epistles of Paul and the Gospel of Mark, fail to mention this seemingly crucial detail.

There are two different accounts of the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth.

Luke says that Joseph and Mary did not leave Nazareth to avoid Herod's intended massacre, but because the Romans were going to conduct a census, which would require everyone to return to the place of their birth. Bethlehem was Joseph's ancestral home, the couple went there and that was where Jesus was born. It was not the three Magi guided by a star who paid homage to the child but a group of shepherds alerted to the birth by angels. None of the known Roman administrative records mention a census around the time of Jesus' birth nor would a census have required many hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps millions, to return to their place of birth.

According to Matthew's version, Mary was pregnant during the wedding and the kindly Joseph only married her to save her from public disgrace. While fleeing to Egypt, Jesus was born in a stable at the back of an inn where his parents were staying for the night. Guided to the inn by a star, the Magi, the so-called Three Wise Men, paid homage and made rich offerings to the child. After this brief visit they immediately returned to the East.

There has been much speculation about the star that guided the Magi. Guesses have ranged from Haley's comet, which appeared in 12 BCE, to a supernova that was observed in 5 BCE. It would of course be impossible to be guided to a specific location, be it a house, town, district or even a country, by a star, comet or supernova; phenomena that can be seen for thousands of miles. Furthermore, Matthew specifically says that the "star" (*aster*) moved in front of the Magi and eventually stopped and hovered over the inn where Jesus and his parents were. 36

So whatever it was, it could not have been any astronomical body known to science.

As for the Buddha's birth, later legend maintains that his mother dreamed of a white elephant around the time of or during his conception, that she was a virgin when she gave birth, and that the Buddha was born from his mother's right side rather than through the birth canal. None of these stories are mentioned in the Tipitaka, not even in the Acchariyābbhuta Sutta, an admittedly late discourse recounting several wondrous events that supposedly occurred during the Buddha's birth.

One of these wondrous events mentioned in this discourse involves not a star but a light, and not a light identifying a particular location but one which made a particular outlook possible. "When the Bodhisattva descended into his mother's womb, a great immeasurable light more radiant even than the light of the gods shone forth into the world. And even in the dark, gloomy spaces between the worlds where the light of our moon and sun, powerful and majestic though they be, cannot reach, even there did that light shine. And the beings that inhabit that darkness became aware of each other because of that light and thought: 'Indeed there are other beings here'."37 It would seem that this story is not meant to suggest that an actual light appeared when the Buddha was born. Rather, it is a literary device, an allegory, a way of saying that the advent of the Buddha would enable beings to become aware of each other, making empathy and understanding between them more possible.

Their Names

The term Buddha is the past participle of the noun *bujjhati* which means

'realized' or 'awakened' and when used in reference to a person means one who has realized or awakened to something. In the Tipitaka the Buddha is often refered to as a Buddha but he is never addresses by the term. He was referred to or addressed by his clan name Gotama meaning 'best cow', as good Gotama (*bho Gotama*) or as ascetic Gotama (*saman 1a Gotama*). The Gotama clan name reflects an earlier time in India when having many cattle was a measure of wealth and a source of pride. More formally the Buddha was called Lord (*Bhagava*), occasionally Kinsman of the Sun (*Ādiccabhandu*),38 a reference to the Sakyan Ādicca linage, and once as the Sakyan Sage (*Sakyamuni*). He often referred to himself as Tathāgata, a title of obscure origin meaning both 'the thus come one' and 'the thus gone one'. Interestingly, never once is the Buddha called Siddhattha Gotama. In fact, the name Siddhattha occurs nowhere in the Tipitaka except it the Apadāna, a book included in the Tipitaka at a very late

date. It may well have been his given name but it gets no mention in the earliest records.

The Bible says that Joseph, Jesus' father, had a dream in which an angel told him to name his soon-to-be born son Jesus.39 This name is derived from the Greek *lesous*, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Yehoshua, or as would be said in English, Joshua. To the villagers and neighbours and villagers who knew Jesus he was "the son of Mary, brother of James, Jose, Judas, and Simon".40 He was also known simply as "Joseph's son" or "the handyman's son"41 Jesus was sometimes addressed as Christ from the Greek meaning 'anointed one' and referring to someone who had been selected by God to do his work. He was also sometimes called *rabbi*, the Hebrew word for teacher, or master (*epistates*) or Lord (*kurios*). This last title can also mean 'Mister' or 'Sir'; wives would address their husbands as *kuros*, and even statues of gods were called *kuros*.

Occasionally Jesus was addressed as Son of David,42 a reference to his supposed relation to King David.

Their Childhoods

Eight days after Jesus' birth he was circumcised in accordance with Jewish sacred law.43 The Bible stipulates that a woman is impure for 40 days after giving birth and this period having elapsed, Jesus' parents took him to the great temple in Jerusalem. There they encountered a holy man named Simon, who had been told by God that he would not die before he had seem the Messiah, the king promised by God to save the Jewish people. When Simon saw Jesus he was convinced that this boy was the promised and longed-for Messiah and he gave him a blessing.44

One incident in the Buddha's childhood bears some resemblance to Jesus'

encounter with Simon. A hermit named Asita lived in a forest in the Sakyan country, and one day he noticed how jubilant the gods were and asked them the reason for it. They replied: "A Bodhisattva, an excellent and incomparable jewel, has been born in the Sakyan town of Lumbini, for the welfare and happiness of the human world. This is why we are so happy." Anxious to see this child, Asita went to Kapilavatthu where Suddhodana welcomed him and gave him the baby to hold. Being accomplished in the art of "signs and mantras" he examined the boy and proclaimed that he would attain complete Awakening (*Sambodhi*),

reach “the ultimate purified vision” (*parama visuddhidassa*), and proclaim the Truth “out of compassion of the many”

(*bahujam hitanukampa*). Then tears welled up in his eyes. Noticing this and alarmed by it, Suddhodana asked Asita if he had seen some misfortune in the

boy’s future. The sage replied that he was sad because he knew that he would pass away before this all happened.45

Later elaborations of the Asita story, and there are several of them, each more detailed than the earlier ones, often say that Asita predicted that the baby would become either a universal monarch (*cakkavattin*) or a fully awakened sage (*Buddha*). This ‘either or’ prediction is not found in the Tipitaka account.

Jesus’ parents visited the temple every year to celebrate the Jewish holy day of Passover. When Jesus was 12 they went again, but on setting out to return home Joseph and Mary noticed that he was not with them and went back to the city to find him. After three days of frantic searching they found Jesus in the great temple listening to the priests and asking them questions. Onlookers were apparently surprised that one so young could speak with such confidence and intelligence. When Mary found him she scolded him for going missing but he replied: “Don’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?” meaning in God’s temple.46 These few scraps of information point to Jesus having a religious interest even at an early age. We are told that later, during his ministry, while on a return visit to Nazareth, he went to the local synagogue and read out a passage from the Old Testament.47 It would have been most unusual at that time for a person of his class and origins to be literate, although it is possible.

More likely Jesus had learned several passages from the scriptures by heart and just quoted them from memory. Either way, it indicates that Jesus had some familiarity with the Old Testament.

Concerning the Buddha’s childhood and youth, we have only two brief pieces of information. Once in later life when reminiscing about his youth he said that he was “delicately brought up, most delicately brought up, exceptionally delicately brought up” in that he wore fine silks and perfumes, had a troupe of female musicians to entertain him, an umbrella-bearer to accompany him when he went out, and sumptuous food to eat. He also mentioned that he had three mansions to live in, one for each season; summer, winter and the monsoon.48

This confirms the impression that the Buddha's family was wealthy. The other piece of information, again mentioned by the Buddha himself, is more significant. One day, while he sat in the shade of a tree watching his father work, he had what might now be called a mystical experience. Apparently quite spontaneously he fell into a meditative state which he later called *jhāna*.49 This experience was to have a profound influence on his Awakening years later.

None of the other stories about the Buddha's youth; saving a goose from his cousin Devadatta, winning athletic and martial competitions, courting and then

marrying Yasodharā, etc., appear in the Tipitaka. Gotama's encounter with the so-called Four Signs; an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a wandering ascetic, of which Joseph Campbell rightly said was "the most celebrated example of the call to adventure in the literature of the world", cannot be found in the Tipitaka either.50

Their Physical Appearances

There is no information whatsoever about Jesus' appearance. He is nearly always portrayed in art as decidedly Western, bearded and with long hair. He was of course Semitic so he would have had a swarthy complexion and black hair. Given St. Paul's comment that "even Nature tells you that long hair on a man is a disgrace"51 Jesus almost certainly wore his hair short and all the earliest depictions show him beardless and with short hair. Once, when Jesus mixed with a crowd in order to slip quietly away, no one noticed him, from which it can be inferred that there was little about his appearance that would stand out or attract attention.52 He was called "sin-bearer"and equated with the "*virdolorum*", the Man of Sorrows mentioned in the Old Testament.53a For this reason several of the earliest non-canonical Christian sources claim that Jesus never smiled.

Early Christian writers were almost unanimous in declaring that Jesus was physically unattractive. Irenaeus (early 2nd cent.) described him as "a weak and inglorious man". As evidence that he was ugly Origen (184-253) quoted this supposed prophecy about Jesus from the Old Testament: "He was so disfigured that he hardly looked human…He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of him. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him…No one would even look at him." The Acts of Peter (second half of 2nd cent.) states that "amongst us he appeared lowly and ill-favoured". The Jewish historian Josephus (1st cent), probably drawing on Christian sources,

described Jesus as “dark skinned, small stature, three cubits high, hunchbacked, with a long face, long nose, and meeting eyebrows, so that they who see him might be affrighted, with scanty hair … and an undeveloped beard.” There seems no good reason for saying all this if it were not true. Of course it should be kept in mind that a person’s moral and spiritual qualities have nothing to do with their physical appearance.

Except in the sculpture of Gandhara from the 2nd to 5th century CE, the Buddha has usually been depicted in a stylised rather than realistic manner. Even today, in depictions of his final passing he is always shown looking 25 or 30 at most, although we know he was about 80 when he died. But tradition aside, the

Tipitaka provides a great deal of interesting information about the Buddha’s physical appearance. We are told that he was four finger-breadth’s taller than his handsome and younger half-brother Nanda, who was often mistaken for him from a distance.53b According to the Buddha’s own comment, when young, before his renunciation, he had black hair, probably long, and a beard.54

Although statues of the Buddha always show him with hair, this is an iconographic convention and not historically accurate. After his renunciation, like all other monks, he “cut off his hair and beard” and there is no reason to doubt that he shaved his scalp and face regularly as did other monks.

All sources agree that the Buddha was particularly good-looking. Sonadan Ld La described him as “handsome, of fine appearance, pleasant to see, with a good complexion and a beautiful form and countenance”.55 Another witness, Don La, said that he was “beautiful, inspiring confidence, calm, composed, with the dignity and presence of a perfectly tamed elephant”56 These natural good looks were enhanced by his deep inner calm. Another observer noted: “It is wonderful, truly marvellous how serene is the good Gotama’s presence, how clear and radiant is his complexion. Just as golden jujube fruit in the autumn is clear and radiant, so too is the good Gotama’s complexion.”57 Nonetheless, like everyone else, the Buddha’s physical appearance declined with age. Ānanda said this of him in old age: “The Lord’s complexion is no longer pure and radiant, his limbs are flabby and wrinkled, his body stooped, and his faculties have changed.”58 In the last months of his life, the Buddha said of himself: “I am now old, aged, worn out, one who has traversed life’s path. Being beyond 80, I am approaching the end of my life. Just as an old cart can only be kept going by being patched up, so too my body can only be kept going by being patched up.”59

Their Languages

It is not known what language the Buddha spoke, although it must have been a dialect used in the region where he spent his first decades, the borderland of north-eastern Kosala. After his Awakening, he travelled and taught widely so it is likely that he became proficient in several languages, and there is evidence that this is the case. In one discourse, the Buddha noted that different regions had different words for bowl, and then he listed eight of them; *pāti, patta, vittha, serāva, dhāropa, pona, hana,* and *pisīla*.60 This suggests that he had at least some knowledge of the languages and dialects then spoken in northern India. However, we know little of what these languages were so we can only speculate what the Buddha's mother tongue was although recently Richard

Gombrich, one of the world's leading authorities in early Buddhism, has argued that the Buddha did in fact speak Pāl Li.

Whatever the case, at some early date, possibly during the Third Council convened by King Asoka, everything the Buddha had said that had been remembered in different languages and dialects was rendered into Magadhi, now usually called Pāl Li, which seems to have been a *lingua franca* widely used at the time. Shortly after this, the first Indian missionary monks arrived in Sri Lanka bringing the Tipitaka with them, either in their memories or in written form, and it has been preserved there in Pāl Li ever since. In India itself, the Buddha's discourses were later translated into Sanskrit and then taken to China and translated into Chinese. These Chinese translations, although not complete, are substantially the same as those in Pāl Li. Sometimes difficulties in the Pāl Li texts can be resolved by referring to the Chinese translations.

Jesus and his immediate disciples spoke Aramaic, the language of the common people in Palestine. Greek and Latin were the languages of administration and learning throughout the Roman Empire, including Palestine. As nearly all Jesus'

words in the four gospels are in Greek, this means that they must be based on earlier Aramaic records.

There are four Aramaic words and phrases in the Bible which preserve Jesus'

own words in his mother tongue. When he healed a child he said: "*Talitha cun*"

(Little girl, rise.); he commanded "*Ephphatha*!" (Be opened!); and he addressed

God as *Abba* meaning ‘Father’. According to Matthew, his last words before dying were: “*Eli Eli lema sabachthani*” (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?).61

Their Callings

The seminal experience in Jesus’ life prior to his teaching career was his meeting with John the Baptist. John was an ascetic itinerant preacher who

“wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey”. He was a fierce critic of the Jewish priests, telling them that God would burn them in the unquenchable fire.62 He, like many others at the time, expected God to very soon visit his terrible judgment on humankind, and preached that people should prepare for this by undergoing baptism, a kind of ritual washing, to purify themselves of their sins.63 John also expected this event to be preceded by the appearance of someone greater than himself who would baptize people in the Holy Spirit (*parakletos*).64 Jesus seems to have become a disciple of John the Baptist or at least his admirer, and accepted his prediction about God’s impending destruction of the world. His

baptism by John was probably the turning point in his life and the beginning of his ministry.

Legend says that the Gotama’s father feared that one day he would renounce the world and become either a great ruler or a great spiritual teacher. To make sure he would become the former and not the latter, Suddhodana had him confined in a beautiful palace provided with all imaginable pleasures. However, one day, with the help of his charioteer Channa, Gotama managed to slip out of his palace and drive through the streets of Kapilavatthu. During this outing he encountered a man bent with age, a sick man, a corpse being taken for cremation, and a wandering ascetic, none of which he had ever seen before. It was these so-called Four Sights that first confronted him with the reality of life and aroused within him the desire to quest for a way to overcome them. The story of Gotama being confined in a palace and the dramatic and iconic one about the Four Sights are recounted in almost every biography of the Buddha, but they are just stories and have not been recorded in the Tipitaka. However, it is easy to see how this legend evolved.

Once when the Buddha was reminiscing he said: “Before my Awakening, while I

was still an unawakened bodhisattva, I too being subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement, sought after that which likewise is subject to such things. But then I thought, 'Why should I do this? Being myself subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement and seeing the danger in them, I should seek after the unageing, unailing, non-dying, sorrowless and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nirvana.' Then later, while still young, with black hair, endowed with the blessings of youth, in the prime of life and despite the weeping and wailing of my parents, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe and went forth from the home life into homelessness."65 Clearly, at some later time, the phenomenon of ageing was transformed into an old man, sickness into a sick man, death into a corpse, and so on. More importantly, it suggests to us that Gotama had been sensitive to the various travails of ordinary existence for some time, and that his renunciation was not an impulse triggered by a single incident.

Being Tempted

After his baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus retreated into the Judean desert and fasted for 40 days. During this time he was ministered to by angels, which is usually taken to mean that these heavenly beings provided him with food and water. It was also during this time that the Devil appeared before him and tried to tempt him. Firstly, the Devil

challenged him to perform a miracle, to turn stones into bread. Then he asked him to jump from a great height and trust the angels to break his fall. And finally he said that if Jesus would worship him he would give him sovereignty over the whole world.66 These three temptations are usually interpreted as attempts to appeal to Jesus' pride, to test his faith, and to arouse in him a desire for worldly power. In each case Jesus calmly rejected the Devil's offers.

A series of events in the Buddha's life parallel Jesus' temptation in some ways. During the second and final phase of his quest for Awakening, Gotama practised exercises in self-mortification, which gradually became more and more extreme. These included maintaining uncomfortable postures for long periods, prolonged fasts and eating filth.67 When it looked as if he might perish from exhaustion and starvation, *deva* offered to feed him with divine food through the pores of his skin so he would not technically break his fast. Gotama rejected this offer.68 Eventually his body could take no more and he collapsed.

Realising that such self-mortification was ineffective he decided to eat normally again, rest and regain his strength before trying another approach. 69 As he sat beneath the Bodhi Tree, Māra appeared. Initially Māra tried to get Gotama to give up his quest, return to normal life and just be a good person by “making merit”. When this did not work Māra assembled his “army” around him and attacked him. The Buddha said that he overcame these attacks with insight and by sheer determination.70

There is little doubt that the authors of the Bible took the Devil to be an actual being; many mil ions of Christians stil do. In the Tipitaka’s account of the Buddha’s temptation, Māra is a personification of the physical and psychological barriers to Awakening.71 This is clear from the constituents of Māra’s “army”; i.e. sensual pleasures, discontent, hunger and thirst, craving, sloth and torpor, fear, doubt, hypocrisy and obstinacy, gain, honour and fame, desire for reputation, and exalting oneself while disparaging others.72 In several other discourses there are references to Māra’s daughters and again their names point to them being personifications of negative mental states, not actual beings. The daughters are named Craving (*Tanhā*), Lust (*Arati*) and Desire (*Ragā*).73

Their Teaching Careers

It is not certain how long Jesus lived or his ministry lasted. Bible scholars are in general agreement that he was 29 or perhaps a year older when he was executed. Everything he did as recorded in the first three gospels could be fitted easily into a single year, although the Gospel of John, written last, says he celebrated three Passovers during his teaching career.

The Buddha said that he had renounced the world to become a wandering monk at the age of 29.74 It can be calculated that he attained Awakening when he was 35, although this is not directly mentioned in the Tipitaka. Just before he died, he commented that he had been a monk for “more than 50 years” (*vassāni pannāsā samādhikāni*) and that he was “around 80”75 unusually long-lived for the time. From this, one can estimate that the Buddha’s mission lasted for at least 45 years.

Their Travels

It seems that Jesus was on the move almost continually during his ministry.

From the 1st century BCE onwards the Romans built a network of roads

throughout Palestine and these would have made Jesus' wanderings relatively easy. Roman rule had also greatly improved security, and long-distance travel was fairly safe, but not everywhere and not all the time. In Jesus' famous parable, the man who had been robbed, beaten and left for dead and who the Good Samaritan helped, had been travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Presumably Jesus included this detail in his parable because such things sometimes happened even on a short, well-used road. The furthest north Jesus went was Sidon, the furthest south Jerusalem, and he only ventured a little east of the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. Concequently his mission would have covered about 7,600 square kilometres.

The region where the Buddha spent his life, the Middle Land, is the wide shallow Ganges and Yamnua valley and is defined in the north by the Himalayan foothills. There is only one reference to the Buddha going into these hills, a passage saying that he once "sojourned in a forest hut in the Himalayan region".76 The Mizrapur and the Rajmahal Hills and the Vindhyachal Range follow the southern edge of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and it is unlikely that the Buddha ever went beyond these hills or even into them. The furthest east he went which can still be identified is the town of Kajaṅgla, now Kankjol 18 km.

south of Rajmahal, and the furthest west is Mathura, about 180 km. south of Delhi. These two places are about 1000 kilometres from each other.

It is hard to say how thoroughly the Buddha covered this area, but during 50

years of wayfaring he could have easily visited much of it. The Tipitaka names

over 500 places that the Buddha visited or passed through; cities, towns, villages, hills, caves, rivers, and forests. Thus, he may well have covered at least 290,000 square kilometres.

The practice amongst the itinerate ascetics of the Buddha's time was to remain in one place during the three months of the monsoon and spend the remaining nine months wayfaring. The Buddha adhered to this tradition, at least until about the last 20 years of his life when he spent more time in and around Sāvatthī, the capital of Kosala. The Tipitaka records some of the Buddha's itineraries. For example, in the 12 months after his Awakening, he went from Uruvelā to Isipatana near Vārānasi, back to Uruvelā and from there to Rājagaha via Gayā and Lat Lt Livana, a distance of about 315 kilometres. The longest trip recorded

in the Tipitaka has him going from Rājagaha to Sāvatthī via Vesāli, and then back to Rājagaha on the alternative route by way of Kitagiri and Āl Lavī

(modern Airwa about 28 km. from Kannauj), a round trip of at least 1600

kilometres. It is likely that the Buddha would have started a trip like this at the end of the rainy season and arrived back in time for the next one nine months later. The Buddha's final journey took him from Rājagaha, through Nāl Landā to Pāt Laligāma (modern Patna), then to Vesāli, where he spent the three months of the rainy season, and eventually to Kusinārā. This 275-kilometre trek must have been strenuous and trying for a man of about 80.77 How much time this and the Buddha's other journeys took is hard to estimate.

There were important practical reasons to move from place to place. In a world without the communications that we take for granted, it allowed the Buddha to spread his teachings far and wide. He was also aware that some personal contact with him was important, especially for newly ordained monks and nuns, and this may have been a factor in determining which districts he visited and how often.78 During his wanderings he might visit a district, teach, make some disciples, even ordain a few monks or nuns, and then perhaps not come again for many years. If a monk from such a district wished to see him again he could simply set off to wherever the Buddha was staying at the time.

Son La Kut Likan Ln La was ordained by Mahā Kaccāna and about a year later developed the desire to meet the man whose teachings he had committed himself to. He said to his preceptor: "I have not yet met the Lord face to face. I have only heard about what he is like. If you give me permission I will travel to see the Lord, the Noble One, the Awakened Buddha."79 For lay disciples with domestic obligations, undertaking a long journey to see the Buddha was more difficult and so they may have had to wait, perhaps years, before they got to see

him again. The Thapataya Sutta gives some idea of the excitement caused in an outlying district when its inhabitants heard that the Buddha might be on his way and how the anticipation increased as word of his gradual approach reached them.80 Elsewhere we read of people's anxiousness for news from a visiting monk about the Buddha and of what he had been teaching.

Once while the Buddha was residing in Cātumā several hundred monks turned up to see him.81 However, with him moving around a lot, it was not always

possible to know where he was at any one time. In the beautiful Pārāyana Vagga we read of the 16 disciples of the ascetic Bāvarī setting out from the Godāvarī, probably from where it flows through Maharashtra, for northern India in the hope of meeting the Buddha. First they heard that he was in Sāvatthī and so they headed there. They went through Kosambī and Sāketa and arrived in Sāvatthī only to find that the Buddha had left. They followed his route through Setavya, Kapilavatthu, Kusinārā, Pāvā, and Vesāli, finally catching up with him at the Pāsān Laka Shrine, (in the Barabar Hills north of Gayā) “and like a thirsty man going for cool water… they quickly ascended the mountain”.82

The Buddha is often described as travelling with 500 monks, a conventional number meaning ‘many’, or simply with “a large group of monks”. At other times, without informing his attendant or companions, he would go off and wander by himself for a while.83 It seems that he went everywhere on foot except for when he had to cross major rivers such as at Payāga, modern Allahabad, when he would have taken a ferry. When travelling he might sleep in a roadside rest house, a threshing floor, an old potter’s shed or, if nothing else were available, out in the open “on the leaf strewn ground”.84 Once, when he was in the Kuru country, he stayed in a small hut, “its floor carpeted with grass”.85 On a return visit to Kapilavatthu, his hometown, he could find no accommodation and had to make do in the simple hermitage of the ascetic Bharan Ld Lu.86

The Buddha once told his monks that they should “wander forth for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the good and the happiness of gods and humans. Teach the Dhamma which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end. Explain both the letter and the spirit of the completely fulfilled and perfectly pure holy life.”87 In saying this, the Buddha was expressing the reason for his many long and arduous journeys; compassion for the world. He wanted as many people as possible to have the opportunity to hear his Dhamma.

Their Disciples

Both the Buddha and Jesus collected around themselves a group of disciples.

Jesus had 70 helpers, a number of close devotees, many of them women,88 and a coterie of 12 disciples, usually called the apostles. That number was selected because Jesus promised that each of them would rule over one of the 12 tribes of

Israel after the world ended.89 The Bible depicts these apostles as an unpromising and rather lacklustre lot. Peter and John were “unlettered”90

meaning that they were illiterate, Simon Peter, James, and John were fishermen and must have been illiterate also. Matthew was a tax collector which, if he was at the level of record-keeper, means he would have been able to read and write.

If he was just an enforcer, which is more likely, he too would have been illiterate. Either way, those connected with tax collecting were a despised group of men and with good reason. Luke was said to have been a doctor but whether this means he had trained in medicine or was just a local folk healer is not certain. At one point, Jesus found the apostles bickering with each other about which of them was the greatest, probably concerning their status when the Kingdom of Heaven was established. They often failed to understand what Jesus was saying to them and he rebuked them as “men of little faith”.91 They also proved to be unreliable in a crisis. When Jesus asked them to keep watch while he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, they fell asleep. After he was arrested Peter, the senior disciple, lied and denied ever having known him, and Judas used to steal money and eventually betrayed his master to the authorities.

Jesus sent the 12 apostles out to spread the teaching with distinct instructions:

“Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, silver or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, two tunics, sandals or a staff; for labourers deserve their food.

Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment Day for that town.” 92

This commission and several others Jesus gave his apostles bear interesting comparison with the Buddha’s instructions to his disciples. They were to go alone, in order to spread the Dhamma as widely as possible, whereas Jesus

wanted his apostles to go in pairs.93 The former were to teach the Dhamma out of “compassion of the many” while Jesus’ were to teach for the benefit of their fellow Jews only, Gentiles (i.e. non-Jews) and Samaritans were to be ignored.

The idea that the Gospel was primarily for Jews and not for others would have been in keeping with the Jewish exclusiveness of the time, and is in part confirmed by another incident recorded in the Gospels (see chapter 3 note 111).

A Canaanite woman once came to Jesus and begged him to heal her daughter who was possessed by a demon. Jesus ignored her pleas. When the apostles urged him to send the woman away he said to the woman: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The desperate woman pleaded once more: “Lord, help me”. Jesus responded: “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” To this the woman replied: “Yes Lord, but even dogs eat crumbs that fall from the master’s table”. Jesus finally relented saying: “Woman you have great faith. Your request is granted” and the child was freed from the demon.94 It is not clear whether Jesus was simply testing this poor woman’s faith or had no intention of helping her but changed his mind. One is reminded of the Buddha’s reaction to Mahāpajāpati’s request, although there is a considerable difference between refusing to allow a woman to become a nun and refusing to help a distraught mother with a sick child.

The Dhamma that the Buddha’s disciples were to teach was about “suffering and the ending of suffering”. Jesus’ disciples were to warn that the end of the world was fast approaching. The former were only to proclaim the Dhamma, the latter to teach the Gospel but also to perform various miracles, specifically raising the dead, healing the sick and exorcizing evil spirits. Both the Buddha and Jesus expected their disciples to take with them the bare minimum for life; eight basic requisites for the monks and for the apostles even less, and neither were to expect any monetary return. The Buddha said to his monks: “One should not go about making a business out of the Dhamma.”95 Indeed, monks were told not even to touch money, i.e. gold and silver. Jesus’ instructions to his apostles end on a rather unattractive note absent from the Buddha’s. He told them that if anyone in any town ignored the message they were proclaiming or refused to believe it, they or the town would be cursed on the Judgment Day and suffer a fate worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities God had punished by incinerating with sulphur and fire.96

Once, probably earlier in his career, the Buddha mentioned that he had “an order

of hundreds", while later he counted his disciples in thousands; monks and nuns, lay men and lay women, many of whom had attained one or another of the four stages leading to Awakening or Awakening itself. 97 While he asked them to look to him as their guide, example and inspiration, he still expected them all, ordained and lay, men and women, to be "accomplished and well-trained, learned and erudite, knowers of the Dhamma, living by Dhamma and walking the path of Dhamma, …and pass on to others what they have received from the Teacher, and teach it and proclaim it, establish it and explain it, promote it and clarify it, … so as to refute false teachings and impart this wondrous Dhamma".98

The Buddha's chief disciples were Sāriputta and Moggallāna, both brahmans, the first known for his wisdom and the second for his psychic abilities. Such was Sāriputta's wisdom that the Buddha' sometimes asked him to give a talk in his place. It seems that the Buddha had planned that either or both of these two disciples would lead the monastic order (*sa gha*

ṅ

) after his passing, but it was

not to be. Both men predeceased him and another eminent disciple, Mahā

Kassapa, took on the role. He it was who convened and chaired the First Council three months after the Buddha's death. Sāriputta's and Moggallāna's deaths seemed to have left the Buddha with a sense of loss as is clear from his comment at the time: "This assembly seems empty to me now that Moggallāna and Sāriputta have attained final Nirvana." 99

Jesus had a particularly close relationship with one of his disciples. This individual is never named and is only ever referred to as "the disciple who Jesus loved". It was this disciple who leaned his head on Jesus' lap during the Last Supper. He may have also been the young man naked except for a linen cloth who was with Jesus on the night he was arrested.100 Exactly why someone so special to Jesus was kept anonymous and why an almost naked youth should be with him in the dark has never been explained.

The Buddha had a very close relationship with one of his disciples too, his cousin Ānanda. During the last 25 years of the Buddha's life, Ānanda acted as his man-servant and assistant and the Buddha came to rely on him implicitly. If

Sāriputta personified wisdom and Moggallāna personified psychic ability, then Ānanda certainly exemplified kindness, gentleness, warmth and love. The Buddha praised him for his "loving acts of body, loving acts of speech and loving acts of mind" (*mettena kāya kammena*, *mettena vacī kammena*, *mettena mano kammena*), meaning that he was always ready to lend a helping hand,

spoke kindly to people and thought well of others.101 The Buddha even said that Ānanda shared some of the very qualities he himself had – that people were delighted to see him, that they were delighted when he taught the Dhamma, and disappointed when he finished speaking.102 On the night the Buddha passed away, Ānanda lent against the door post sobbing at the thought that the Buddha's end was near.

Judas and Devadatta

The most notorious of Jesus' apostles was Judas Iscariot. The meaning of the epithet Iscariot is uncertain. It could mean 'of Kerioth' meaning that he came from the village of that name. It could also mean 'dagger man' and that Judas was associated with a group of anti-Roman terrorists called the Sicarri who assassinated Romans and their Jewish collaborators. Initially Judas, like the other apostles, had the power to exorcise evil spirits and perform miraculous healings,103 but for reasons that are not explained he gradually went bad. One of his jobs was to look after the money Jesus and the other apostles used for their needs and to distribute to the poor, but in fact he would help himself to it. Once when a female devotee poured expensive perfume over Jesus, Judas complained: "Why wasn't this perfume sold for 300 silver coins and the money given to the poor?" The other apostles suspected that he did not really care about the poor but wanted to steal the money.104 Jesus knew or had a premonition that one of his apostles would eventually betray him and sensed that it would be Judas. This turned out to be right. After Jesus' death Judas died also. There are two different accounts of how this happened; that he hanged himself, or that he fell over and his body tore open and his intestines spilled out.

105

If the Buddha had an equivalent to "the disciple that Jesus loved" then he also had an equivalent to Judas; Devadatta, the son of his father's brother Suppabuddha. When the Buddha returned to Kapilavatthu for the first time after his Awakening, several young Sakyan men, including Devadatta, announced that

they wanted to become monks.106 For years, Devadatta proved to be a sincere and diligent monk and in several places in the texts he is praised as such.

107 The Buddha named him together with several others as an exemplary disciple.108 But things were to change. Later the Buddha said of him: “Once Devadatta’s character was one way, now it is another way altogether.”109 This change began after Devadatta started to manifest psychic powers as a result of diligent meditation, and he gradually became arrogant and conceited. He came to feel that the Buddha had drifted too far from the traditional ascetic lifestyle and he was able to get some other monks to agree with him. Confronting the

Buddha about this, Devadatta demanded that several acetic practices be made compulsory for all monks; that they live only in the forest, never accept invitations to eat at devotees’ homes but live only by begging, wear only rag robes, live in the open and not in a monastery, and that they be vegetarian.

Perhaps trying to avoid a conflict, the Buddha said that monks could follow these practices if they wished to but that he would not to make them compulsory, so Devadatta and his supporters formed a splinter group. This was the greatest crisis the Buddha had to face during his 45-year ministry. The Vinaya even claims Devadatta tried to murder the Buddha on two occasions, although this may be an early attempt to make him look as bad as possible.110

There is no information in the Tipitaka itself about Devadatta’s eventual fate, but tradition says his supporters eventually abandoned him and returned to the Buddha and that he died discredited and alone.

Heavenly Visitations

It is claimed that both Jesus and the Buddha occasionally had visitations from heavenly beings. Once Jesus led his disciples to the top of a mountain and, as they looked on, his appearance gradually changed to a dazzling white. Then the ancient prophets Elijah and Moses appeared with him. The disciples were left speechless. Later Jesus instructed them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after he had died.111

A week after the Buddha’s Awakening, something similar happened to him.

Realising that the truths he had discovered were “deep, difficult to see and understand …subtle and intelligible mainly to the wise” and that the world is

“delighted only by sense pleasures”, he decided not to teach to others what he had realised. It would only be “tiresome and annoying” to him if they simply argued with him. Brahmā Sahampatī, one of the highest deities in the heaven of Brahmā, dismayed by this decision, appeared before the Buddha, bowed, and beseeched him to reconsider: “Before you, there has been an impure Dhamma in Magadha, devised by impure minds. Open the gate of the Immortal so that all capable of hearing can respond to you, the Stainless One.” Thinking that few people would understand the Dhamma but there were some “with but little dust in their eyes” he decided to teach for their sake.112 In the following decades, various divine beings visited the Buddha often, usually to ask him questions on spiritual matters.

Several of the Buddha’s disciples had similar encounters with divine beings.

Apparently, gods would sometimes manifest themselves to and converse with Ugga, one of the Buddha’s more advanced lay disciples. While others might

have considered such divine visitations a sign of special favour or a great blessing, Ugga was quite unimpressed and unmoved. Anything of significance the gods could have told him, he had already learned from the Buddha.113

The Background to their Missions

Centuries before Jesus, the Jews had come to believe in a single deity named Yahweh, who had a special relationship with them, giving them laws to live by, receiving their sacrifices, and protecting them from their enemies. If and when they were invaded and occupied by neighbouring kingdoms who worshipped other gods, the Jews believed that Yahweh would send a king to drive the occupiers out and liberate them. Such a king would be called a messiah, meaning ‘anointed one’ because he would be consecrated and anointed by God for this task. The title Christ which Jesus was given, is from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *māšîah 1*. It seems that anyone could qualify to be a messiah. When the pagan Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jews who had been driven into exile to return to their homeland, the Bible hailed him as a messiah.

114

By Jesus’ time, the Jews had been living under Roman domination, directly or indirectly, for decades and were longing for God to send a messiah to free them from their hated pagan overlords. The understanding of the nature and mission

of a messiah evolved over the centuries but several things remained unchanged: that the messiah would be a human king, that he would be anointed and empowered by God, and that he would liberate the Jewish homeland from its enemies. It seems that Jesus came to believe that he was the long-awaited messiah.

Around the 6th century BCE in India, the notion had evolved that at some time in the future a universal monarch, a 'wheel-turner' (*cakkavatin*), would unite all of India, not through military might but through the power of his virtue, and establish a just and righteous society. The Buddha was familiar with the wheel-turner concept and mentioned it several times.115 However, he never claimed to be a wheel-turning monarch himself and none of his disciples ever considered him to be one.

Many of the wandering ascetics (*saman 1a*) of the Buddha's time looked back to great spiritually accomplished masters who supposedly lived in the distant past.

Such masters were called Buddhas, Jinas, Tathāgatas, Tīrtha kar ṅ

as, Kevalins,

Uttamapurisas, or Munis. The Jains for example, claimed that their religion had been founded by Pārśva, probably a real person who lived in about the 7th century BCE. Others may also have been real people whose names at least had been remembered; most were properly legendary or semi-legendary figures.

The Buddha believed in such past Awakened masters, naming six of them,116

and considered himself to be the most recent of these. Such awakened beings were not sent by any deity, they would not come at any particular time, and they were not associated with any particular ethnic group but would benefit anyone who would listen to them. The concept of past Buddhas was based on the idea that truth was eternal (*dhammo sananto*), that humans have a natural capacity to comprehend it, and that some individuals would sometimes do this.

Related to the belief in a messiah, many Jews at the time of Jesus also had apocalyptic expectations, i.e. the idea that the world, or at least the world as it was known, would soon end. The belief was that the world was a corrupt and evil place and an angry God was going to destroy it in a cataclysm of brimstone and fire, destroy the wicked, save the righteous and then establish a new and

perfect world.

How Others Saw Them

Having been in the public arena for so long and proclaiming some ideas that challenged existing beliefs, the Buddha of course attracted opposition, criticism and sometimes even antipathy. Although unruffled by such reactions, he usually made attempts to justify his position by explaining himself more fully, and usually without attacking his critics on a personal level.

Within a year of his Awakening, the Buddha had made disciples of the three Kassapa brothers, the most well-known and esteemed *saman 1as* in Magadha, together with all their followers. Shortly after this, most of the followers of another *saman 1a* teacher, Sañjaya Belat Lt Lhiputta, some 250 altogether, abandoned him to join the Buddha's order also. These two events created great interest throughout Magadha and made the Buddha famous very early in his career.

Soon numerous young men were requesting to become monks and the Buddha was happy to accept them all. But his readiness to ordain anyone who asked for it created problems. Ill-trained and unsupervised monks were soon wandering all over the place causing embarrassment. Also, so many youths and men abandoning their families created disquiet amongst the people affected by it and led to grumbling against the Buddha himself. People were saying: "The ascetic Gotama proceeds by making us childless, by making us widows, by breaking up families." If the Buddha was concerned by this he did not show it. When informed of what people were saying about him he commented: "This noise will not last long, it will continue for seven days and then cease."117 Only after this did the Buddha start laying down rules for vetting candidates and for ordaining and training monks. He had apparently not given sufficient thought to

the proper organisation of his order before accepting large numbers of men into it.

Although the Buddha was situated firmly within the non-Vedic *saman 1a* tradition he disregarded some of its most basic assumptions, particularly the practice of painful austerities (*tapa*) and self-mortification (*attakilmatha*). For this he was sometimes criticised by other ascetics. When, after several years of undergoing such disciplines himself, he finally abandoned them and started

washing and eating properly again, the five disciples who had attached themselves to him were outraged. They accused him of “reverting to the life of plenty” (*āvatto bahullāya*) and left him in disgust.118 The ascetic Kassapa repeated to the Buddha the accusation he had heard about him: “The ascetic Gotama disapproves of all austerities, he criticises and blames all those who live the hard life.” The Buddha denied this. He explained that he praised austerities that led to understanding and liberation and criticised those that did not, implying that the first did not necessarily lead to the second.119 As shown above, the justification for Devadatta breaking with the Buddha and founding his own order was the Buddha’s de-emphasis of the value of austerity and self-mortification.

One interesting perception that many people had of the Buddha was that despite his relative youth he claimed to be fully Awakened, while most others making such claims were “long gone in years”. King Pasenadi asked the Buddha about this: “Even those ascetics and brahmans who are the head of orders and sects, well-known teachers, famous and considered so by the general public, even they do not claim to have attained the unsurpassed perfect Awakening. Therefore, why should you make such a claim when you are still so young and you have so recently become an ascetic?”120 The Buddha’s reply was that even though a king might be young, a snake only recently hatched or a fire just ignited, they could still have an impact and that therefore careful note should be taken of them.121

As will be mentioned in more detail below, public discussions and debates on religious questions were a feature on Indian society during the Buddha’s time.

For some, such events were a chance to learn about the new ideas being aired, while for a few they were an opportunity to promote themselves as clever and entertaining disputants. There were “certain learned nobles who are clever, well-versed in the doctrines of others, real hair-splitters, who go about demolishing the views of others with their sharp intelligence. When they hear that the ascetic Gotama will visit a certain village or town they formulate a question thinking, ‘We will go and ask him this question and if he answers like

this we will say that, and if he answers like that we will say this, and thereby refute his Dhamma’… But when they go to the ascetic Gotama and he delights, uplifts, inspires, and gladdens them with talk on Dhamma they do not so much as ask their question, let alone refute his Dhamma.”122 As a result of the

Buddha's ability to disarm and impress such opponents and disputants, some people suspected him of doing so by occult means.123

Another criticism of the Buddha, and interestingly one that continues to be made even today, was that his concept of Nirvana and his doctrine of non-self (*anatta*) amounted to a form of nihilism (*uceddhavada*). When accused of teaching this he responded: "There is a way of speaking truthfully that one could say I teach a doctrine of annihilation and train my disciples in it. I teach the annihilation of greed, hatred and delusion, I teach the annihilation of manifold evil and wrong mental states."124 A few of the more extreme ascetics accused the Buddha of being careless with life. When the ascetic Māgandiya saw the grass spread out on the floor where the Buddha was sleeping he commented: "It is a sorry sight indeed when we see the ascetic Gotama's bed, that destroyer of growth."125 It is not entirely certain what this criticism meant but it is likely that Māgandiya accepted the belief current at the time amongst some *saman 1as*, that plants were sentient life and thus to pluck or cut them was tantamount to killing, something the more scrupulous ascetic would avoid.126

Others condemned the Buddha for supposed indirect killing. The Jains, who were strict vegetarians, attacked the Buddha and his disciples for eating meat.

"Many Jains went through the town, through the main roads and side streets, the alleys and the lanes, waving their arms and shouting, 'The general Sīha has this very day slaughtered a large creature to feed to the ascetic Gotama and he is going to eat it knowing that it was slaughtered specifically for him'."127 The Buddha did not respond to the charge that accepting from a donor and then eating a meal containing meat amounted to killing. However, he made it a rule for his monks and nuns that they should not accept such a meal if they saw, heard or suspected that the meat was from an animal that had been slaughtered specifically for them.128 It is widely believed that the Buddha taught vegetarianism but this is not correct, although the practice became common amongst some Buddhists in later centuries.129

At the end of a discussion with the Buddha, an interlocutor would often express his or her satisfaction with what the Buddha had said, but not always. Several weeks after his Awakening, the Buddha set off to find his five former disciples in order to teach them what he had realised. On the road between Uruvelā and

Gayā he encountered an ascetic named Upaka. Even from a distance Upaka

noticed and was impressed by the Buddha's calm demeanour. When the two got to each other he said to the Buddha: "Your senses are clear and your complexion is pure and radiant. Who is your teacher?" The Buddha replied that he had no teachers, and that because he had attained complete Awakening no one was in a position to teach him anything. This reply may have been true but Upaka took it to be an outrageous boast. Shaking his head he walked off saying:

"It may be so, your reverence."130

After giving a talk to a group of his own monks at Ukkat Lt Lhā, we are told that they were "not delighted by the Lord's words".131 On another occasion while on a visit to Kapilavatthu the Buddha met his mother's brother Dan Ld Lapāni, who asked him to explain his Dhamma. After listening without comment until the Buddha had finished, the old man "shook his head, wagged his tongue, raised his eyebrows so that three wrinkles formed on his forehead and then walked off leaning on his stick".132 Once during a talk with a brahman, the Buddha said that those brahmans who so confidently explained what the ancient sages taught while admitting that they themselves did not have their attainments were like a string of blind men. "The first one does not see, the middle one does not see and neither does the last". At this, the brahman became "angry and displeased with this comparison and he reviled, disparaged and criticised the Lord, saying, 'The ascetic Gotama will be disgraced!'."133 In this case, the discussion continued, the tension lessened, and eventually the brahman went on to develop some respect for the Buddha.

The Tipitaka also records a few examples where some of the Buddha's disciples abandoned him. Sunakkhatta, who had been a monk for some time, was dissatisfied with the Dhamma and said to the Buddha: "Lord, I am leaving you.

I am no longer living by your guidance." The Buddha responded to this declaration by questioning Sunakkhatta. "Did I ever say to you, 'Come, and live by my teachings'?"

"No Lord."

"Then did you ever say to me that you wished to live by my teachings?"

"No Lord."

"That being the case, who are you and what are you giving up, you foolish

man?”134

Apparently Sunakkhatta had hoped to witness the Buddha perform a psychic feat or miracle and when this did not happen he became disappointed. More commonly though, those who dropped out of the monastic order maintained

their commitment to the Dhamma. “Even those who fall from the monkhood and return to the lay life, still praise the Buddha, the Dhamma and the order.

They blame themselves rather than others, saying, ‘We were unlucky, we had scant merit, for although we became monks in such a well-proclaimed Dhamma, we were unable to live the perfect and pure spiritual life for our whole lives.’ Having become monastery attendants or lay disciples they take and observe the Five Precepts.”135

The most disturbing event in the whole of the Buddha’s career happened during one of his sojourns in Vesāli. He had given a talk to an assembly of monks on a contemplation called *asubhabhāvana*. This practice involved contemplating the unpleasant aspects of physicality; the sometimes revolting bodily discharges that soon become apparent without regular washing. The purpose of this practice was to encourage detachment towards the body, to cool sexual impulses, and to balance the usual over-emphasis on physical attractiveness.

After his talk, the Buddha announced that he wanted to go into a solitary retreat for half a month and that no one was to visit him except the monk who brought his food. While he was away the monks did this contemplation, with drastic results for some of them. The Tipitaka recounts that some 30 became so

“repelled, disgusted and ashamed” of their bodies that they committed suicide, literally “took to the knife”. When the Buddha returned from his retreat and noticed some of the monks missing, he asked where they were, and was told what had happened. The Tipitaka records that he then gave a talk on mindfulness of breathing, emphasising its ability to evoke tranquility and calm, but it records nothing he had to say about this tragedy.136 It is also silent about any others’ comments, although people would have been as deeply shocked by it as they would be even today. It is often claimed that the Buddha was able to read a person’s mind or at least sense their abilities and inclinations, and present the Dhamma to them in such a way that it would appeal specifically to them.

The Vesāli incident is evidence that he could not always do this.

Despite the occasional criticisms and negative assessments, the Buddha was the most respected teacher of his time, along with the Jain Tīrtha kar ṅ

a Mahāvīra

who was senior to him by about a dozen years. People were attracted as much by what the Buddha said as how he acted. One admirer stated: “The Lord acts as he speaks, and he speaks as he acts. Other than him, we find no teacher as consistent as this, whether we survey the past or the present.”137 His penetrating wisdom and the persuasiveness with which he explained his Dhamma are mentioned time and again as among his most noticeable abilities. The Tipitaka

records this conversation between two brahmans. “At that time, the brahman Kāranapāli was constructing a building for the Licchavis. On seeing his fellow brahman Pingiyānī coming in the distance, he approached him and asked: ‘How now! From where is your honour Pingiyāni coming from so early in the day?’

‘I come from the presence of the ascetic Gotama.’

‘Well, what do you think of his clarity of wisdom? Do you think he is a wise man?’

‘But what am I compared to him? Who am I to judge his clarity? Only one like him who could judge his clarity of wisdom?’

‘High indeed is the praise that you give the ascetic Gotama.’

‘But what am I compared to him? Who am I to praise the ascetic Gotama? Truly he is praised by the praised. He is the highest amongst gods and humans’.”138

Once a monk who had spent the rainy season with the Buddha in Sāvatthī

arrived in Kapilavatthu. When people heard where the monk had come from he found himself deluged with questions about the Buddha.139 On another occasion a group of brahmans from Kosala and Magadha who had arrived in Vesāli heard that the Buddha just happened to be in town and decided that the opportunity to meet him was too good to miss. The Buddha had apparently given his attendant instructions that he was not to be disturbed, while the brahmans were adamant that they would not leave until they got to meet the famous teacher. Seeing this impasse, the novice Sīha asked the attendant to tell the

Buddha that there were three people waiting to see him. The attendant said he would not do this but he would not object if Sīha did. This was done, and the Buddha asked Sīha to put a mat outside his residence in the shade for him to sit on while he talked to the brahmans.140

Such was the Buddha's Dhamma and the way he presented it that it could even have a noticeable effect on a person's physical features. When Sāriputta met Nakulapitā and noticed how peaceful and composed he looked, he commented to him: "Householder, your senses are calmed, your complexion is clear and radiant, so I suppose today you have had a face to face talk with the Lord?"

Nakulapitā replied: "How could it be otherwise, Sir? I have just now been sprinkled with the nectar of the Lord's Dhamma."141

People often expressed surprise by what was seen as the Buddha's magnanimity and openness, particularly concerning religious matters. Once, on meeting a party of ascetics, their leader asked him to explain his Dhamma. He replied: "It is hard for you, having different opinions, inclinations and biases, and following

a different teacher, to understand the doctrine I teach. Therefore let us discuss your teaching." The ascetics were astonished by this. "It is wonderful, truly marvellous, how great are the powers of the acetic Gotama in that he holds back his own teaching and invites others to discuss theirs!"142

Some teachers would tell their disciples or admirers not to give any help to those of other religions, an attitude that prevails amongst some religious people even today. As will be pointed out below, while the Buddha could be critical of other doctrines he said of himself: "I analyse things first. I do not [always]

speak categorically" (*vibhajjavādo nāham ettha ekam1savādo*).143 By this he meant that he refrained from making sweeping generalizations about other beliefs but would examine them and acknowledge any truths they might contain while also pointing out their weaknesses. Likewise, he was able to acknowledge that the followers of other religions might well be sincerely striving for truth and thus were worthy of encouragement. When Upāli, who had been a Jain, decided to embrace the Buddha's Dhamma instead, the Buddha said to him:

"For a long time your family has supported the Jains so you should consider still giving them alms when they come to your house."144 On another occasion someone said to the Buddha: "I have heard it said that you, good Gotama, teach

that charity should only be given to you, not to others, to your disciples, not to the disciples of other teachers. Are those who say this representing your opinion without distorting it? Do they speak according to your teaching? For indeed, good Gotama, I am anxious not to misrepresent you." The Buddha replied:

"Those who say this are not of my opinion, they misrepresent me and say something false. Truly, whoever discourages another from giving charity hinders in three ways. He hinders the giver from acquiring good, he hinders the receiver from receiving the charity, and he has already ruined himself through his stinginess."145 There is no record of what people thought about the Buddha's openness towards and respect for others' beliefs but it is likely that they considered it to be a welcome difference from the more common jealousy and competitiveness between most other sects of the time.

People also noticed and admired the Buddha's love of silence. He said: "Learn this from the waters. In mountain clefts and chasms, loud gush the streamlets, but great rivers flow silently. Empty things make a noise while the full is always quiet. The fool is like a half-filled pot; the wise person is like a deep still pool."146 He praised in particular, the maintenance of a dignified silence in the face of insults and false accusations. "Not to react to anger with angry words is to win a battle hard to win. It is to act for one's own and the other's welfare,

although those who do not know the Dhamma will think you are a fool."147

Despite the numerous accounts of the Buddha giving talks and engaging in dialogues and debates, he nonetheless spent a good deal of his time "meditating far into the night", going into solitary retreat, sometimes for as long as three months,148 and frequently just sitting in silence. It was said of him that he

"seeks lodgings in the forest, in the depth of the jungle, in quiet places with little noise, places far from the crowd, undisturbed by people and well suited for solitude".149 Once a group of ascetics were sitting noisily talking and arguing when they saw the Buddha in the distance. One of them said to the others:

"Quiet Sirs, make no noise. That ascetic Gotama is coming and he likes silence and speaks in praise of silence. If he sees that our group is quiet he might come and visit us."150

Even people who met and listened to the Buddha without necessarily becoming his disciples would sometimes express their admiration for him. A good example

of this is this comment by the leading brahman Son Ladan Ld La. “The ascetic Gotama is well-born on both sides of his family, being of pure and unbroken descent for at least seven generations, irreproachable as far as his birth is concerned. He renounced a large kin group and gave up much gold and grain … He is virtuous, his virtue is wide and ever-widening. He is well-spoken, of pleasing speech, polite, his enunciation attractive, clear and to the point. He is the teacher of many. He has given up sensuality and vanity. He teaches action and the results of action and honours the blameless brahman traditions. He is a wandering ascetic of high birth, coming from a leading warrior caste family, one of great wealth and estate. People come from foreign kingdoms and lands to consult him… Many gods and humans are devoted to him and if he stays in some town or village that place is not troubled by malevolent spirits. He has a crowd of followers, he is a teacher of teachers, and even the heads or various sects come to discuss matters with him. Unlike some other ascetics and brahmans, his fame is based on his genuine attainment of unsurpassed knowledge and conduct. Even King Bimbisāra of Magadha has become his disciple, as has his son and wife, his courtiers and ministers. So has King Pasenadi of Kosala and the brahman Pokkharasāti too.”151 Son Ladan Ld La’s accolade tells us something about the Buddha and also about the concerns and interests of the brahman class of the time, what they considered admirable.

The New Testament indicates that Jesus was a polarising figure, attracting both praise and blame in equal measure. Some were intrigued and impressed by him and thought he might be John the Baptist reborn; others believed that he was

Elijah, or one of the other Old Testament prophets.152 Peter, his chief disciple, was among those who believed he was the long hoped-for messiah.153 Others were less impressed, saying: “Look at this man! He is a glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other sinners.”154 When several priests saw Jesus in the house of a tax collector eating with a group of bad types, they asked him why he would mix with such people. He replied: “People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people but sinners.”155 This explanation was perfectly reasonable, and underlined Jesus’ belief in a loving, caring God who wanted to save everyone, including people who others had given up on and shunned. Nevertheless, his actions were unconventional and seen as unworthy of a religious teacher. It may also have raised suspicions as to his private behaviour, just as it would today if a monk, priest or pastor mixed with petty thieves, prostitutes or gang members.

Jesus was able to attract large crowds, sometimes up to four or five thousand strong, sometimes so many that there would be a crush.156 It seems likely that some in these crowds came to hear what he had to say but just as many came hoping to either witness a miracle or to be miraculously healed themselves.

“News about him spread through the whole country of Syria so that people brought to him all those who were sick, suffering from all kinds of diseases and disorders: people with demons, epileptics, and paralytics – and Jesus healed them all. Large crowds followed him from Galilee and the Ten Towns, from Jerusalem, Judea, and the lands on the other side of the Jordan.”157 The evidence suggests that large crowds did not necessarily mean that they all accepted his Gospel or were even interested in it. “The people in the towns where he performed most of his miracles did not turn from their sins”158 and because of this Jesus had hard words for them: “You can be sure that on the Judgment Day, God will show more mercy to Sodom than to you!”159 After he fed a huge crowd by miraculously producing food for them they followed him as he left, not because they liked what he was teaching or because of the miracle he had performed but because of the food they got, as Jesus himself realized.160

Whether liked or not, believed or not, there can be no doubt that there was something about Jesus which made people sit up and take notice of him. His miraculous abilities were part of it, so were the claims he made about himself, and his startling predictions about the end of the world. So too were some of the other things he taught. It is generally agreed that the pinnacle of Jesus’ Gospel was the Sermon on the Mount. Parts of this famous sermon, while continuing to be lauded, have almost never been put into practice and would not even get

assent today if recommended by someone else. For example, few would agree that looking at a woman with lust should count as equivalent to actually committing adultery, or that calling someone a fool deserves being condemned to hell. The prohibition against divorce for any reason other than one partner being unfaithful has condemned millions to either a loveless marriage or the stigma of being an adulterer. Giving no thought for the future, where one’s food and clothing will come from, might be possible for monks, but would be totally impractical for the vast majority of people. Someone who tried to live like this would be branded irresponsible. Is it really advisable or even good “not resist an evil person?” And if someone sues you for a certain amount and wins, are you really going to give them more than the court awarded them?

The advice to mutilate oneself to avoid committing sin is extreme by any standard, although some have claimed that this was hyperbole on the part of Jesus.161 It is interesting what the Buddha had to say about self-mutilation. Once a monk actually cut off his genitals in despair at being unable to control his sexual urges. When the Buddha was informed of this he commented: “This foolish man cut off one thing when he should have cut off another,” i.e. the desires and fantasies rather than the organ that responded to them. He then made it an offence to mutilate oneself for any reason.162

Despite this, other parts of the Sermon on the Mount are a timeless and universal call to holiness that any decent person could agree with. Jesus declared that the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure of heart, and those who thirst for righteousness are blessed. He asked his audience to speak straightforwardly and honestly rather than taking oaths, to try to reconcile with an adversary instead of taking them to court, to refrain from judging others or retaliating against abuse, to love one’s enemies and sincerely pray for those who persecute you. He urged people to treat others as they would want to be treated themselves. He said that your piety should be unostentatious and your almsgiving unadvertised. He counselled that if while making an offering to God you remember that someone has something against you, leave your offering on the altar, go and make up with that person and then return and make your offering. He said one should pray with humble gratitude for “your daily bread”, which God has provided.

It is not surprising that people were impressed by this, not only its content but because of the simple, unfeigned sincerity with which he proclaimed. It was probably much more alive and personal than the dull, legalistic sermons of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law that people were used to. But other things

Jesus taught, or perhaps the way he phrased them, disturbed people and they distanced themselves from him. Once he preached: “I am telling you the truth; if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them to life on the last day. For my flesh is the real food; my blood is the real drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me and I live in them.”163 This was too much for his audience. “Because of this, many of Jesus’ followers turned back and would not go with him anymore.”164 Perhaps if Jesus had taken the time to explain what he meant by these startling words he might have got a different reaction. However, at a time when consuming raw meat, let alone human flesh, was taboo, and even all blood had

to be flushed from meat before being consumed in order to conform to the sacred dietary laws, it shocked and repelled people.

When Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth and gave a talk in the town's synagogue the locals were surprised that the country boy they has known, the handyman's son, spoke with such eloquence and learning. Surprised but not impressed! They were cool towards him and what he had to say. Perhaps they thought he was getting above his station. Perhaps he said something that offended them or perhaps they had heard about his reputation of mixing with ne'r-do-wells. Whatever it was, being cold-shouldered by the folk he had grown up with seems to have shaken Jesus. He tried to heal some of the town's sick but his miraculous powers failed him and only two or three were healed.

Surprised that no one had faith in him, he left Nazareth and went to the surrounding villages.165

The Old Testament lays out all the laws that God gave to Moses for the Jews to live by. These include every aspect of life and all religious rituals that must be practiced. One of the most important of these laws is to rest on the Sabbath, the last day of the week. This was interpreted to mean refraining from virtually any activity, even the most simple. The criteria of a person's piety was how strictly they practised all these laws.

While Jesus taught that people should follow the sacred laws more closely than the Pharisees did166 he was actually committed to a less burdensome application of them, or at least some of them, and his critics were quick to point out this contradiction. They asked him why he did not fast as did the disciples of John the Baptist and other pious folk.167 When he offhandedly plucked a head of wheat he was accused of breaking the Sabbath. His rebuttal to this charge was a good one. "The Sabbath was made for the good of human beings; they were not

made for the Sabbath."168 It may well have been that some of the Pharisees were hypocritical nit-pickers when it came to following the law, but that was no good reason for Jesus to ignore it.

Once a group of Pharisees invited him to a meal, which may have been just a friendly gesture on their part or an attempt to get to know him better. When Jesus began eating, one of the Pharisees mentioned to him that he had not washed his

hands first, as was the custom. This triggered a long angry tirade from Jesus against the Pharisees. Addressing him in a respectful manner they pleaded: “Teacher, when you say this you insult us too!” Nevertheless, Jesus continued to tar all Pharisees with the same brush.169 This and similar outbursts must have struck some people as incongruous given that Jesus taught one should not judge others. The Buddha was quite capable of being critical and he sometimes was towards aspects of Brahmanism and what he saw as the hypocrisy of some of its priests. In the Abayayrājakumāra Sutta however, he said that if he did deliver criticism it was based on fact, likely to be remedial, spoken at an appropriate time and always motivated by compassion.

Their Last Days

The four accounts of Jesus’ last days agree in general while differing considerably in detail. This is particularly so in the case of his trial, which is perhaps not surprising given that it would not have been open to the public.

According to Matthew, Jesus remained silent throughout the proceedings, while John claims he both asked and answered questions.170 Rather than present the four versions it will be better to rely mainly on Matthew’s account.

Jesus’ last journey took him to Jerusalem, where he went to participate in the important feast of Passover. He entered the city riding on a donkey or a colt.

Being already well-known, a crowd gathered to watch and welcome his arrival, some even laying their cloaks on the road for him to ride over. Other inhabitants had never heard of him and asked: the others: “Who is this?”171

What happened next is somewhat confused. The first three Gospels say that Jesus went to the great temple and drove the money changers out, although John says this happened at the beginning of his ministry.

As a part of the Passover ritual participants had to sacrifice an animal. Coming from all over the land they could not bring an animal with them so there were arrangements for them to buy one in the temple. They could not buy an animal with Roman currency because it had an image of the emperor in it, anathema in such a holy place, so they had to change their Roman coins into special temple currency. This was the role of the money changers. Jesus was apparently

outraged by all this and he knocked over the money changers’ tables, drove them

out and blocked anyone carrying anything through the temple courtyard.172

Disrupting the usual running of such a major institution must have alarmed the authorities. After this Jesus had a tense confrontation with the temple priests.173

Later, perhaps the next day, he gave talks in the temple which included yet another bitter condemnations of the priests. “Watch out for the teachers of the law, who like to walk around in their long robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplace, who choose the reserved seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts. They take advantage of widows and rob them of their homes, and make a show of saying long prayers. Their punishment will be all the worse.”174 On this occasion Jesus, was addressing a crowd of ordinary folk but later he said even more harsh things directly to the priests: “You snakes and children of snakes! How do you expect to escape from hell?” In seemingly uncontrollable rage he even accused them of being murderers.175 In an earlier encounter with the priests he went beyond this, calling them children of the Devil.176

Such outbursts were more than tactless, they were inflammatory, and not surprisingly they made him no friends. His disruption in the temple must have worried the Romans, and his tirades against the temple priests must have lost him any sympathy they had for him. Jesus as depicted in the New Testament is sometimes markedly different from the “gentle Jesus meek and mild” of the famous hymn and of popular perception.

The Jewish priests knew only too well that if Jesus’ behaviour provoked the Romans to initiate a crackdown it would be bad for everyone, so they decided to get rid of him. They got help from a surprising quarter, one of Jesus’ own apostles, Judas. Why this apostle should turn against his master is hard to explain. Was it nothing more than a desire for money as the New Testament maintains?177 Jesus had promised Judas that he would be amongst the 12

apostles to rule with him over the Kingdom of God once it was established.178

Had he ceased to believe this promise, or was it some other motive? Whatever the case, Jesus sensed that he was going to be arrested and that one of his disciples was going to have a hand in this. After sharing the Passover meal together179 he and the apostles went to the garden of Gethsemane, just beyond the walls of Jerusalem, while Judas snuck away by himself. Wanting to pray

alone and in private, Jesus asked the apostles to keep watch while he did so.

When he came back he found them asleep. This happened two more times and seemingly in exasperation Jesus scolded them: “Simon, are you asleep? Weren’t

you able to stay awake for even an hour?”180 Just as he said this Judas and a crowd of armed men sent by the high priest arrived and seized Jesus.

There was a brief struggle during which Peter drew his sword and cut the ear off a servant of the high priest.181 This incident raises a few questions. Jesus had once said that he had not come “to bring peace on earth but the sword”,182 and before his arrest he had instructed his disciples to arm themselves. “Whoever does not have a sword must sell his coat and buy one.”183 He seemed to be expecting trouble and wanted his disciples to protect him, apparently by force if necessary. That the apostles understood this is evidenced by one of them shedding blood. Luke claims that in fact Jesus only wanted the disciples to have swords in order to fulfil a supposed prophesy about the Messiah from the Old Testament, in Isaiah. In fact, this prophesy says nothing about weapons or violence and it seems unlikely that the whole passage refers to Jesus. It mentions a messenger sent by God to free the Jewish people from enslavement by their neighbours. Further, it says: “He was placed in a grave with those who are evil, he was buried with the rich… He will see his descendants, he will live long.”184 None of this is applicable to or happened to Jesus.

Violence, the use of coercion or force, for any reason or by anyone, even violent language, is completely at odds with the most fundamental principles of the Buddha’s ethics. Many times he said that one should “put aside the stick and the sword and live with care, empathy and kindly compassion for all living beings”.185 He also said: “Putting aside the weapon towards all beings in the world, whether moving or still, one should not kill, get others to kill, or encourage killing”.186 King Pasenadi expressed amazement that the Buddha was able to train even undisciplined and unruly people “without stick or sword”

(*adan 1d 1ena asatthena*).187 The Buddha referred to violent language as “stabbing others with the weapon of the tongue”188 and insisted that his followers should restrain themselves from such speech. Quite apart from using weapons, actual or even allegorical, the Buddha said that just to manufacture or sell them would be contrary to his teaching of Right Livelihood (*Sammā Ājiva*), the fifth step on his Noble Eightfold Path.189

After his arrest, Jesus was taken before the council of Jewish priests and elders but he refused to answer any of the charges they brought against him, and the witness statements were contradictory. Finally, the high priest asked him whether he was the Messiah, to which he replied: “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated on the right-hand of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Not for the first time Jesus was stating to the people he was

addressing that they would be there when the Judgment Day arrived. However, it was not this claim that sealed his fate but the admission that he believed himslf to be the Messiah. For this he was accused of blasphemy and the council voted to have him executed.190 The next morning he was put in chains and brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who alone had the right to order an execution. Having heard the priests’ accusations against Jesus, Pilate asked him: “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied: “So you say.” This is a curious answer for someone who had advised: “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’.”191 Pilate did not say he was the king of the Jews, he simply asked him if he claimed to be. After that, Jesus remained silent through the rest of the proceedings.

Because it was Passover, during which there was a tradition of reprieving any prisoner requested for by the public, Pilate asked the crowd gathered outside his palace whether they wanted Jesus released or another prisoner named Barabbas.

The crowd cried out for the release of Barabbas and for Jesus they howled:

“Crucify him!”192 Mark says that the high priest egged the crowd on, although this is hard to understand. Only a few days before large crowds were welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem, laying their cloaks on the ground before him, crying out “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” and later, appreciative crowds were listening to him teach in the temple. Just how the public was so easily transformed from adulation to murderous condemnation is not clear. Whatever the case, Pilate ordered Jesus to be executed by crucifixion, a particularly ghastly form of capital punishment. He was handed over to the soldiers who beat, mocked and humiliated him then took him outside the walls of the city and crucified him.

The last months of the Buddha’s life are recounted in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the longest discourse in the Tipitaka. It opens with the Buddha leaving Rājagaha, describes the events that took place during his journey north and then

north-west, his death in Kusinārā and the disposal of his remains, and ends with the sharing out of his ashes. It is only necessary to relate the final days and anything previous relevant to them.

The Buddha foretold the time and place of his passing, saying that he would die three months hence in the small town of Kusinārā.193 That he had a premonition of when he would die and that it actually came true, is perhaps not surprising.

People have occasionally been known to have the strange ability to predict the time of their death. That he accurately predicted where he would die seems less credible. A look at the map of the route the Buddha took during this last journey

strongly suggests that he intended to make one final visit to his hometown Kapilavatthu and die there. As it happened, he was delayed by a serious illness and died in Kusinārā before reaching Kapilavatthu.

The Buddha, Ānanda and the party of monks accompanying them arrived in Vesāli just at the beginning of the monsoon and, in accordance with the tradition among ascetics, they found places to stay for the next three months.

The Buddha took up lodgings in “the small village of Beluva”, one of the outer suburbs of the city. While there “he was attacked by a severe sickness, with sharp pains as if he was about to die but he endured all this mindfully, clearly aware and without complaint”.194 Even today in India water-born diseases are common during the monsoon. After the monsoon the party set off again, passing through Bhan Ld Lagāma, Jambugāma, Bhoganagāma and eventually Pāvā, where they stayed in a mango orchard owned by a blacksmith named Cunda.195 Cunda welcomed them and invited them to a meal the next day. During the meal the Buddha was served and ate a dish called *sūkaramaddva* after which “he was attacked by a severe sickness with bloody diarrhoea (*lohita pakkhandika*) and sharp pain”.196

There has been a great deal of speculation and controversy around this incident.

Sūkaramaddva literally means ‘boar’s softness’ although what it consisted of is unknown. It may have been a pork preparation of some kind, e.g. tender pork, but not necessarily. Then as now, culinary preparations could be given names entirely unrelated to their ingredients. It has also been claimed that the Buddha died from eating poison mushrooms, from food poisoning or even that he was deliberately poisoned. The fact that his main symptom was exudative diarrhoea

suggest that he suffered from either a gastroenteritis or some water borne disease. However, given that he had been sick while staying in Vesāli and that he was around 80, this points to his death being due to a continuation of this earlier sickness whatever it was, exacerbated by exhaustion. Earlier during his journey the Buddha had mentioned the only time he was physically comfortable was when he went into deep meditation.197

Having recovered somewhat, the Buddha and the monks continued on their way but he grew increasingly frail and they had to stop, the Buddha asking Ānanda to fold a robe into four so he could sit on it while resting at the foot of a tree.

While there they were approached by a man named Pukkusa who had been a disciple of the Buddha's old teacher Āl Lāra Kālāma. Pukkusa offered the Buddha two cloth of gold robes. The Buddha accepted one and asked that the other be given to Ānanda. When Pukkusa left, Ānanda draped one robe over the Buddha

and almost immediately his body was transfigured, becoming "radiant and glowing", so much so that the cloth of gold robe appeared dull.198 When Ānanda mentioned this, the Buddha said that this phenomenon had only happened to him once before, on the night he attained Awakening. The account of the Buddha's Awakening mentions that rays (*ra s*

ṁ i) of blue and yellow, red, white

and orange light emanated from his body.199

The party moved on to the Kukuttha River, where they all bathed. The Buddha then asked Cundaka to fold a robe into four and place it on the ground so he could lie down and rest again. Cundaka did this and then sat watch beside the Buddha to attend to anything he might need. This devoted disciple kept awake the whole time. He had been attentive to the Buddha's needs in the past as well.

Once when the Buddha was sick, Cundaka had visited him and the two of them talked about the Dhamma. The texts suggest that the Buddha's illness eased as a result of Cundaka's caring presence.200

The party continued until they arrived at the sal grove on the outskirts of the Malla's main town Kusinārā. The Buddha asked Ānanda to prepare a bed for him between two large sal trees. As he lay down, the tree spontaneously burst

into blossom and flower petals showered down over the Buddha's body. When Ānanda expressed his astonishment at this the Buddha took the opportunity to make an important point. "These sal trees have burst into blossom out of season.

Never before has the Tathāgata been so honoured and revered, reverenced, esteemed and worshipped. But the monk or the nun, the layman or lay woman disciple who lives practising the Dhamma fully and perfectly fulfils the Dhamma way, it is they who truly honour the Tathāgata, revere, reverence and worship him in the highest way."201 This is yet another example of the Buddhist ideas that miracles are of minor importance compared with living in accordance with the Dhamma and that the Dhamma is for everyone, monastic and lay.

Realising that the end was near the Buddha, gave some final advice and instructions. He encouraged every devotee to go on pilgrimage to the place where he was born, where he attained Awakening, where he proclaimed the Dhamma for the first time, and where he passed away. He warned monks not to become too familiar with women, and gave instructions of how his remains were to be disposed of. He thanked and praised Ānanda for his many years of selfless service, advised that the errant monk Channa be disciplined, and gave permission for any of the minor monastic rules to be changed if necessary. As a final encouragement he also said: "Ānanda, it may be that you think, 'The Teacher guidance has ceased, and now we have no teacher.' But this is not how

you should see it. The Dhamma and training I have taught you, after I am gone let them be your teacher."202

Their Last Words

Now the Buddha's end had come. With the Mallas of Kusinārā, the monks who had accompanied him during his final journey and others gathered around, he uttered his final words. "Now monks I declare to you; all conditioned things are impermanent. Strive on with awareness (*Vayadhammā sa kār ṅ*

ā. Appamādena

sampādetha)."200

Because there are four different accounts of Jesus' trial, execution and death, there are also four different versions of his final utterance. According to Matthew: "He gave a loud cry and breathed his last." According to Mark he said:

“My God, my God, why did you abandon me?” Luke’s account gives this:

“Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Father! In your hands I place my spirit!’.”

According to John, he said “I am thirsty” and some cheap wine with bitter herb was lifted up to his lips. Then he uttered “It is finished” and died.201

Some of those gathered around the Buddha’s deathbed broke into tears but others, understanding the nature of ordinary conditioned existence, remained calm and spent the rest of the night in silent meditation.202 While the Buddha’s passing evokes sadness and a sense of loss, such feelings are tempered by knowing that it came at the end of a long and fruitful life and that it was in keeping with the natural course of things. The death of Jesus by contrast was tragic. In the prime of life he suffered the humiliation and brutality of the type still inflicted on people in police stations and secret police dungeons around the world. Most Christians believe that Jesus’ death was a part of God’s plan, necessary to redeem humanity from sin, and that his subsequent resurrection was a triumph over mortality. Nonetheless, the accounts of his end can still move one to pity.

The Dhamma and the Gospel

What they named Their Teachings

Jesus never gave his teaching a name, almost certainly because he did not see it as something new but as a restatement of Judaism, a return to what he took to be the essence the ancient Jewish sacred law, combined with John the Baptist’s apocalyptic theology. He said: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfil them.”1 He asked his followers to practise the God’s law with even more zeal than the Pharisees did.2 Perhaps Jesus’ single most famous pronouncement, and one

encapsulating an idea often assumed to be unique to him, “Love your neighbour as yourself”, actually comes from the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, written some 500 years before his time.3 Jesus described his teaching as *euangelion*, a Greek word meaning ‘good news’ and which has come into English as ‘gospel’.4 From an early period, Jesus’ followers were called Nazarenes or Christians 5 although Jesus himself never used these terms.

The Buddha called his teachings Dhamma, a word meaning reality, the way

things are, or actuality. Sometimes he called it the Instruction (*Sāsana*). He named the central conception of his Dhamma the Four Noble Truths. The fourth of these, the practical one, he called the Middle Way (*Majjhima Patipadā*) because he said it avoided the extremes of self-mortification on the one hand and sensual indulgence on the other.6 His first disciples called themselves or were called Gotama's disciples (*Gotama sāvaka*) or scions of the Sakyan (*Sakaya putta*).7

It is frequently claimed, even in some academic publications, that Buddhism started as a branch or a reform of Hinduism or that it borrowed some of its central concepts from it. Such assertions needs to be clarified and then challenged. While most Indians during the Buddha's time were probably animists, Brahmanism was the main formal religion, with a priesthood, a canon of scriptures, a liturgical language, and various formulated doctrines and set rituals. It was based on the Vedas and its supreme god was Brahmā, or according to some versions Pajāpati. In the centuries after the Buddha, Brahmanism gradually evolved into what is now called and is recognisable as Hinduism. In the process, many Brahmanical doctrines and practices fell into abeyance or changed radically, so that while Brahmanism and Hinduism have much in common, they have distinct differences as well. Scholars sometimes distinguish between them by calling them Vedic Hinduism and Purān Lic Hinduism. The situation is similar in some ways to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. The latter grew out of the former, retaining some features and developing many new ideas, so that the two became distinct religions.

The two religious specialists during the Buddha's time were the brahmans and the *saman 1as*. The brahmans were the hereditary priests of Brahmanism and considered the Vedas to be the ultimate spiritual authority. The *saman 1as*, on the other hand, were wandering ascetics who rejected the Vedas and most Brahmanical beliefs and practices, disregarded social norms and expectations and gave precedence to experience over dogma and scriptural authority. They

experimented with meditation, self-mortification, yogic breathing, fasting and long periods of solitude. They were also usually celibate, mendicant and itinerate. The Buddha said of the typical *saman 1a* that "having accepted sufficient alms he goes his way as a bird when it flies here or there taking nothing with it but its wings".8 The *saman 1as* were sometimes also known as ford-makers (*titthakara*) because they were trying to find or claimed to have found a way to cross the raging river of conditioned existence. Likewise, they

were sometimes called mendicants (*bhikkhus*) because they begged for their food, or *tapassin* because they exerted themselves. During the Buddha's time, there were at least a dozen major fraternities or sects of *saman 1as* but the ones that attracted most attention were the Jains, called *niganthas* in the Tipitaka, meaning Bondless Ones, and the Buddha's Sa gha o

ṅ

r monastic community.

The more orthodox followers of Brahmanism, particularly brahman priests, regarded *saman 1as* as rivals, heretics and on a par with outcastes because they ignored caste rules. The Tipitaka often records various brahmans referring to the Buddha or his monks as miserable ascetics (*saman 1aka*) and menials (*ibbha*).9

The antagonism between the two was highlighted by Patañjali (circa. 150 BCE), who wrote that *saman 1as* and brahmans were "like cat and mouse, dog and fox, snake and mongoose" meaning that they were polar opposites in both their lifestyles and their approaches to spirituality. He added that "the opposition between the two is eternal" (*yes 1ām1 ca virodhah śāśvatikah*).10 The Buddha was very much within the *saman 1a* tradition and throughout the Tipitaka he is addressed as the "*saman 1a* Gotama". When he renounced the world, he did not seek out a brahman teacher to study the Vedas from but rather the two respected *saman 1a* gurus, Āl Lāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta.11

Just as the Buddha rejected the Brahmanical approach to the religious life, he also rejected most of its doctrines. The central sacrament of Brahmanism was the worship of Agni, the god of fire, and the sacrifices (*yāga*) in which offerings (*homa*) were made to Agni and other gods. Agni is mentioned in the Vedas more than any other deity and the Vedas, the *Samhitās*, the *Gr 1hya Sūtras* and the *Brāhman 1as*, describe in minute detail when and how these sacrifices were to be performed, their meaning, and their efficacy. The Buddha was highly critical of these rituals, particularly the sacrifices in which animals were slaughtered.

To him the sacrifices were "not worth a sixteenth of having a calm mind". He called the worship of Agni ineffective and dismissed it as "an outlet to failure"

(*apāyamukhānī*). "If one were to sacrifice to the sacred fire for a hundred years in the forest or another were to honour someone who had developed himself,

that would be better than the hundred years of sacrifice.”12 Again: “Not fire worship, undergoing penance, chanting the sacred hymns, making oblations or conducting fire sacrifices can win immortality or purify one who has not gone beyond doubt.”13 The Buddha chose to itemise the three root mental defilements, greed, hatred and ignorance, (*lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*) and call them fires, to parallel and also contrast with the three sacred fires of Brahmanism.14

Brahmanism required that these three sacred household fires be tended and kept burning for all one’s life; the Buddha taught that one attained Awakening only by extinguishing the three fires. Of the several names the Buddha gave to the state of complete liberation, the most common was Nirvana, meaning ‘to blow out’, i.e. to blow out the burning mental defilements.

The Buddha also rejected in the strongest terms the caste system, the very cornerstone of the Brahminical social order. The only social division he recognized was that of householders (*gahapati*) and home-leavers, (*pabbajita*), i.e. monks and nuns, and one could change from one to another.

He taught that everyone was worthy of being considered a brahman if they were virtuous, turning on its head the Brahmanical notion that a brahman is someone born to brahman parents, who in turn had to be “of pure decent through at least seven generations”.15 He said: “I do not consider one a brahman simply by being born from, or emerged from the womb of a brahman mother. Such a one is just a chanter of the Vedic hymns.”16 “Whoever is friendly amidst the hostile, peaceful amidst the violent, content amidst the clinging, him I call a brahman.”17 “Even if one chants the sacred hymns, one born brahman is not one if he is internally rotten, soiled and supports himself by fraudulent means.

Whether warrior caste, brahman caste, merchant caste, service caste, outcaste or scavenger, if one is energetic, determined and always makes an effort one can attain the highest purity. You should know that this is a fact.18 Once, hearing that the Buddha “teaches that all four castes are pure”, a brahman went to debate with and refute him on this issue. When this brahman kept insisting that brahmans are pure because they are born from Brahmā’s mouth, the Buddha replied that it was an observable fact that they were born from their mother’s womb just like everyone else.19

Because the Buddha and his monks accepted food from and mixed with people of all castes, even outcastes, in the eyes of upper caste people they were as

impure and contaminating as outcastes. When the Buddha approached the brahman Aggikabhāradvāja to beg for food he was rebuffed and insulted. “Stop there you shaveling, you miserable ascetic, you outcaste!”20 When he went to

the brahman village of Thunā and the people saw him coming, they stuffed their well with grass and rice husks so he could not drink from and thereby pollute their water.22

For most people today caste would be considered an outdated custom or a matter of justice or equality, but to brahmans it was something quite different. It was the very foundation of their view of themselves, their role in society and the underpinning of the divinely created social order of which they were the pinnacle. The Buddha’s repudiation of the caste system left the orthodox aghast.

An important Brahmanical practice which the Buddha rejected was ritual bathing. He maintained that bathing in the Ganges or other sacred rivers could never wash away the evil a person had done, any more that the water in a village well could.23 Real pollution, he maintained, came from negative thoughts and immoral behaviour, and this could only be “cleaned” by changing one’s heart and one’s actions. He called this the “inner washing” (*sināto antarena sinānena*).24 For him, to live in austerity and moral purity was to be “washed without water” (*sinānam anodakam1*).25

Brahmanism was a strongly domestic religion. During the Buddha’s time people married for all the reasons they always have, but within Brahmanism marriage was imperative because some of its central rites could not be performed or even participated in by an unmarried man. The brahman who conducted a sacrifice had to be married and the wife of a man who sponsored a sacrifice had to be present during its performance, otherwise it would be ineffective. One of the four stages (*catur āśrama*) each person was supposed to pass through during their life was being married and raising a family.

An important Brahminical concept which centred on family and producing male progeny was the doctrine of the Threefold Debt (*trir 1n 1a*). According to this doctrine, as soon as a man is born he incurs three debts which must be repaid before he dies: studentship to teachers, sacrifices to gods, and producing a son.

Having a son was not just to perpetuate the family line; it guaranteed immortality.26 A son had to ignite his parent’s funeral pyre and only he could

make the offerings that sustained his ancestors in the world of the fathers (*pitr 1loka*). “The father who sees the face of his new-born son repays his debt and attains immortality…By means of a son a father crosses the mighty darkness…A wife is a friend, a daughter is grief but a son is a light in the highest heaven.” “Through your offspring, i.e. son, you are born again in heaven. That O mortal, is your immortality.” “By having a son a man gains the world; through a son he obtains immortality; and through a son’s grandson he

attains the crest of the sun.”27 To become a celibate monk and thus never produce a son was, according to Brahmanism, to cease to exist after death, it was annihilation.

For the Buddha as for Jesus and the first Christians, home life was a hindrance to spiritual aspirations. St. Paul’s words at 1 Cornthians.7.32-35 on this matter could have been spoken at least in part by the Buddha: “I would like you to be free from worries. An unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord’s work because he is trying to please the Lord. But a married man concerns himself with worldly matters, because he wants to please his wife, and so he is pulled in two directions…I am saying this because I want to help you. I am not trying to put restrictions on you. Instead, I want you to do what is right and proper, and to give yourselves completely to the Lord’s service without any reservations.”

The Buddha put it this way: “The household life is confining and dusty while the homeless life is as free as the breeze. It is not easy living the household life, and also living the completely perfected holy life, purified and polished like a conch shell.”28 The Buddha said that “sons do not protect you” and that “one obsessed with getting sons or cattle will be carried away by death.”29 Other things the Buddha had to say about family life will be discussed below.

The Buddha did not teach that the goal of the religious life to go to heaven, or what in Brahmanism was called the world of the fathers (*pitr 1loka*). He considered the celestial state to be better than hell but distinctly inferior to Nirvana. For him, heaven, like all conditioned states, was impermanent and when one’s time there was over, one could well be reborn as a human again and be heir to all the travails of bodily existence. Thus “the wise are not interested in the glories of heaven”, and attaining even the first stage of Awakening “is better than going to heaven”.30 Related to this, there was no place in the Buddha’s Dhamma for a single supreme being, as will be shown below.

An important daily ritual in Brahmanism was the worship of the direction, sometimes the four cardinal ones, sometimes these four plus the nadir and the zenith, sometimes all six plus the intermediate directions. When the young man Sigāla told the Buddha that he worshipped the six directions at the request of his dying father the Buddha said that he too taught the worship of the directions but in a very different way. He explained that for each direction one should consider a known person - parent, spouse, friend, teacher, employee, etc., and "worship"

them by treating them with respect and kindness.31

Even in unexpected and seemingly minor matters the evidence shows that the Buddha sort to distance his Dhamma from Brahmanism. The sacred language of

Brahmanism was Sanskrit which was believed to be the language of the gods; primordial, pure and eternal. Sanskrit was the language of the Vedas but by the 6th century BCE it was used mainly for chanting the Vedic hymns during sacrifices and other rituals. On one occasion two monks, both brahmans, suggested to the Buddha that all his teachings be rendered into *chandas*, metrical Sanskrit. The Buddha rebuked them saying: "How can you foolish men say such a thing. It would not be pleasing to those not yet pleased or increase the number of those already pleased. Rather, it would be unpleasing for those not yet pleased and also to those already pleased." Then he added: "I want you to learn the Buddha's teaching each in your own language."32 There can be no doubt that the Buddha did not want his teachings to be associated with the Brahmanical priestly class and in a language inaccessible to the majority of people.

In later centuries Sanskrit became India's language of the culture and learning and by about the 1st century BCE, bowing to the inevitable, monks translated the Buddha's discourses into Sanskrit and started composing various works in that language.

It is true that the Buddha sometimes borrowed Brahmanical terminology and categories but he always gave them new, usually ethical, meanings. For example a brahman who had mastered the three Vedas and other sacred knowledge was given the honoured title Thrice-learned One (*tevijja*) while the Buddha said it was attaining the three insights through meditation that made one a real Thrice-learned One.33

Thus the Buddha either criticised, rejected, ignored or reinterpreted almost every

one of the essential doctrines and practices of Brahmanism. Likewise, the central principles of his Dhamma - the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Three Characteristics of Existence, the doctrine of no-self, and Dependant Origination - are not found in the Vedas or in later Brahmanical texts. Neither do any of the Vedas mention kamma or rebirth, absolutely fundamental concepts in Buddhism, although they were later incorporated into Hinduism. In fact, the Buddha distinctly said that these and the other truths he had realised had "not been heard about before" (*pubbe ananussutesu*).

Given that the Buddha presented his Dhamma as an alternative to the prevailing religions, and that the brahman priests were all too aware of this, it is not surprising that the Tipitaka records numerous examples of brahman hostility towards the Buddha and his Dhamma. They disparaged Buddhist monks as

"the black scrapings of our kinsmen's foot" (*ibbhā kin 1hā bandhupadāpaccā*),

equating them with the lowest caste who were supposedly created from Brahmā's feet. Once some brahmans who had become the Buddha's disciples commented to him that their fellow brahmans now "insult and abuse us. They do not hold back with their usual flood of insults".34 When the brahman Akkosaka heard that a member of his clan had become a Buddhist, he went to the Buddha and "abused and reviled him with rude harsh words".35

Although meditation of various kinds would later become an important part of Hindu spirituality, there were no such practices in Brahmanism, and brahmans mocked and disparaged this aspect of Buddhism. "As a cat at a door post, a rubbish heap or a drain meditates, contemplates, ruminates, speculates, so these ascetics …claim, 'We meditate, we are meditators!' With their drooping shoulders, their heads hanging down, limp all over, they meditate…"36 Some of the Buddha's disciples were not always prepared to take such abuse lying down.

Some young brahman students once encountered the senior monk Kaccāna in the forest and sniped that he and other monks were only given respect by lowly menials (*bhāratakā*). Deciding not to let this insult pass Kaccāna replied:

"Puffed up with pride… bathing at sunrise, chanting the three Vedas, reciting mantras, rules, vows and penance… hypocrisy, crooked staffs and ritual ablutions, these are the marks of brahmans. But it is by having a focused mind, clear and free from blemishes, and by being gentle towards all beings that is the

way to Brahmā.”37

Brahmanism’s hostility towards and criticism of Buddhism, like that of Hinduism later, continued for centuries. The *Maitri Upanis 1ad* says: “There are those who love to distract believers in the Vedas by the jugglery of false arguments, comparisons and parallelisms…The world is bewildered by a doctrine that denies the self (*nairātmyavāda*), by false comparisons and proofs, it does not discern the difference between the wisdom of the Vedas and other knowledge…Some say that there should be attention to Dhamma instead of the Vedas…But it is the Vedas that are true. The wise should base their lives on the Vedas. A brahman should only study what is in the Vedas.” This is obviously a criticism of the Buddhist doctrine of no self (*anattā*), of Buddhism’s rejection of the authority of the Vedas, and of the logical arguments Buddhists used to support their views. The *Vis 1n 1u Purān 1a* depicted the Buddha as a cunning seducer who used illusion and ignorance (*māyāmoha*) to wean people away from the truth. In his commentaries on the *Vedanta Sūtra* s, Sankaracariya wrote: “The Buddha’s Dhamma must be completely rejected by all those who have regard for their own happiness.” Kumārila Bhat Lt La’s *Śloka-vārttika*

contained a detailed critique of Buddhism and concluded by dismissing it as suitable only for outcastes, foreigners and savages. The *Prameyamālā* saw Buddhism as being at odds with and a threat to Hinduism, stating: “The truth contained in the three Vedas is destroyed by the followers of Kan Lāda, by the Buddhists and by other heretics. Previously, it was protected by Vis Ln Lu with his trident.”

All this disagreement and disparagement would have been meaningless and unnecessary if Buddhism had been just a branch of or a reform of Brahmanism or later Hinduism. The Buddha used the vernacular of the time which included some Brahmanical terminology, but he saw his Dhamma as distinct from Brahmanism and so did the Brahmanical philosophers and thinkers, both during his time and later.

Despite the Buddha’s criticism of Brahmanism and orthodox brahman hostility towards him, the two were sometimes on good terms with each other. The more open and liberal brahmans in particular could be curious about the Buddha and respectful towards his ideas, and would engage in polite dialogue with him. As mentioned above, a good number of them converted to Buddhism and even became monks.

Their Teaching Styles

The fact that the Dhamma and the Gospel took hold so firmly and spread so quickly was largely due to the teaching style of both the Buddha and Jesus. In Jesus' case, this was even more remarkable given that his career was so short and initially met with sometimes violent opposition. It is obvious that the two men were extremely effective communicators to their respective audiences.

Jesus addressed his message primarily to the simple Jewish peasants of Palestine and he spoke in a manner that appealed to them. It is quite likely that his words as preserved in the first three Gospels fairly accurately reflect his teaching style – interesting parables drawing mainly on elements from peasant life and the experiences of ordinary people, and short, memorable adages and parables. According to most scholars, Jesus used about 40 parables. When his apostles asked him why he used parables to communicate with people he gave a rather perplexing answer. "The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you but not to them…The reason I use parables in talking to them is that they look but do not see, and they listen but do not hear or understand… As for you, how fortunate you are! Your eyes see and your ears hear. I assure you that many prophets and many of God's people wanted very much to see what you see, but they could not, and hear what you hear, but they

did not."38 This suggests that the purpose of the parables was to conceal something that was only revealed to the inner circle of apostles. Yet it is widely assumed, and it seems to be the case, that the parables were the main way Jesus got his message across.

A justly famous example of Jesus' ability to effect positive change in people with a few simple words is what he said to a crowd who had assembled to stone a woman accused of adultery. Hoping to get Jesus to criticise the Old Testament sacred law which lays down stoning as a punishment for this offence (Deuteronomy 22,22-24), the presiding priests asked Jesus what he would do in this case. He paused for a moment, lent down and drew something on the ground with his finger, then stood up and said: "Let him amongst you who is without sin cast the first stone." One by one the crowd dropped their stones and drifted away and when they had all gone Jesus asked the woman: "Is there no one left to condemn you?" When she answered "No" he said: "Then neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."39 A great deal is packed into these three short sentences. They prompted the crowd to think of their own shortcomings rather

than the woman's, they balanced mercy and forgiveness with a plea to the woman to change her behaviour, and at the same time subtly rebuked the priests for their scheming. This is a wonderful story and one of several examples of Jesus' power as a teacher.

The popular perception of the Buddha, even by Buddhists themselves, is that he was a semi-recluse who spent most of his time alone in forest glades and mountain caves. This perception is not supported by the Tipitaka, which depicts him very much as an urbanite. He lived mainly within walking distance of large cities and towns; Rājagaha, Kosambi, Sāketa, Sāvatthī, Vesāli, Campa, Mathura, etc. Even when he went into rural areas or forest retreats he was always near a village or hamlet which he needed to get his food. This meant that while the Buddha's audience came from all backgrounds, typically they were city-dwellers, often from the economic, religious and political class; merchants, ascetics of various sects, military men, occasionally even royalty.

Sunidha, Vassakāra and Ugga were all government ministers, Jīvaka was a physician, Sīha a general, Abhaya a prince, Mallikā a queen, Cundi and Sumanā

were both princesses. Many of the brahmans he dialogued with were the leaders of their clans and communities and a significant number of them became monks. Others such as Anāthapin Ld Laka, Ghosita, Kukkut La, Kālaka and Pāvārika were wealthy businessmen. Such people were often familiar with and interested in the various religious and philosophical theories that were being discussed at

the time and homely parables, unsubstantiated claims and threats of hell for failing to believe would not have impressed them.

The Buddha often engaged in dialogues with one or more of the people who came to hear him or ask him questions, sometimes while people who accompanied the protagonist listened in. These encounters would take the form of the Buddha asking questions of the visitor who answered them, or the visitor doing the questioning and the Buddha the answering. Inevitably, towards the end of such a back and forth the Buddha would give his perspective. Some of these dialogues were quite long. They were usually conducted in a polite manner and only rarely became heated, as for example those with Ambat Lt Lha, Assalāyana and Cankī.40

The Buddha sometimes used parables (*upamākathā*) in this teaching although

he more often used similes (*upamā*).41 When explaining something he would sometimes say: “I shall give you a simile because some intelligent people understand better by means of a simile.”42 No one has ever counted all the Buddha’s similes and parables but there are some 165 in the Majjhima Nikāya, about 170 in the SamLyutta Nikāya, and many more in the other books of the Tipitaka. These similes draw on a wide variety of elements ranging from natural phenomena to travelling, country life, business, animal taming, royalty, metallurgy, household articles and duties, to name but a few. Their richness, diversity and realism suggest a mind of a careful observer with wide experience.

One of the more famous of these is the Parable of the Raft. The Buddha saw his Dhamma mainly in utilitarian terms, as something used to accomplish a particular goal, i.e. Awakening, after which it would become redundant. To explain what he meant he told a story of a man who in the course of a journey came to a wide river and, knowing that the country on his side to be dangerous and the other side safe, was determined to cross over. With no ferry or bridge available he constructed a raft of grass, foliage and branches and using his hands and feet paddled to the further bank of the river. Having done this and thinking how useful the raft had been he decided to hoist it onto his head and carry it with him for the remainder of his journey. Then the Buddha asked his monks if they thought this was an intelligent thing for the man to do. They answered that it was not, and then the Buddha concluded by saying: “Monks, when you understand that the Dhamma is similar to a raft, you [eventually] let go of even good states, how much more so bad ones.”43

Another of the Buddha’s parables that used the image of crossing a river, although to make a different point, is this one. A man once asked the Buddha

what he thought of those who claimed that liberation could be achieved through self-mortification. In answer to this the Buddha said; “Suppose a man wanting to cross a river were to take an axe, go into a forest and chop down a young, straight tree without any knots. He would lop off the crown, strip the foliage and branches off, shape the log with the axe, trim it with a adze, smoothed it with a scraper, then polished it with a stone ball, and having done so set out across the river. What do you think? Would he be able to cross that river?” The man answered: “No sir, he would not. Because although the log had been well shaped on the outside it had not been cleaned out on the inside.” The Buddha then said that unless someone had “cleaned the inside” by cultivating behavioural and psychological purity he or she would not be able to attain Awakening.44

Undoubtedly the Buddha's most famous parable, and one that later spread throughout the world, is about the blind men and the elephant. The story's appeal lays in how well it makes its point, its striking juxtaposition of man and beast, and its gentle humour. It has been used to illustrate different ideas or sometimes as just as an amusing tale, but the Buddha used it to highlight a specific point. Once some monks noticed a group of ascetics quarrelling with one another about some philosophical or theological issue. Later, they mentioned what they had seen to the Buddha and he said: "Ascetics of other sects are blind and unseeing. They don't know the good and the bad, the true and the false. Consequently, they are always quarrelling, arguing and fighting, stabbing one another with the weapon of the tongue." He then related the parable and having done so summed up its meaning: "Some ascetics and brahmans are attached to their views and having seized hold of them they wrangle, seeing as they do only one part of a thing." So the point of the story is that seeing only one aspect of a thing (*ekam1ga dassino*) gives an incomplete or partial understanding, and that this leads to contention. Implicit in this is that one needs to take time assembling all the facts before drawing conclusions.45

An aspect of the Buddha's approach to teaching which rarely gets mentioned is its humour. His discourses and dialogues contain numerous puns, humorous exaggerations, irony and occasional satire. Unfortunately for the most part this humour is not apparent to the modern reader. Thanissaro Bhikkhu writes; "One of the reasons why the Canon's humour goes unrecognized relates to its style, which is often subtle, deadpan, and dry. This style of humour can go right past readers in modern cultures where jokes are telegraphed well in advance, and humour tends to be broad. Another reason is that translators often miss the fact

that a passage is meant to be humorous, and so render it in a flat, pedantic way."46

Another way the Buddha communicated his Dhamma was by participating in the public debates that were a feature of the time. So popular were these events that some towns even had debating halls (*kutūhala sālā*) in which to hold them.47

The Tipitaka and other contemporary sources give a good idea of how these debates were conducted. If on being asked a legitimate question for a third time, an opponent could not answer, he was considered to have been defeated.48

Participants were expected to use recognised arguments and adhere to accepted

procedures, and a moderator (*pañhavīma s*

ṁ akā) tried to make sure they did.49

To dodge a question by asking another question, change the subject or ridicule the questioner was considered improper. Likewise, to shout down an opponent, catch him up when he hesitated or interrupt from the sidelines were also unacceptable.50 A teacher who held his own in debate could win honour, patronage and disciples, while the defeated had to slink away in shame. There is a description of a participant in a debate with the Buddha "reduced to silence, his head lowered, his eyes downcast, at a loss, unable to make a reply" while the audience "assailed him on all sides with a torrent of abuse and poked fun at him…"51 Vague theologies and dreamy doctrines were soon subjected to hard reason, logical scrutiny and demands for evidence. Those that stood the test, like the Buddha's Dhamma, flourished; those that did not faded away.

Debates could get heated and sometimes even end in blows and this was probably the reason that during the early part of his career the Buddha avoided such assemblies. He observed: "Some debates are conducted in a spirit of hostility and some in a spirit of truth. Either way, the sage does not get involved."52 As a consequence, at the beginning of his career the Buddha was accused of being unable to defend his ideas in the face of scrutiny. One critic said of him: "Who does the ascetic Gotama speak to? From whom does he get his lucidity of wisdom? His wisdom is destroyed by living in solitude, he is unused to discussions, he is no good at speaking, he is completely out of touch.

Like an antelope that circles around and keeps to the edges, so does the ascetic Gotama."53 It seems that for a long time the Buddha was content to let his Dhamma speak for itself. But as people began to seek deeper explanations of it and it began to be criticised and even misrepresented, he was compelled to participate in public debates and discussions. He soon earned a reputation for being able to explain his philosophy with great clarity and to defend it

effectively against criticism. He also began to subject the doctrines of others to hard questioning.

What has been dubbed "the silence of the Buddha" has become almost proverbial and has been widely commented on in both academic and popular writings. Supposedly the Buddha characteristically responded to questions by

maintaining an enigmatic silence, and that this was a significant aspect of his teaching style. Certainly the Buddha occasionally refused to answer questions he considered to be trivial or irreverent, but he would usually explain his reasons for doing so. Of the Buddha's several thousand discourses, in only two did he decline to answer a question and just hold his silence.54

The Buddha's aim was never to defeat an opponent, silence a critic or even to win disciples, but to lead people from ignorance to clarity and understanding. In one of the most heartfelt appeals he ever made he said: "I tell you this. Let an intelligent person who is sincere, honest and straightforward come to me and I will teach him Dhamma. If he practises as he is taught, within seven days and by his own knowledge and vision, he will attain that holy life and goal. Now you may think that I say this just to get disciples or to make you abandon your rules. But this is not so. Keep your teacher and continue to follow your rules.

You may think that I say this so you will give up your way of life, follow things you consider bad or reject things you consider good. But this is not so. Live as you see fit and continue to reject things you consider bad and follow things you consider good. But there are states that are unskilful, defiled, leading to rebirth, fearful, causing distress and associated with birth, decay and death, and it is only for the overcoming of these things that I teach the Dhamma."55

Miracles

As much as being a great moral teacher, Jesus was also a man of miracles. His birth was miraculous, he performed numerous supernatural feats throughout his short career, marvels took place in his presence, and his earthly life was finished with a miracle, his resurrection. There were times when he refused to demonstrate his amazing powers as when the Devil tempted him or the Pharisees challenged him to do so. At other times he performed miracles almost casually. He caused a tree to wither and die because it had no fruit, it not being the right season. When all the wine at a wedding he was attending ran out he turned several jars of water into wine. On another occasion he caused some fishermen's nets to be filled with fish. Making a coin appear in a fish's mouth so it could be used to pay his and his apostles' tax would seem to be another example of using extraordinary abilities for rather trivial ends.56

Jesus' miraculous healing of the sick were of a different order in that they were obviously motivated by compassion. In some such cases he did not have to

pronounce a blessing, touch the afflicted person or even notice them for them to be healed. His clothes and even his body fluids somehow emanated a miraculous energy. A woman who had been ill for years was immediately cured simply by touching Jesus' robe, and on another occasion Jesus spat on the ground, mixed the spittle with the dust, applied the mud to a blind man's eyes, and his sight was restored.57 Jesus maintained that anyone who had faith in him could cure diseases just as he himself did, simply by laying their hands on the afflicted. But they could do more than that if they truly believed; they would, he said, be able to pick up poison snakes and not get bitten or even drink deadly poison and not die.

According to the Gospels several miracles and signs occurred just as Jesus died; an earthquake, the curtain in the great temple tearing, and the sun going dark.

This last occurrence has been interpreted as an eclipse. Astronomers know that a solar eclipse visible from Jerusalem took place at 11:05 on the 24th November in the year 29 CE. However, three of the Gospels are clear that Jesus died at the start of the Jewish festival of Passover which is celebrated in March/April.

Further, this darkness is supposed to have continued for three hours, far longer than any solar eclipse. So whatever caused the Earth to go dark it was not a natural phenomenon.58 But surely the most astonishing miracle coinciding with Jesus' death was a mass resurrection. It is claimed that numerous people who had recently died came out of their graves and walked around in Jerusalem so that "many people saw them".59 Their loved ones, just getting over their grief, must have been speechless; the Roman governor and the officials under him would have been amazed. Reports of this would have been sent back to Rome.

One could well imagine that at least one or two of these resurrected people would have written or got someone to write for them an account of their extraordinary experience. Inexplicably, other than in the Gospel of Matthew there is no record of this event in any documents of the time or even later.

Stranger still, neither Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul or any of the other apostles thought it worthwhile to mention this amazing happening. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded numerous significant events that occurred during this time, including all kinds of portents and wonders, but he said nothing about this one.

A curious thing about Jesus' miraculous power is that it seemed to fluctuate or

work only sometimes. When he attempted to heal a group of sick people in Nazareth his power only worked on a few of them, apparently somewhat

embarrassing him.60 On another occasion he touched a blind man and then asked him if he could see. The man replied he could only make out vague shapes and movement. Jesus had to touch him a second time before his vision was fully restored.61

Jesus' miraculous powers were meant to be and were seen as proof that he had God's favor or even that he was divine himself. He said: "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."62 On another occasion Jesus claimed that a blind man he healed had been born with this affliction specifically so he could heal him and thus demonstrate that he, Jesus, was imbued with God's power.63

Jesus' exclusivist claims created a problem as far as his miracles were concerned. If he and he alone had God's favour or was divine, and proof of this was that he or those acting in his name could do miracles, how could the miracles done by others, even pagans, be explained? The solution to this apparent quandary was to insist that any miracles done by others were actually the work of the Devil.64 But in solving one problem this explanation only created another. If the Devil gave some people miraculous powers, the Pharisees pointed out, then perhaps Jesus' powers came from the Devil too.

Jesus' rebuttal of this charge was, one must say, rather weak.65

It is worth noting that Jesus was only one of many wonder workers in and around Palestine in the 1st century CE. Hanina ben Dosa, Vespasian before he became emperor, Simon Magus, and Theudas were all credited with having miraculous powers. Theudas is mentioned in several sources including the Bible (Act.5,36-8) and so is another wonder-worker called the Egyptian who, according to Josephus, attracted crowds of up to 30,000. The miracles of Apollonius of Tyana especially were something of an embracement to the early Christians because they were so like those done by Jesus and so well attested.

Interestingly, Apollonius' disciples accused Jesus of using demonic power to do his miracles, just as the first Christians explained away Apollonius's miracles by saying that they were just tricks or caused by the Devil.

Before examining the Buddha's attitude to what are generally called miracles, it is necessary to clarify a few things. Miracles are usually thought of as being caused by or connected in some way with supernatural beings, in Christianity with either the Devil or God. The Devil performs miracles to mislead or seduce people, while God does them to demonstrate his power, punish the wicked or in answer to prayers. However, the Buddha understood 'miracles' (*pāti1hāriya*) to

be an outcome or a by-product of mental development. Thus in the Buddhist context it is more appropriate to speak of psychic power (*iddhi*) than miracles.

The Buddha freely acknowledged that some of the other ascetics of his time possessed psychic powers as a result of their spiritual practice. They might well misinterpret the significance of such powers or draw wrong conclusions from them, but he never accused them of being in league with the forces of evil.

It is also true that the Buddha generally had a cautious attitude towards all superhuman abilities. Someone once asked him to get one of his monks to

"demonstrate a superhuman ability, a psychic feat or a miracle (*uttari manussa dhamma iddhi pāti1hāra*) so that even more people will have faith in you". The Buddha replied that there were such abilities which thoughtful or sceptical people would have legitimate doubts about. However, there was one such power that everyone could have confidence in; what he called "the superhuman ability, the psychic feat, and the miracle of education" (*anusāsani*). This consisted, he said, of encouraging others with advice such as this: "Consider in this way, not in that. Direct your mind in this way, not in that. Give up that, gain this and persist with it."66 In other words, rather than bedazzling people with apparent miracles, the Buddha thought it far better to encourage people to think, consider, reflect and behave in certain ways.

On another occasion a wealthy merchant had a valuable sandalwood bowl placed on the top of a bamboo pole, which was then erected in the centre of the town. Then he had a proclamation made to the effect that anyone who could rise to the top of the pole through psychic power could have the bowl. The monk Pin Ld Lola heard of this and having manifested the ability to levitate he took up the challenge and retrieved the bowl. When the Buddha came to hear of this he rebuked the monk in the strongest terms: "You are like a prostitute who lifts her dress for the sake of a miserable coin."67 Then he made it an offence for monks or nuns to display any psychic abilities they might develop. What happened

subsequent to Pin Ld Lola's demonstration helps explain the Buddha's reaction to it. "Noisy, excited crowds began following Pin Ld Lola around". Undoubtedly the Buddha wanted people to respect him and his monks because of their virtue and wisdom, not because they could manifest marvels and miracles.

Buddhism has long pointed out that miraculous powers should not be taken as evidence of spiritual or even moral accomplishments and there is evidence from both Christianity and Buddhism to support this assertion. Devadatta had such powers and he caused the Buddha considerable problems; Judas could exorcise evil spirits and perform miraculous healings and he betrayed Jesus. As far as the

Buddha was concerned, miracles were one thing and the Dhamma was something else entirely. He said: "Whether superhuman abilities, psychic feats or miracles are performed or not, my purpose in teaching the Dhamma is to lead whoever practises it to the complete freedom from suffering. In which case, what is the point of performing miracles?"68

Miraculous healings formed a significant part of Jesus' ministry and were a major reason why people accepted his claims and his Gospel. He healed the blind, paralytics and lepers, he cast out demons and even brought the dead back to life. Interestingly, there are no examples from the Tipitaka of the Buddha or any of his disciples performing miraculous healings or exorcisms. This was partly for the reasons given above, but also because the Buddha saw his goal and purpose as solving the problem of human suffering at its most fundamental level. He saw sickness, decrepitude and death as inherent in embodied existence, as indeed they are. Thus for him, curing a sick person was no guarantee that they would not become sick again, and raising the dead simply meant that the revived person would have to die a second time later. Are miraculous healings impressive? Definitely! Are they sure to attract a following? Absolutely! However, from the Buddhist perspective they do not go to the heart of the problem.

It should not be taken from this that the Buddha lacked compassion for the sick or that he ignored their plight. He healed, helped and comforted them as any decent person would, although through normal means. He considered visiting and caring for the sick to be virtuous acts and out of compassion he did both, and he encouraged his disciples to do the same.69 After washing a monk who was suffering from diarrhoea and had been neglected by his fellows, the Buddha called the monks together, admonished them for their indifference to another

monk and then concluded: “He who would nurse me, let him nurse the sick.”

(*Yo bhikkhave ma*

ṁ upatt1 1aheyya so gilānaṁ upatt1 1hahissati).70 One cannot fail to see a similarity between this exhortation and the one given by Jesus concerning nursing the sick, although he added feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcomeing strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting those in prison:

“I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me.”71

The Afterlife and the Soul

During Jesus’ time, Jewish theologians were split into two groups, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The former rejected belief in any type of afterlife and the latter taught that there was a life after death, although exactly in what

form is not known.72 On the question of the afterlife, Jesus sided with the Pharisees. He believed in a heaven (*ouranos*), sometimes also called paradise (*paradeisos*), and a hell. He described heaven as a place of “eternal life” where the inhabitants “shine like the sun” and “see God”. Apparently the people in heaven would not marry. Whether they would retain their physical bodies was not clear either, but as Jesus still had his body after the resurrection it seems likely that heavenly beings would have theirs too. The only spatial description Jesus gave of heaven was that it had rooms, perhaps meaning different levels or intensities of joy.73 Jesus used several words and phrases for hell; hades, the fiery furnace (*kaminos tou pyrus*), the outer darkness (*exoteros skotos*), and Gehennah, named after a ravine outside Jerusalem where rubbish was burned.74

He described hell as a place of extreme pain, mainly inflicted by fire and worms eating the flesh.

The Buddha taught that the individual was made up of a collection, literally ‘a heap’ (*khanda*) of parts, all of them interdependent and in a constant state of flux. The body was, he said, “bound up with consciousness and dependent on it”

(*ettha sitam ettha patibaddham*).75 When an individual died the body dropped away, the consciousness restablished itself in another physical entity, animated it, and their next life would begin. The Buddha called this process “existence after

existence", "moving from womb to womb" or more precisely, "re-becoming" (*punabbhava*).76 As he explained it, at death the consciousness

"moves upwards" (*uddhagāmi*), then "descends" (*avakkanti*) into the womb i.e.

a mother's newly fertilised egg to find "a resting place" (*patitt1t1hā*) there, although these spatial description are probably only metaphorical.77 The circumstances of one's present life are conditioned in part by one's kamma from the previous life and kamma being created in the present, and the same process will continue in the next life; kamma being how one's consciousness has been constructed and moulded by all one's intentional thoughts, speech and actions.

The word 'conditioned' is more appropriate here than 'determined' because the Buddha said that it is possible to modify one's kamma, just as it is possible to change one's thought patterns and behaviour.78

One of the most persistent misunderstandings about kamma is that it cannot be changed, that one's future in either the present life or the next is determined by one's past. Supposedly "you can never escape from your past kamma". The Buddha called the idea that everything one experiences is due to kamma (*pubbe hetu katha*), one of the three false and pernicious views, the others being that everything is caused by an all-powerful god (*issa*, Sanskrit *iśvara*) and that

everything is without specific cause, i.e. random.79 He taught that a series of positive actions subsequent to a negative one might well 'dilute' the kamma created by the negative action. To give an example, speaking harshly or rudely to someone, later feeling regretful about it and then making amends to them by sincerely apologising, may modify or perhaps even erase the negative kamma made earlier.80 Of course it goes the other way too; positive kamma created earlier could be diminished or even cancelled out by some stronger or equally strong negative action done now.

There are several spheres one can be born into, the most significant being the human, the heavenly and the purgatorial spheres. Most of the Buddha's statements indicate that these spheres are spatial locations, but some things he said suggest that they are more experiences than places. For example: "Fools say that purgatory is under the sea. But I say that purgatory is really a name for painful experience."81

The Buddha's descriptions of heaven and purgatory were not that different from

those of Jesus; heavenly beings would experience joy and happiness and purgatorial beings pain and distress. However, there the similarities end, and in several significant ways. For Jesus, heaven and hell were eternal; for the Buddha they lasted only for as long as one's kamma had not played itself out.

When it had, one would pass away and be reborn in another sphere. Thus, in the Buddhist context it is more appropriate to speak of purgatory than hell. Jesus'

understanding was that one's fate in the afterlife depended on his or God's judgment (*krino*);82 good and faithful individuals being assigned to heaven, sinners and unbelievers being condemned to hell. This examination and evaluation would take place on what Jesus called the Judgment Day (*Imera tis krísis*). In the case of sinners God would deliver his judgment against them with wrath (*orge*) and fury (*thumos*) and without mercy (*aneleos*).83

For the Buddha neither he or a divine being decided a person's post-mortem destiny, rather they created it themselves by how they chose to behave during their life, i.e. their kamma. It was a process of impersonal cause and effect.

Consequently the Buddha did not see heaven, purgatory or a human existence as a reward or a punishment but as an outcome of specific causes, positive ones in the case of heaven or a human life and negative ones in the case of purgatory.

For Jesus, heaven was a reward (*misthos*) granted by God and hell a punishment, a penalty (*kolasis*) administered by him.84 The major difference between the two men's vision of heaven is that Jesus considered it to be the ultimate goal whereas for the Buddha it was part of unsatisfactory conditioned

existence; better than purgatory but inferior to Nirvana, complete transcendence.

All Christian churches assert as one of their central teachings that humans possess a soul; an incorporeal, immortal essence which is the real person, animated by God when he creates them and destined for heaven or hell after physical death. Despite its theological importance, Jesus said almost nothing about the soul. He used the word spirit (*pneuma* or *psyche*) in several different contexts but only occasionally in the sense of a soul, as when he said "that which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of spirit is spirit" and "…

into your hands I commit my spirit".85 It was the early church fathers and later theologians who worked out the details.

Brahmanism, and the Upanas Ladic sages who had just started coming into prominence during the Buddha's time, had a wide range of ideas about what they called the self (*ātman*), the spirit (*jīva*) or the true person (*purus 1a*), its nature and destiny. All these theories asserted in one way or another that the *ātman* was immortal and in some way related to the divine. In contrast to this, and indeed differing from nearly all other *saman 1a* teachers of the time, the Buddha taught that there was no eternal self or soul. This was the central theme of his second sermon, the Discourse on the Sign of No-self (*Anattalakkhan 1a Sutta*). In it he said to understand that all compounded things were unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), impermanent (*anicca*) and without self (*anattā*) was a crucial step in attaining Awakening. "Body is not self, feelings are not self, perception is not self, mental constructs are not self and consciousness is not self…When one sees this, one becomes detached from these things, being detached, the passions fade, when the passions have faded one is free, and being free, one knows one is free."86 For the Buddha the truth of no-self was not just a theory, the result of intellectual speculation, but the outcome of a profound investigative insight into the nature or reality.

When some people learn that the Buddha taught that there was no self and also that individuals were reborn, they ask how there can be personal continuity if there is nothing to pass from one life to the next. This problem is more apparent than real. Firstly, the Buddha did not teach that there was no empirical self, i.e.

the sense of being distinct and separate from others, one's orientation in space, the feeling of continuity that comes from rememberance of the past and imagining the future, associating with a name and being called by that name, etc. Clearly such experiences exist. He taught that there was no metaphysical self, no unchanging essence behind the appearance.

Using an analogy can help clarify what the Buddha meant. A mother might take out the family photo album and show her children photos of herself when she was a child. According to science not one cell in her body is the same as when she was young. Her thoughts, ideas and beliefs are all different from when she was a child. Even her facial features when young, although vaguely similar, are hardly recognisable to her children. Even so, when the curious children ask their mother: "Is that you mummy?", and she answers "Yes", no one would accuse her of lying. Despite the fact that both body and mind are continually changing, it is still valid to say that the person who is reborn is a continuation in some way of the person who died – not because any unchanging self has passed from one to

another, but because identity persists in memories, dispositions, traits, mental habits and psychological tendencies. It is the consciousness which includes all these things that pass from one life to another, and that one can experience in this life the result (*vipāka*) of kamma done in the past, the past of the present life and the past of previous lives.

Misapprehending the empirical self, the sense of self, as an eternal essence results in the ‘me’ notion which automatically gives rise the ‘mine’ idea - my car, my money, my country, my political party, my religion. It is behind the longing for eternal life, the terror of annilation at death, the desire to posess things to enhance the self, and all the concequent suffering this causes.

Renunciation

The Buddha started his quest for truth by giving up his life of ease and privilege and walking out on his family. Later, after his Awakening, he founded an order of men and women who followed his example. As the Buddha saw it, the encumbrances of home life, the demands and expectations of society and the time, effort and trouble they required, made the attainment of Awakening that much more difficult. He acknowledged that married lay people could achieve Awakening and indeed some of them did, but for them it was more challenging.

As a result of this emphasis on renunciation, Buddhism has been characterised in the West as a “world-denying” religion as opposed to Christianity, which is supposedly “world-affirming”. This view is rather perplexing given that an examination of Jesus’ words as presented in the New Testament indicate that his world-denying theology is one of the few things he and the Buddha had in common. Jesus too advocated giving up one’s family: “And I assure you that anyone who leaves home or wife or brother or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in the present age and eternal life in the age to come.”87 When his mother and brothers came looking for Jesus

he left them standing outside and pointedly said to the disciples gathered around him that they were his only family. He stressed this repudiation of familial bonds still further by saying: “You must not call anyone here on earth ‘Father’, because you have only one father in heaven.” But he went even beyond this saying that his very purpose was to break up families. “I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies will be those of his own household.”88

The apostles understood Jesus to be saying that the things of the world are mere dust compared to God. “Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world – what is sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are proud of – none of that comes from the Father; it comes from the world.”89 James put it like this: “Don’t you know that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. If you want to be the world’s friend you make yourself God’s enemy.” Peter urged Christians to be

“strangers and refugees in this world”, and Paul asked them to “put to death all worldly desires”.90 To emphasise how Christians should feel about the world, Jesus even used the word *miseo*, meaning ‘to hate’ or ‘to detest’. “Those who love their own life will lose it; those who hate their own life in this world will keep it for life eternal.”91 And again: “Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they hate their father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters and themselves as well.”92

Some of this could have been spoken by the Buddha except that he would have refrained from such robust language and would not have countenanced hate for anyone or anything. He used terms equivalent to ‘renounce’ or ‘let go of’ or ‘be detached from’. More importantly, he addressed such a message mainly to those intending to become monks and nuns, not to everyone. Concerning family life he had a great deal to say about loving conjugal, parental and filial relationships. He used generic words such as *piya*, *pema* and *sineha* for familial love but also the more specific terms such as maternal love (*matteyya*) and paternal love (*petteyya*). Being a boy and an only child the young Gotama was probably particularly cherished by his parents. Later he became a husband for more than a decade and very briefly a father. This, together with his penetrating understanding of human desires, needs and motivations allowed him to speak of familial relationships with insightfulness and sensitivity.

The parents’ role, apart from loving and caring for their offspring was, the Buddha said “to restrain them from wrong, encourage them to do good, give them an education, provide them with a suitable marriage partner and leave them an inheritance.”93 For children: “Love of one’s mother and love of one’s father is true happiness in the world” he said.94 Parents were particularly worthy of their children’s love, respect and gratitude the Buddha believed, “because they do much for their children; they bring them up, nourish them and introduce them to the world”.95 As if to underscore the blessing of this loving gratitude, he added

that it was impossible to repay one's parents for all they had done for one. Then he added this important proviso: "But whoever encourages their unbelieving parents to have faith, their immoral parents to become virtuous or their ignorant parents to become wise, such a one by so doing, does repay, does more than repay their parents."96 The minds of parents who are so honoured and cherished have "beautiful thoughts and compassion (*kalyān 1ena manasā*

anukampanti) towards their offspring and wish them well saying: 'May you live long!'." 97

For the Buddha love, tenderness and mutual respect were the basis for a successful marriage, that is to say a happy and enduring one. He reproached the brahmans for buying their wives rather than "coming together in harmony and out of mutual affection",98 things he clearly considered made far better foundations for a lifetime partnership. As he commented in the Jātaka: "In this world, union without love is suffering."99 He said that "cherishing one's spouse and child is the greatest blessing",100 that a loving wife was "the best friend one can have",101 and that a couple who were following the Dhamma would

"speak loving words to each other",102 and live together "with joyful minds, of one heart and in harmony".103

When two people love each other deeply they often have a strong feeling that their coming together was somehow "destined". Scientists have tried to explain such feelings in terms of chemical changes in the body and they might be right, although there could be another explanation. According to the Buddha's understanding, each person comes into the present life from an earlier one and if they have not attained Awakening will go on to a new one after they die. A person's intentional thoughts, speech and actions (i.e. their kamma) will be a major factor in conditioning their experiences in each life. But beyond that a strong identification with, connection or attachment to a particular location or culture may cause them to be reborn there. Likewise, a close bond or affinity with a particular person may draw them to that person in the next life.104

The ideal loving couple would be Nakulapitā and Nakulamātā, who were close disciples of the Buddha. Once Nakulamātā, devotedly nursed her husband through a long illness, encouraging and reassuring him all the while. When the Buddha came to know of this, he said to Nakulapitā: "You have benefited, good Sir, you have greatly benefited, in having your wife full of compassion for you,

with love for your welfare, as your mentor and teacher".105 From the Buddhist perspective, these qualities would be a recipe for an enduring and enriching relationship –faithfulness (*anubatta*), compassion (*anukampikā*) concern for one another's welfare (*atthakāmā*) and being each other's mentor and teacher (*ovādikā anusasikā*). On another occasion Nakulamātā and Nakulapitā came to the Buddha and said that since their marriage when they were young they had never been unfaithful to each other, not even in thought let alone in deed and that so close was their relationship that they wanted to be together in the next life just as they had been in this one. The Buddha replied: "If a both a husband and wife wish to see each other in the present life and the future lives and they have the same faith, the same virtue, the same generosity, and the same wisdom then they may see each other in this and in future lives."106

A Buddhists reading through the Gospels to find practical advice and guidance for living in the world or for family life is likely to be disappointed. All Jesus'

pronouncements on both subjects, as seen above, were negative. Concerning conjugal relationships the only thing he ever taught on the subject was that one could divorce one's wife only if she committed adultery.107

Returning to the subject at hand, the Buddha's reason for advocating radical renunciation for his more committed disciples was quite different from that of Jesus. The Buddha believed that the world and its pleasures offered "meagre satisfaction and much pain and tribulation"108 and that a higher and more refined happiness was attainable, what he called Nirvana. "If by giving up a limited happiness one can experience a greater happiness, the wise person should forsake the limited and thus behold the greater."109 As we will see below, Jesus taught radical renunciation because he was convinced that the world was soon to pass away and be replaced by the Kingdom of God, where possessions, family relations, status, and personal achievements would count for nothing.

Love

For most people today, it is Jesus' teachings on kindness and love (*agape*) which attract most attention, often overshadowing many or even most of the other ideas he taught. This is not surprising; it is the most appealing thing about his Gospel. Jesus spoke of love often and in a heartfelt, almost passionate

manner. Moved by this, his immediate disciples emphasised love just as much

and on occasion with even more eloquence. Jesus never defined what he meant by love, but Paul did so with considerable success. “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous, conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered, selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope and patience never fail.”110 When asked how one could be saved, Jesus replied that one had to love God and one’s neighbour.111 Such ideas were not new. Jesus was quoting the Old Testament; Deuteronomy 6,5 and Leviticus 19,9-18. Nor was he the first, even within the Jewish tradition, to emphasise the importance of this idea. Hillel taught that it was the most important aspect of the Law.

Jesus’ exhortation indicates two focuses for love. For him, love towards God should be deep and felt “with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind”.112 Love of one’s fellows should be expressed in kindness and patience, generosity and forgiveness, non-retaliation and even a preparedness to die for another should the need arise.113 John was echoing Jesus’ intent when he wrote:

“If we are rich and see others in need, yet close our hearts against them, how can we claim that we love God? My children, love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.”114 Again: “If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God, who we have not seen, if we do not love others, who we have seen.”115 These are among the most powerful and moving words in all religious literature.

When Jesus said that to be saved one had to love God and one’s neighbour and was then asked who one’s neighbour was, he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. The meaning of the parable is clear; to love is to help anyone in need, whether they be a stranger or even an enemy.116 Jesus’ call for an almost unworldly love led the first Christians to believe that such a love could only have a divine origin, that it “comes from God”.117 Paul said that it was God who

“has poured out his love into our hearts.”118 “No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in union with us, and his love is made perfect in us.”119 So as the early Christians understood it, love was not actually an initiative of man but something bestowed by God.

An outside observer might notice a quandary in Jesus’ understanding of love, whether it be human or divine. On one occasion he said: “If you obey my commandments you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father’s

commandments and remained in his love."120 The inference here is that if you do not follow Jesus' commandments he will withdraw his love from you.

Furthermore, for Jesus the highest love, God's love, could accommodate the intention to condemn people to eternal hell. Jesus emphasised repeatedly that either he or God would judge each individual on the Judgment Day and decide their fate. If they were found to be sinful, unrepentant or lacking faith, he or God would assign then to everlasting punishment. Jesus warned that on that day he would reward those who helped others when they were in distress, but those who failed to do so would be under God's curse and he would say to them:

"Away with you to the eternal fire that has been prepared by the Devil and his angels."121 "Just as the weeds are gathered up and burned in a fire, so the same thing will happen at the end of the age; the Son of Man will send out his angels to gather up out of his Kingdom all those who cause people to sin and all others who do evil things, and they will throw them into the fiery furnace where they will cry and gnash their teeth."122 For those who had not repented their sins or who did not believe in God or Jesus, there would be no forgiveness and no reprieve. "Whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God's punishment,"123 "God will show no mercy when he judges the person who has not been merciful."124 Any sin can be forgiven, Jesus said, but not speaking against the Holy Spirit or saying something against the Son of Man

"not now or ever".125 So love as Jesus understood it, including God's love, very definitely had its limits and its conditions.

It is interesting to compare the divine reaction to insult, criticism, disbelief or even just honest scepticism, with that of an awakened human being such as the Buddha. "Should anyone speak disparagingly of me, the Dhamma or the Sa gha

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, you should not get angry, resentful or upset because of that. For if you did, you would not be able recognise if what they said was true or not.

Therefore, if others speak disparagingly of me, the Dhamma or the Sa gha ṅ

, you

should explain whatever is incorrect saying: 'This is not correct, that is not true,

we do not do this, that is not our way'."126

Because the Buddha saw his Dhamma primarily as a way of overcoming suffering (*dukkha*), both physical and psychological, and because compassion is the most appropriate response to suffering, it is only natural that he should have spoken of compassion (*karun 1ā*, *anukampati* or *dayā*) more than love.

"Giving up ill-will and hatred, one abides with a mind of kindly compassion for all living beings and purifies the mind of that ill-will and hatred…Giving up the taking of life, and putting aside the stick and the sword, one lives with care, empathy and kindly compassion for all living beings."127 The most noticeable feature of the Buddha's personality was his compassion, and this was not just

something he felt for others or what they felt in his presence; it was the motive for much of what he said and did. "What should be done out of compassion for his disciples by a teacher who cares about their welfare and out of compassion for them, I have done for you."128 He visited and comforted the sick "out of compassion",129 and he taught the Dhamma "out of compassion"130 Once, he went into the forest looking for a serial killer because he had compassion for the killer's potential victims and also for the murderer himself.131 The Buddha's compassion seems to have even transcended the bounds of time. He is described sometimes as doing or refraining from doing certain things "out of compassion for coming generations".132 Once, he said his very reason for being was "for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the good and the happiness of gods and humans".133

However, while laying great stress on compassion, the Buddha had plenty to say about love as well. He saw love (*mettā*) as an immeasurable or boundless (*appamāna*) state, part of an ensemble of four related states; the others being compassion, sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), and called them "Brahmā-like abiding" (*brahmavihāra*). This was his advice on love to his disciples. "You should train yourselves like this: 'Our minds shall not be perverted nor shall we speak evil speech but with kindness and compassion, we will live with a mind free from hatred and filled with love. We will live suffusing firstly one person with love and starting with them, suffuse the whole world with a love that is expansive, pervasive, immeasurable and utterly devoid of hatred or enmity.' This is how you should train yourselves."134 Love as the Buddha understood it had a strong nurturing component. "Just as a mother would protect her one and only child with her life, so should you cultivate an unbounded mind

towards all beings and love towards the whole world."135 Nor was there any place for retaliation or retribution in the Buddha's love. "Even if low-down criminals were to cut you limb from limb with a double-handled saw, if you filled your mind with hatred you would not be practising my teachings."136 This might be seen as an equivalent to Jesus' call to "turn the other cheek".

For the Buddha, having a loving heart was many times better than doing good with the intention of getting some personal advantage from it. "Just as the radiance of all stars is not worth a sixteenth part of the moon's radiance; just as in the last month of the rainy season in the autumn, when the sky is clear and free from clouds, the sun rises into the sky and flashes, radiates and dispels all darkness; just as in the pre-dawn light the healing star shines flashes and

radiates; so too, whatever good deeds one might do for the purpose of a good rebirth, none of them are worth a sixteenth part of that love which frees the mind. It is this love that frees the mind and which illuminates, glows and shines, surpassing all those good deeds."137 Likewise, performing various religious rituals was, for the Buddha, of little worth compared with having love,138 and he called upon his disciples to "live in concord, harmony and agreement, like milk and water mixed, looking upon each other with the eyes of love".139 One should, he said, speak with love, share the Dhamma with love, and nurse the sick out of love for them.140

Perhaps most striking of all, the Buddha said that if one has a loving heart, one's future in the present life and the hereafter need not be a cause for concern. "A noble disciple who is without longing or hatred, who is unconfused and has lucid awareness, dwells pervading the four directions with a mind filled with love and compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Above, below, across and everywhere, to all as to himself he dwells pervading the whole world with a mind filled with love and compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity that is expansive and pervasive, immeasurable and utterly devoid of hatred or enmity. Such a disciple can have these four confidences. He can think, 'If there is an afterlife, if good and bad deeds have a result, then when my body disintegrates after death I will be reborn in a good place or in a heaven realm.'

This is the first confidence he can have. Or he can think, 'Even if there is no afterlife and good and bad deeds have no result, nonetheless in this life I live devoid of hatred and enmity, happily and free from trouble.' This is the second confidence he can have. Or he can think, 'If one who is evil is repaid with evil

then how can suffering come to me because I do no evil?' This is the third confidence he can have. Or he can think, 'If one who is evil is not repaid with evil I am pure nonetheless'."141 So according the Buddha's understanding, an exalted afterlife was not dependant on "believing in the Buddha" or having faith in a particular deity, but on being virtuous and loving. This contrasts significantly with Jesus' understanding that being loving was not sufficient for salvation. Unless one also had faith in God one could not be saved.

But there were other differences between the two men's understanding of love, despite the many similarities. For the Buddha, empathy, solicitude, compassion and love were to have a universal application and be extended to all sentient beings, not just to humans. While the Old Testament includes several rules to protect animals from cruelty and over-work, Jesus said nothing about the treatment of animals. According to Paul, these Old Testament rules were for the

benefit of humans only and God was not concerned about the fate of animals, a position that most Christian theologians maintained until recently. The earliest known regulations on animal welfare drawn up by the King Asoka in 243 BCE

were directly influenced by the Buddha's teaching on kindness and love for all sentient life. Perhaps significat also, while the Buddha spoke of love as involving acts of kindness, he emphasised such active expressions of love less often than did Jesus. The Buddha spoke of love mainly in psychological terms, as a state of mind; Jesus saw it more in behavioural terms, as something done for and expressed in actions towards others. It is possible that how the Buddha spoke of love is the reason why Buddhist cultures have traditionally been less proactive in organized long-term charitable endeavours and social engagement than Christian ones.

The Tipitaka tells of a young man who became a monk despite opposition from his parents, and some months later returned to his parents' home while begging for alms. Still hoping to get him to change his mind, the parents invited him to a meal the next day and before he came they piled money and other valuables in the dining room to entice him to disrobe. When he came they showed him the money and told him that if he returned to being a layman all of it would be his.

He replied: "If you take my advice, have this pile of money and valuables loaded into a cart, taken to the Ganges and dumped in."142 Significantly, he did not ask his parents to distribute the money amongst the poor, as Jesus might have.

Faith

Christian sects hold differing positions on the role of faith in their religion.

Catholicism teaches that salvation depends on faith and good works; Protestantism that faith alone is sufficient. Whoever is right, Jesus taught that faith was an important, if not the most important, quality that bridged the chasm between humankind and God. “Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Again: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.” And again: “You will die for your sins if you do not believe that ‘I Am Who I Am’.” And once more: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God’s punishment.” When someone asked Jesus what must be done to please God he replied: “What God wants you to do is believe in the one he sent” i.e. Jesus.143

This same point was reiterated again and again by the apostles. “No one can

please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him.” Again: “God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ.” And again: “It is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not through your own efforts, but God’s gift.”144

From these and similar statements it can be seen that there are two objects of faith; God and Jesus. To have faith in God means to believe certain claims made about him; that he created everything, that he has three natures, that he has a son, that he sent his son to die for humankind, etc. To have faith in Jesus likewise means to believe that he was born of a virgin, he is the Son of God, that he was resurrected, that he will come again to judge the world, etc. Thus salvation depends on having no doubt, uncertainty or hesitation about certain ideas. “When you pray you must not doubt at all. Whoever doubts is like a wave in the sea which is driven and blown about by the wind. If you are like that, unable to make up your mind and undecided in all you do, you must not think that you will receive anything from the Lord.”145 God responds to this total acceptance of certain ideas by saving the believer.

All the creeds of Christianity; the Apostles Creed, the Nicaean Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Thirty Nine Articles, the Augsburg Confession, the Pillars

of Adventism, the Methodist Articles of Religion, etc.- all itemise specific ideas about God and Jesus that must be believed to become a Christian and be saved. There is no suggestion that all these claims need be intellectually understood; to be convinced of them or to implicitly trust or hope that they are true is enough. Interestingly, none of these the creeds say anything about how to behave, mention anything about being loving or even mention the word love.

Likewise, even the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, believed by many scholars to be the oldest account of the essence of Christianity only states and explains a set of ideas that must be believed. For Jesus, the ideal faith was simple, trusting and unquestioning, like that of a child. As he said: “I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”146

Faith (*saddhā*) and confidence (*pasāda*) have an importance in the preliminary stages of a Buddhist’s journey towards Awakening. Thus the Buddha referred to faith as a seed (*saddhā bījam1*),147 meaning that one might not even start exploring the Dhamma or practising it without at least some initial faith or confidence that it will produce results. This can be seen in doctrinal categories such as the Four Accomplishments (*catu sampadā*), the Five Riches (*pañca dhana*), the Five Strengths (*pañca bala*), the Five Spiritual Faculties (*pañca*

indriya), and the Seven Good States (*satta saddgammehi*)148 etc., all of which start with faith but have wisdom as their culmination. Likewise, the Transcendental Dependent Arising says that an awareness of the inadequate and unsatisfactory nature of conditioned existence (*dukkha*) leads to faith, which can subsequently trigger higher and more important spiritual qualities. The Buddha claimed that it was possible to attain Awakening “without recourse to faith, tradition preconceived ideas….”149 The fact that Right Faith is not one of the steps on the Noble Eightfold Path further indicates that while it is helpful for spiritual growth faith must be superseded by other more important qualities. By contrast, faith is so fundamental to Christianity that in English and most European languages ‘faith’ is a synonym for ‘religion’.

Buddhism distinguishes between reasoned faith (*ākāravatī saddhā*) and baseless faith (*amūlikā saddhā*). Reasoned faith grows out of a careful assessment of probabilities, inferences and facts, baseless faith is that activated by hope, a strong appeal to the emotions, being awed by miracles, or accepting the first claim one encounters without having examined alternatives. The first is more

intellectual while the second is more emotional. The Buddha's preference for reasoned faith is well illustrated by his encounter with Upāli, a respected community leader and a follower of Jainism. After a discussion with the Buddha, Upāli decided to become his disciple "from this day onward for as long as life lasts". Rather than accept Upāli's avowal of faith, the Buddha asked him to take time to consider before deciding: "Make a careful investigation, Upāli. It is appropriate for well-known people like yourself to make a careful investigation first."150 The Buddha's advice here contrasts interestingly with Jesus' comments to Thomas, who said he would only believe that Jesus had been resurrected if he had empirical evidence (to see and touch). "Jesus said to him, 'Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing!'."151 Thus Jesus asserted the superiority of faith over physical evidence.

According to the Buddha's understanding, confidence becomes unshakable (*aveccappasāda*) only after one sees its transformational effects.152 It is only as individuals start experiencing the fruits of their practice that these inspire confidence in the Buddha so that their esteem for him becomes truly strong.153

For example, the Buddha actually asked his disciples to examine his behaviour and character to see if what he said about himself was true, to see if there was a difference between his public persona and private behaviour, to note if he practised what he preached, to observe if there were changes in his character as

he became famous and esteemed. If a disciple did this over a period of time he would, the Buddha claimed, develop a faith in the Buddha that was "supported by reasons".154

So for the Buddha, faith was a helpful psychological state which eventually had to be replaced by personal experience. For Jesus it was a spiritual power that God responded to by saving the person who had it.155 Paradoxically, one only had this faith or wisdom or any other spiritual quality if it were granted by the grace of God.

The End of the World

For several centuries before the turn of the first millennium and for at least a century and a half after it, many Jews believed that because the world had become so wicked God was going to destroy it. There was a precedent for this when God wiped out almost all living things with a great flood. A hundred years

before Jesus, a Jewish ascetic sect called the Essenes was teaching that the day of destruction was near. The idea can be found in a Jewish work called the *Psalms of Solomon* written in about 90 BCE. John the Baptist taught the same thing, Jesus did, so did his apostles after his death, and it was a major theme of preaching by the first several generations of Christians. The fiery John the Baptist harangued and no doubt terrified the crowds who came to hear him, warning them to repent because of "the punishment God is about to send".156

"The axe is ready to cut down the tree at its roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire."157 It was a message that Jesus took to heart. He came to believe that he was the Son of Man sent by God to judge the world; the wicked being destroyed and the righteous rewarded. The poor and the humble were going to be exalted and the rich and powerful brought low. "The meek shall inherit the earth" Jesus promised.158 The time had come to love each other, to give to anyone who asked, forgive one's enemies, turn the other cheek, and give no thought for tomorrow. The overthrow of the old world and its replacement by a new and perfect one was imminent.

The opening scene would be the sun and moon going dark, the stars falling from the heavens and the Son of Man coming through the clouds in glory. "There will be a shout of command, the archangel's voice, the sound of God's trumpet, and the Lord himself will come down from heaven. Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first, then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord."159 This was going to happen quite unexpectedly, "like a thief in the night", and very soon. "When people say,

'Everything is quiet and safe' then suddenly destruction will hit them! It will come as suddenly as the pains that come upon a woman in labour, and people will not escape" (1 Thess.5,3). Jesus told the Jewish high priest that he would

"see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."160 Jesus warned his audience that they would witness this dramatic end. "Remember that all these things will happen before the people now living have all died."161 Again: "I tell you, there are some here who will not die until they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power."162 Today those who believe such predictions tend to provoke ridicule or at least a knowing smile, but it is obvious that Jesus meant what he said and the first several generations of Christians took him very seriously. John promised his readers:

“My children, the end is near! You were told that the Enemy of Christ would come, and now many enemies of Christ have already appeared, and so we know the end is near.”163 James asked “all God’s people scattered over the whole world” to “Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord’s coming is near”.164

Paul reminded people that “The Lord is coming soon”165 and warned them to be careful of their behaviour “for we live at a time when the end of the world is about to come”.166 When someone asked him for his advice on marriage he replied: “Have you got a wife? Then don’t try to get rid of her. Are you unmarried? Then don’t look for a wife…What I mean is this, my friends: there is not much time left and from now on married people should live as though they were not married…”167

The Buddha’s conception of the world, indeed of the whole universe and its fate differed in almost every respect from that of Jesus. He did not accept the notion that the world or the universe were a divine creation but rather a phenomenon that had come into existence through a process of natural forces, causes and effects. Nor did the universe have a specific beginning in time, or an end. He saw what he called “world systems” (*cakkavali*) as going through an endless cycle of destruction and reformation taking place over aeons. “There comes a time when, sooner or later, after a vast duration, this universe contracts (*samvattati*)…Then there comes a time when, sooner or later, after a vast duration, this universe expands (*vivattati*).”168 When asked how long one of these periods of disintegration or reformation would be, he said it would take a *kappa*. Asked how long a *kappa* was he replied: “It would not be easy to calculate by counting years, centuries or even millennia.” Then he gave this simile. “If once in a hundred years a man were to stroke the peak of a mighty rocky mountain once with a silk cloth, that mountain would be worn away

before a *kalpa* had expired.”169 There is no suggestion in this or anything the Buddha said about the world or the cosmos that they were the outcome of a divine will, that a divine power was overlooking them or intervening in them, or that a divine being was going to destroy them.

Salvation and Awakening

The Kingdom of God which Jesus believed would replace the old world after it had been destroyed by God would be utopian one, an existence of abundant joy for eternity in the presence of God. Nonetheless, the vision of an apocalyptic

destruction of the entire world, together with all its natural wonders and everything that humans have achieved and loved, is an overwhelmingly negative one. Adding to this grim vision is Jesus' contention that very few would survive the apocalypse to be able to enjoy the Kingdom of God. "The gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it",170 and further "…many will try to get through but will not be able."171 Apparently, even believing in Jesus and his Gospel was no guarantee of salvation. "When the Day of Judgment comes, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God's message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!' Then I will say to them, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!'."172 Peter, Jesus' senior apostle and leader of the early church, went so far as to say this:

"It is difficult for good people to be saved; what then will become of godless sinners?"173 God actually revealed to the apostle John the number who would be saved; some 144,000.174 As for the others, a terrible fate awaited them.

When the Buddha was asked how many people would realise Nirvana he refused to answer, one of only two times he ever did this, probably considering the question to be irrelevant. Thinking that the questioner might go away disappointed, Ānanda answered on the Buddha's behalf. He said that if there were a city surrounded by a strong wall with only one gate, anyone who entered the city would have to go through that gate. He then said that anyone who realised Nirvana would do so by following the Noble Eightfold Path.175 While stating that his teaching "goes against the stream" and that there were "many with much dust in their eyes", the Buddha also claimed that many thousands of his disciples had attained one or another of the stages that make complete Awakening inevitable.176 No doubt his feelings on the difficulty of attaining Nirvana was well summed up by the nun Sumedha when she said: "The

Immortal has been attained by many and can still be attained even today by those who make an effort, but not by those who do not try."177

Wealth

While Jesus was sure that only a few would be saved on the Judgment Day, mainly the humble, the neglected and the lowly, he taught it would be virtually impossible for the rich. "My children, how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of

God? It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle."178 He declared that his mission from God was specifically to the poor (*echrisen me euangelisasthai ptochois*).179 He was well aware that wealth could make people greedy, proud and contemptuous of their fellows and of spiritual pursuits, and he pointed this out on several occasions. However, Jesus' attitude seemed to have gone beyond this to condemning the rich simply for being rich. It has been observed more than once that Jesus reserved his harshest words firstly for hypocrites and then for the wealthy.

Jesus told a story of a rich man who died and went to hell, while the poor man who used to sit at his door hoping to get something to eat died and was carried to heaven by the angels. In hell and suffering terrible agony, the rich man begged for pity from Abraham and the poor man now sitting beside him in paradise even for a drop of water to ease his thirst. They refused. They even refused a plea from the man to send a message to his brothers warning them not to be neglectful of the poor as he had been.180 This is a troubling parable. There is no suggestion that the poor man was particularly virtuous; it seems that his saving grace was only that he was poor. The rich man for his part perhaps deserved to be rebuked for his callousness and neglect, even chastised for it, but did he deserve eternal punishment? Most troubling of all, the story lacks compassion; Abraham's and the poor man's response to the rich man's pleas for mercy suggests spite and vengefulness.

Several of Jesus' other comments about the rich suggest the same thing. "How terrible for you who are rich now; you have had your easy life! How terrible for you who are full now; you will go hungry! How terrible for you who laugh now; you will mourn and weep!"181 Following Jesus' lead his apostles took a similar stance. "And now you rich people, listen to me! Weep and wail over the miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches have rotted away, and your clothes have been eaten by moths. Your gold and silver are covered with rust, and this rust will be a witness against you and will eat up your flesh like fire.

You have piled up riches in these last days."182 Again: "Those Christians who

are poor must be glad when God lifts them up, and the rich Christians must be glad when God brings them down. For the rich will pass away like a wild flower. The sun rises with its blazing heat and burns the plant, its flower falls off, and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way the rich will be destroyed while they go

about their business."183

God was said to love everyone but he had more for the poor than the rich and it seems Jesus and his apostles thought similarly. "Has not God chosen the poor people of this world to be rich in faith and to possess the Kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?"184 Mary, Jesus' mother, said of God: "He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands."185

In an all-or-nothing approach characteristic of Jesus, he declared that there were only two choices – God or wealth.186 For him, the only riches worth striving for were heavenly ones. "Sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor.

Provide yourself with purses that don't wear out, and save your riches in heaven, where they will never decrease, because no thief can get them. For your heart will always be where your riches are."187

On the one hand such teachings about the poor have been the template for the long Christian tradition of care and compassion for the disadvantaged, probably Christianity's greatest contribution to the societies where it has flourished, and an example that others should follow. On the other hand it almost seems to fetishise poverty and the poor. Jesus said that to invite the sick and the wrenched to your celebrations or social events is more blessed than to invite the members of your family, your friends and neighbours.188 Quite apart from the fact that very few people ever do or ever have done this, is it really necessary to be thinking about the poor all the time, to include the poor in everything, to valorise the poor more than everyone else? Are not the poor as capable of greed and mean-spiritedness, selfishness, dishonesty and malice as others?

In accordance with these teachings about wealth, and in expectation of the imminent end of the world, the first Christians sold all their possessions, pooled the money and shared it out equally between them. "All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed."189 "None of them said that any of their belongings were their own, but they all shared with one another everything they had…There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned land or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale and hand it over to the apostles; and it would be distributed according to the needs of the

people.”190

While the Buddha considered ordinary conditioned existence to be unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and transcending it to be the most worthwhile of all endeavours, his teaching does not exhibit the intense sense of urgency characteristic of Jesus’ Gospel. For the Buddha, the world was not on the brink of destruction and his doctrine of rebirth meant that those who did not attain Awakening in this life would have a chance of doing so in the next one, and if not then hopefully in the life after that. Accepting that many people were going to live “in the world” he took this into account in his Dhamma and offered sound, practical and realistic advice on how to do so righteously. Among the types of happiness he considered to be worthwhile and legitimate were the happiness of ownership (*atthisukha*), the happiness of wealth (*bhogasukha*) and the happiness of being free from debt (*anan 1asukha*).191

The Buddha said: “Take the case of the person who makes his wealth lawfully and without harming others and in doing so makes himself happy and fulfilled, shares it with others, does good works, makes use of it without greed or infatuation, aware of its limitations and keeping in mind his own spiritual growth; that person is praiseworthy on all these counts.”192 Here the Buddha was saying that wealthy people could be praiseworthy (*pāsa s ṁ o*) according how

they made their wealth, how they utilised it, and their attitude towards it. An upright person should make his or her wealth lawfully (*dhammena*), without harming others (*sa vi*

ṁ bhajati) and without infringing the norms and standards of society. Having earned their wealth, they should use it meaningfully and in ways that give them happiness and fulfilment (*attānaṁ sukheti pīn 1eti*), rather than squandering it on frivolous pursuits or trite luxuries, or never spending it at all. Even while enjoying themselves, they should never forget the many who do not have the blessings they do and share their wealth with others and support charities and religious institutions (*puññāni karoti*).

On another occasion, the Buddha advised dividing one’s financial resources into four and using one part for living expenses, two parts for one’s work or investments and one part kept aside for future eventualities.193 Contrasting quite dramatically with this common sense advice is Jesus’ Parable of the Rich

Fool, a clear discouragement to the acquisition wealth, even for the sake of basic security and comfort.194 Timothy make this same point. “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires which pull them down to ruin and destruction.” 195

The Buddha was aware that being in debt or lacking sufficient financial

resources could be a source of anxiety so he advised his disciples to maintain what he called a balanced lifestyle (*samaṁ jīvikaṁ*). “And what is a balanced lifestyle? One knows both one’s income and expenditure, and lives neither extravagantly nor miserly, knowing well that income after expenditure will stand at a particular amount and that expenditure not exceed income.”196 In its early decades Jesus’ Gospel spread because of a band of energetic and fervent promoters, the most important being Paul. After the Buddha’s passing his monks and nuns spread the Dhamma beyond the Middle Land but the support they received from wealthy merchants, Anāthapin Ld Lika being the best-known example, was a factor in their success. The Buddha’s Dhamma had a relevance and appeal to everyone, including the wealthy.

Wealth has a tendency to make people proud and complacent, especially if it has been acquired suddenly or with little effort. The Buddha observed: “Few are the people in the world who, when they acquire great wealth, do not get carried away by it, become negligent, chase after sensual pleasures and mistreat others.”198 Remembering this caution, the Buddha said thoughtful disciples should keep in mind the limitations of their wealth (*ādīnavadassāvī*). They should know that while it can give them so much in some areas, it cannot deliver some of the most important things in life, and this will encourage them to use their wealth without greed, infatuation or longing (*amucchita*). They should also understand that their wealth can have an even greater value if they use the time, freedom and opportunities it gives them to focus on their spiritual growth (*nissaran 1apañña*).

While praising wealth rightfully acquired and thoughtfully used, the Buddha always balanced this by pointing out another type of wealth, of greater value, that was accessible to everyone, that could never be stolen or lost, and that could be taken into the next life. “There are these five types of wealth. What five? The wealth of faith, the wealth of virtue, the wealth of learning, the wealth of generosity and the wealth of wisdom.”199 Whoever is ‘rich’ in these and other kinds of spiritual treasures “whether they be a man or a woman, they are not

poor nor are their lives empty".

Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness

The famous theologian John Hick defined religious exclusiveness as "the view that one particular mode of religious thought (namely one's own) is alone valid, all others being false"; inclusiveness as "the view that one's own tradition has the whole truth but that this truth is nevertheless partially reflected in other traditions"; and pluralism as "the view that the great world faiths and

conceptions embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate." By Hick's definitions, and they are good ones, the Buddha taught a Dhamma that is inclusive. He was the first to teach a vision of reality and a philosophy of life for all humankind, not for one particular caste, gender or ethnic group. He described himself as "a teacher of gods and humans" (*satthā devamanussānaṁ*) i.e. of all beings capable of reasoning and comprehension. Once he said rhetorically that even the trees would embrace the Dhamma if they had discernment, "how much more so human beings!"200 After he made his first disciples, he instructed them to proclaim the Dhamma for "the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world".201 This universalism was especially noteworthy considering the particularism of the Brahmanism of the time, which excluded outcastes and foreigners (*milakkha*) from any place in the religion.

The nature of the Buddha's Dhamma lends itself comfortably to religious inclusivity. The Buddha never claimed that the way he understood, formulated and presented the Dhamma was the only way to Awakening. Some have argued that his statement "There is no ascetic outside" (*saman 1o natthi bāhire*) 202

suggests exclusivism because it means that outside (*bāhira*) Buddhism, no one can be a genuine seeker and therefore attain Awakening. However, all the statement actually says is that, other than the Buddha's ordained disciples, no other monks or nuns qualified to be genuine ascetics, which may well have been the case at the time he said it.

An inquirer once asked the Buddha if the ascetics of other sects and religions had attained Awakening and he replied: "I do not say that all ascetics and brahmans are shrouded in birth and death. Whoever does not cling to sense experience or morality and rules, who has given up doubts, who is free from

craving and defilements, I say that one has attained Nirvana."203 Thus the Buddha's answer was not a sweeping assertion that only within his Dhamma can someone attain final liberation, but rather an "it depends". On another occasion when asked the same question, he replied: "I do not deny that others can become Awakened ones" (*Na kho…arahattassa maccharāyāmi*).204 In yet another discourse, he affirmed this stance even more clearly, saying that some individuals "attain the unalterable path" (*okkamati niyāmam1*) that led to Awakening even if they never saw him or heard his Dhamma.205

The reason for the Buddha's open attitude towards other paths was not just because he was tolerant and well-informed about them, although he was, but

because of his understanding of the nature of truth and the liberation it can impart. Attaining liberation, as the Buddha understood it, was not dependent on believing in, winning the approval of or receiving grace from a deity, but on realising certain natural truths, which he believed everyone had the ability to do.

Consequently, it is conceivable that even those who have never come into contact with the Dhamma could become Awakened. Having said that, an openness to the Buddha's teaching makes an appreciation of it more likely.

Appreciation of the teaching would make the desire to practise it stronger.

Practising the Buddha's teaching would make attaining Awakening many times more probable.

According to Jesus, we have only one earthly life and if we are not saved before death we will be damned forever. There are only these two possible destinies.

The Buddha's doctrine of rebirth means that if one has not attained Awakening in this life one always has the possibility of doing so in the next. Furthermore, linked to the doctrine of rebirth is the doctrine of kamma, the idea that intentional thoughts, speech and actions build one's character and thereby condition one's present and future; next week, next month, next year, and perhaps next life. Having the right conceptual or intellectual understanding (*sammā ditt1 1hi*) is crucial but one's beliefs are only significant to the degree that they influence one's behaviour and thereby one's kamma. Thus an upright and virtuous person could have a positive rebirth no matter what his or her religious beliefs, or even if they have none. As was shown before, anyone who is kind and loving will have a good rebirth no matter what religion they follow.

Certainly Buddhists will rejoice when someone embraces the Dhamma, but they can also be glad that someone is a genuine Hindu, a practicing Jew or a sincere Christian. Thus the need to assert superiority over other faiths and to be always trying to make converts has not generally been characteristic of Buddhism.

To say that Christianity claims an exclusive legitimacy is not controversial. On this issue Jesus was unambiguous. “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me”, and: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God’s punishment.” “Whoever denies me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.”206 He presented the choices available simply and clearly: “Anyone who is not for me is really against me.”207 The apostles took these and similar statements at face value. “Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save

us.” And again: “For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and humans together, the man Jesus Christ.”208

These exclusivist claims have from the very beginning motivated Christians to spread their religion and have guaranteed its success in terms of the number of adherents. But Jesus’ instructions to his disciples to compel, force or induse (*anankason, compelle* in the Latin Vulgate) people to convert “so that my house will be full” (Lk,14,23) have also ment that this evangelizing has sometimes had very negative concequences on individuals and communities.

God

There can be no doubt that the biggest, the most striking, the most fundamental difference between the Buddha and Jesus, and the one from which many of the other dissimilarities stem, is their ideas about God. Jesus believed implicitly in a personal God; the Buddha did not.

Jesus’ god had been worshipped for centuries. Called Yahweh, he was the national god of the Jews and had a distinctly Janus-like nature. One side of his nature was benign and nurturing, at least towards his votaries. In jarring contrast to this, God was also demanding, quick to anger, vengeful and terrifying when disobeyed. Even common English usage points to this other side. We refer to an upright, honest person as “God fearing” because ignoring God’s commandments can have frightful consequences. To scare someone is to “put the fear of God in

them”. A huge natural catastrophe is often described as being

“of biblical proportions” because it is thought to be remanisant of the plagues God visited on Egypt. Somewhere evoking happiness and delight is said to be

“like heaven”, but a place where some atrocity has been or is being committed is commonly described as “hell on Earth”, because it is thought to be something like the place to which God condemns sinners and unbelievers.

Around the turn of the first millennium, great Jewish thinkers and theologians such as Hillel, Rabbi Avika and Simon the Just were giving more emphasis to God’s loving nature, and Jesus would be counted among these. Nonetheless, Jesus was quite aware of God’s other side and was not averse to reminding people of it. “Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell.”209

This hell was, he warned, a place “where the fire never goes out”, a deep pit from which it is impossible to cross over into heaven, a state where “the worm that eats them never dies, and the fire that burns them is never extinguished”.210

The Brahmanism of the Buddha’s time and for centuries before him believed in innumerable gods; Yama, Suriya, Soma, Agni, Canda, Indra, Varun La, and

Pajāpati being amongst the most popular. However, by the 7th/6th centuries BCE, the beginning of what would later evolve into a form of henotheism was starting to develop, at least amongst the more sophisticated mystics and theologians. Brahmā was emerging as preeminent. He was described as “All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Lord, Maker, Creator and Ruler, Appointer and Controller, Father of All that Are and All that Shall Be”.211 He was said to

“outshine all other gods in radiance”, and “when he appears, he assumes a grosser form because his natural appearance is not perceptible to the eye”.212

As well as having created everything, Brahmā was also thought of as a benign deity, loving and without anger or ill-will.213 Devotees praised him, called upon him for help and worshipped him with offerings and sacrifices. Their hope was to be guided and protected by him in this life and be in fellowship with him (*brahmasahavyatā*)214 after death. Thus, minus the dark side, the Brahmā the Buddha was familiar with was equivalent to the supreme deity of the major theistic religions, including Christianity.

While the Buddha tactically acknowledged the reality of Brahmā, he cast doubts on nearly every claim made about him, thereby indirectly rendering worship of and devotion to him meaningless. Far from being immutable, the Buddha said, Brahmā was subject to changes and reverses (*aññathattam1 atthi viparin 1āmo*) like everyone and everything else.215 Although Brahmā thought he had created everything he had misunderstood the facts; it all happened through natural forces, the Buddha said.216 When the Buddha asked those who believed in Brahmā's creation to explain exactly how it came about, "they could not give a [convincing] answer" (*te mayā putt1 1hā na sampāyanti*).217 In fact, the Buddha said the belief that all happenings were due to the Lord (*issara nimmānahetu*) was false, like the belief that everything was due to past karma or without a cause or causes.218 Brahmā may have claimed to be omniscient but in his better moments admitted being ignorant of many things.219 Brahmā's supposed omniscience was further diminished by the Buddha's claim that he, Brahmā, would sometimes come to praise him or ask questions about things he did not know, especially concerning spiritual matters.220 Then there was the question of theodicy. The early Buddhists asked, as many have before and since, why if the Supreme Being is all-powerful and at the same time all-loving, does he do nothing about the great evil and suffering in the world."Why does Brahmā not straighten out the world? If he really is the Controller, the Highest, Lord of All Beings, why is the whole world in such a mess? Why did he not make the world happy? If he really is the Controller, the Highest, Lord of All Beings, why is

there so much deceit and lies, pride and unrighteousness? If he really is the Controller, the Highest, Lord of All Beings, then he must be unrighteous and cruel himself because it was he who created everything."221

Like Jesus, the Buddha was deeply moved by and concerned about human suffering. For Jesus, it all came back to God in one way or another. Sin and its consequent evil and suffering were the result of humankind disobeying God.

For the Buddha, they had psychological roots; clinging and ignorance. For Jesus, the goal of the religious life was to live for eternity in the presence of God. For the Buddha, it was to attain Nirvana. Jesus believed salvation was attained by having a simple trusting faith in God. The Buddha taught that Awakening would come naturally as a result of developing clear-eyed

"knowledge and vision of things as they really are" (*yathā bhūta ñān 1a*

dassana).222 Jesus believed God's purpose and will lay behind everything that happened. The Buddha related everything to the mind. The first words in the Dhammapada, the most widely known collections of all his sayings, is: "Mind precedes all things, they depend on mind, they are constructed by mind."223

Some have claimed that the Buddha rarely talked about God "because the Divine is beyond words". The reality is that he only addressed the subject occasionally because amongst the heterodox thinkers and intellectuals, of which he was one, the subject was not considered important enough to warrant discussion.

Prayer and Meditation

Jesus took it as granted that there is a single supreme being who involves himself in human affairs and who can be communicated with through prayer.

Prayer was and continues to be integral to Christian life and faith. One can pray for help in time of need, both for oneself and others, and for guidance and strength in following the Gospel. Jesus promised that God would answer every sincere prayer. "When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you asked for."224 The apostles made the same promise: "This is the confidence we have in God's presence; we are sure that he hears us if we ask for anything that is according to his will. He hears us whenever we ask him; and since we know this is true, we know also that he gives us what we ask from him." 225 In fact, all the things people want but do not have is because they do not pray to God for them.226 Prayer can also take the form of praising and giving thanks to God. On one occasion Jesus instructed his disciples to use specific words when praying to God, i.e. the Lord's Prayer.

In later centuries the Christian tradition developed rich and sophisticated

systems of prayer and contemplation but as Jesus taught it, prayer was simple, direct and immediate communication between the believer and God.

Prayer was an important practice in the Brahmanism and the Buddha described it as "to beseech, praise and worship with joined hands" (*āyācanti thomayanti pañjalikā namassamānā*) Brahmā and the other Vedic gods.227 But as there is no place in the Buddha's understanding of reality for a single supreme deity, praying has no significance in the Dhamma. Prayer may make people feel better or console them, it may foster virtues such as gratitude, humility and patiance.

But according to Buddhism, objectively it does not work in the sense that a divine force external to the individual precipitates such qualities. The Buddha said that the things people long for most; "happiness, longevity, fame and

rebirth in heaven", cannot "be acquired by prayers and vows." (*na āyācanahetu vā na patthanāhetu*).228 Some centuries after the Buddha the *Mahāvastu* gave an interestingly modern and rational explanation of how a combination of chance and coincidence may well give the impression that prayers are answered. "Once a man prayed to a goddess for prosperity and later he just happened to become rich. This is exactly how false beliefs arise."229

For the Buddha the mind (*mano*, *citta*, or *viññana*) was the standpoint from which humans see, interpret, evaluate and judge themselves, others and the world in which they live. This concept is reflected in many things the Buddha said: "The world is led around by the mind and dragged here and there by it.

The mind is the single thing that has everything under its control."230 If a person's mind is distorted in some way their perceptions, then their decisions and from that their behaviour will be problematic. And it is greed, hatred, doubt, longing, biases, lust, worry, etc. that distort the mind.

In one discourse the Buddha compared the mind to a bowl of pure still water in which a person could clearly see the reflection of their face. But if a person is always preoccupied with sensual thoughts it is as if oil paint or dye were tipped into the bowl so that their reflection would become unclear. For the person who is full of anger it is as if the bowl has been put on a fire so that the boiling bubbling water obscures their reflection. The mind of one who is dull and lazy is equivalent to algae and water plants growing on the surface of the water and making it difficult to see one's reflection. A mind troubled by agitation and worry is like a draft blowing over the surface of the water creating ripples so that the reflection is distorted. Being hesitant and doubtful is as if the water is darkened by mud making it difficult to see the reflection of one's face.231

Like so much else the Buddha said these analogies are not based on theological claims, faith, creeds or even 'believing in the Buddha' but on simple, observable psychological phenomenon. Therefore, one of the central principles of the Buddha's Dhamma is meditation, which in Buddhism is a collection of mental exercises meant to calm and discipline, focus and clarify the mind so one can devolop "a knowledge and vision of things as they really are. The word the

Buddha used for meditation is *bhāvana*, literally meaning ‘to develop’, ‘to cultivate’ or ‘to enhance.’ He taught a range of meditation techniques but for our purpose here it is only sufficient to examine a few of them. Prayer is about intersession from or adoration of God; meditation is about knowing and transforming one’s own mind.

The most basic meditation is called mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna sati*). In this practice one focuses attention on the in and out movement of the breath for the purpose of enhancing the ability to concentrate. The Buddha said: “Just as in the last month of the hot season when dust and grit blow about and an unexpected shower of rain immediately settles it, so too, mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful and sublime, a pleasant way of living and it dispels and settles evil, unskilful thoughts immediately.”232

Those doing this meditation will sit in a comfortable posture, usually cross-legged and with a straight back, and gently focus their attention on the in-and-out movement of the breath. As they proceed, they more quickly notice when their attention strays and then return it to the breath. Over time concentration, mental discipline and physical and psychological relaxation increase. As the practice matures, concentration is allowed to give way to mindfulness (*sati*) i.e.

rather than trying to control the attention, one simply becomes aware of what is happening from moment to moment. With the mind purified of distracting thoughts, distorting biases and agitating desires one sees the truth of *dukkha*, *anicca* and *anatta* and this imparts a profound peace.

Another important practice is called loving kindness meditation (*mettā*

bhāvana) which aims to arouse and strengthen love; *mettā* in Pali which is the same as or similar to *agape* in Christianity. In this practice one sits in a comfortable posture, composes oneself and over a period of time thinks about and radiates kindly wishes first to oneself, then a loved person, then a neutral person and finally a disliked person. Gradually any anger or annoyance one has towards others is replaced by a warm patience and forgivness.

Another important practice is called Recollection (*anussati*) which unlike some others types of meditation does not seek to still thoughts but to harness

and utilise their potential power. Some of these consist of recollecting or reflecting on one’s own virtue (*silānussati*), on the value of generosity (

cāgānussati), on spiritual friends (*kalyana mittānussati*), on peace (*upasamāssati*), and on the reality of death (*maranassati*).233 Spending at least some time reflecting on these subjects can help strengthen self-appreciation, sharing, the blessings of having good companions, courage in the face of death, etc. In some ways these practices have something in common with prayer except that any transformative effect they might have would be attributed to God by Christians while Buddhists would put it down to the person's own mind.

The Buddha explained the psychology behind the Recollections like this:

"Whatever one thinks about and reflects on often makes the mind lean in that way."234

Another practice that has some similarity with prayer is affirmation (*adhiññāna* or *dhiti*). An affirmation is a strong resolve, avowal or determination to do or to achieve something. Making an affirmation clarifies and brings to the forefront of consciousness the goal one aspires to, it marshals and intensifies the power of the mind, and it focuses that power on the goal. An affirmation can make one

"resolute for the highest goal, firm-minded, steadfast and endowed with strength and energy".235 When prayers work, as they sometimes seem to, it is actually due to the power of the mind, not the intervention of a deity. That at least, would be the Buddhist's explaination.

One of the important differences between prayer and meditation is meditation's universal application. Prayer presoposes and requires belief in God, while meditation requires nothing beyond the effort to practice it. Concequently, anyone can do meditation and benefit from it, no matter what their religious belief. In fact, in the West now significant numbers of Christians do meditation.

If the Buddha were alive he would probably smile knowing that some of his teachings are enriching the spritual lives of those of other religions.

Psychologists too are starting to appreciate the value of meditation. Aspects of it are being integrated into relaxation training, counselling, psychiatric therapies and mental health care.

Conclusion

Living half a millennium from each other, coming from such disparate

backgrounds, and being moulded by very different cultural and religious influences, it is hardly surprising that Jesus and the Buddha arrived at dramatically different conclusions about reality. The Buddha was once asked whether “all teachers proclaim the same doctrine, practise the same morality,

have the same aspiration and pursue the same goal?” He replied: “No they do not…The world is made up of many and varied elements. This being the case beings adhere to one or another of these and whatever they adhere to they become strongly attached to, and then assert, ‘This alone is true and all else is false!’ Consequently all teachers do not proclaim the same doctrine, practise the same or morality, have the same aspirations or pursue the same goal?”1

So is it true as an increasing number of commentators claim, that Jesus and the Buddha would have nodded in agreement if they had heard about the other’s teachings? Given Jesus’s absolutist claims and his belief that the only alternative to salvation was damnation, it is unlikely that he or the first Christians would have approved of the Buddha and his Dhamma. What would the Buddha have thought about Jesus and his Gospel? Ānanda articulated the Buddha’s attitude when he said that some religions and philosophies are outright false (*abrahmacariyavāsā*), and others are unsatisfactory or incomplete while containing important truths. Amongst the first are those that teach materialism, moral relativism, determinism, or that salvation or liberation is inevitable. Amongst the second are those that teach some form of afterlife, sound moral values, free will, personal responsibility, and the notion that salvation or liberation is not inevitable but conditional on the individual’s behaviour. 2 The Gospel contains most of the elements in this second group and thus it seems quite likely the Buddha would have considered it to be an imperfect vision of reality but with important truths and laudable ethics nonetheless. One aspect of the Gospel he would have agreed with would have been the importance of loving your neighbour as yourself”. The Buddha may well have also seen a similarity between his own and Jesus’ simple itinerate lifestyle and found it praiseworthy and his calls for world renunciation. He would have been less impressed by Jesus’ frequent angry outbursts and threats of damnation.

If Buddhism and Christianity have little in common when it comes to most of the fundamental issues, the findings of this study, what does this mean for respectful interaction between them? If respect for other religions hinges on convincing oneself that they are just a slightly different version of one’s own then it is not really acceptance; it is just a reassuring confirmation of what one has always

believed. However, is it not possible for people to disagree about even questions of great moment and still be friendly, accepting and respectful towards each other? It is, and it does sometimes happen. I personally know of a Sri Lankan Buddhist expatriate community in Canada that was invited by the

local pastor to use his church for their meetings until they were able to get a place of their own. A Buddhist monk in the US told me that two door-to-door missionaries arrived at his house-temple just as he was shovelling snow from the driveway and they stopped to give him a hand. Later he invited them inside and they had a friendly discussion of their respective beliefs over cups of coffee.

I know of another case when during a riot in Sri Lanka a mob came to loot a church and a Buddhist monk appeared and reproached the crowd for their behaviour so that they were shamed into dispersing. Actions like these do more for mutual respect and understanding than a hundred dialogue sessions and inter-religious conferences.

Discussing doctrinal commonalities certainly has a role in strengthening mutual understanding. As the Buddha said: “Those things about which there is no agreement, let us put aside. Those things about which there is agreement, let the wise bring up, discuss and examine.” 3 However, comparing notes on doctrines can only go so far before repetition starts to set in. Perhaps more important than straining to find similarities between Buddhist and Christian ideas is being or endeavouring to be a particular type of Buddhist or a particular type of Christian.

Some believers are committed to the goal of converting those of other faiths, whether by robust or more subtle means, come what may. Proselytising is not just an unspoken way of saying “I cannot accept your beliefs”, it is a demonstration of it as well. No matter how friendly inter-religious meetings may be, those whose fellow-religionists are a target of conversion efforts must feel at least some reticence about and suspicion of such events. For a few it may cause resentment or worse. Other believers, whose faith is just as strong, understand that there will always be those with different beliefs and come to accept that this is just the way things are and probably always will be. The advantages of this attitude are many, not the least being that the believer can focus more attention on removing the beam from his or her own eyes or from their faith community’s eye, rather than directing it into evangelism. Just as importantly, it can make genuine mutual respect and friendship possible.

In the Introduction it was pointed out how many books there are claiming that Buddhism and Christianity are in general agreement on fundamental issues.

However, outnumbering these by many hundreds are books by Christians advocating evangelising those of other faiths, including Buddhists. Ones with titles such as *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* and *Spiritual Warfare and Missions: The Battle*

for God's Glory among the Nations make no effort to hide their agenda or how it is to be implemented. But even publications by mainline and liberal theologians and church leaders endorse this same goal, albeit using more tactful titles and recommending more sensitive methods.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) which represents nearly 350 churches in 150 countries has a special Commission on World Mission and Evangelism which meets every 18 months to report on and discuss strategies and projects to convert non-Christians. It has recently called for "a more humble approach to missions" and recommended that evangelism be done "with gentleness and respect." This is a welcomed innovation but it is also only a different approach to the same long-standing agenda, to replace all other religions with Christianity. Recently the WCC, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance jointly issued a set of 12

principles recommending how missionaries should relate to the people they are trying to convert. One of these principles urged missionaries to "acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good" in other faiths and "to listen" to the people they are evengelizing. Again these are admirable principles. But if missionaries actually did listen to the people they were trying to convert they might hear them saying that they are content with their own religion and do not wish to be evangelized.

So here we see a quandary. One the one hand some Christians are telling Buddhist that their religion is a just slightly different version of what Jesus taught and that actually we are all "friends in conversation". On the other, many Christian churches, probably the majority, are spending vast amounts of time, resources and ingenuity on trying to replace Buddhism with Christianity.

What are Buddhists to think of these mixed messages?

Tensions between religions often have longstanding and complex causes;

economic, political, historical and ethnic, but there can be no doubt that evangelism is a significant contributing factor as well. Those who say that they are committed to inter-religious understanding and cooperation need to honestly acknowledge this and consider what they can do about it. Churches and religious NGOs are limited in the impact they can have on the more complex causes of tensions between faiths but there is one cause they could effectively stop – evangelism.

This is not to say that Christian NGOs should stop the enormous amount of good they do in the world. Far from it. But perhaps they should revisit the Parable of the Good Samaritan and note that the Samaritan never considered

that his act of compassion might be an opportunity to convert the man he helped. He helped only because he saw a fellow human being in need. Again, rather than discussing abstruse religious doctrines with Buddhists perhaps Christians could invite them to become full partners in their charitable and development efforts. Actually working together with others to solve practical problems builds bridges far better than just talking with them.

In 256 BCE the Buddhist emperor Asoka under his throne name Piyadasi, issued this edict which could still, more than two millennia later, be a guide for positive relations between different religions. “Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi honors both the clergy and the householders of all religions, and he honors them with gifts and honors of various kinds. But the king does not value gifts and honors as much as he values this - that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. Growth in essentials can be done in different ways, but all of them have as their root restraint in speech, that is, not praising one’s own religion, or condemning the religion of others without good cause. And if there is cause for criticism, it should be done in a mild way. But it is better to honor other religions for this reason. By so doing, one’s own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one’s own religion and the religions of others. Whoever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and condemns others with the thought ‘Let me glorify my own religion,’ only harms his own religion. Therefore contact [between religions] is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. The king desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions.” 4

Today such ideas are still resisted but are gradually winning more acceptance.

The distinguished Anglican theologian John Macquarrie has written: “In 1964 I published an article entitled ‘Christianity and Other Faiths’ ... [and] I continue to hold the views I expressed then ... I believe that, however difficult it may be, we should hold to our own traditions and yet respect and even learn from the traditions of others. I drew the conclusion that there should be an end to proselytizing but that equally there should be no syncretism…”5 To hold to and be true to one’s own faith, to openly and humbly learn from other faiths, to respect other faiths by not trying to replace them with one’s own – this sounds to me like a formula for enriching all faiths and creating lasting harmony between them.

Glossary

Apocalypse. A term for the destruction of the world by God as predicted in the New Testament.

Aramaic. A Semitic language spoken in Palestine and much of the Middle East during the time of Jesus.

Asoka. The third emperor of the Mauryan Empire who ruled much of India from 268 to 232

BCE and converted to Buddhism.

Awakening. The state of being completely liberated through knowledge, according to Buddhism.

Bible. The sacred scriptures of Christianity. It is made up of two collections of writings, the Old Testament written mainly in Hebrew and considered sacred by Jews and Christians; and the New Testament written in Greek, the most important part of the Bible for Christians but not recognised by Jews.

Bodhisattva. Someone committed to (*śakta*) attaining Awakening (*bodhi*) and used to refer to the Buddha before his Awakening.

Eightfold Path. The third of the four Noble Truths; Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Henotheism. The belief in a single supreme god while accepting that there are

other lesser gods.

Gandhara. A region in ancient northern Pakistan and Afghanistan much influenced by Hellenism. It became a major centre of Buddhism.

Gentiles. A term for anyone who is not Jewish, Hebrew *goi* meaning ‘stranger’.

Herod. A reputedly cruel king who ruled Judea, a part of Palestine, between 4 BCE and 39

CE.

Hebrew. The liturgical language of Judaism at the time of Jesus, now the national language of Israel.

Holy Spirit. According to Christianity God has three aspects; the Father, the Son (i.e. Jesus) and the Holy Spirit.

Isipatana. The park where the Buddha preached for the first time, now known as Sarnath.

Last Supper. The Passover meal Jesus shared with his main disciples before he was arrested.

Law. The rules and regulations for living given by God to Moses as found in the Old Testament.

Magadha. The largest and most powerful kingdom during the Buddha’s time and the scene of many of his activities.

Mahavāstu. A Buddhist anthology of Sanskrit texts compiled between about the 3rd century BCE and the 2nd century CE.

Magi. Priests of the Zoroastrian religion known for their skills in magic and astrology.

Mahāyāna. The second of three movements within Indian Buddhism, which started to emerge around the 1st century BCE.

New Testament. See Bible.

Old Testament. See Bible.

Passover. An important seven-day Jewish holiday which commemorates the freeing of the Jewish people from slavery in ancient Egypt.

Pāli. Pāli is a Middle Indo-Aryan language similar to what may have been spoken by the Buddha. The earliest Buddhist documents are in Pāli.

Paul. The most influential figure in early Christianity even though he only converted to the religion after Jesus' death.

Pharisees. A movement or sect within the Jewish priesthood during the time of Jesus. Jesus was highly critical of the Pharisees although the historian Josephus said they received great respect and support from most people of the time.

Precepts, the Five. The basic moral principles of Buddhism; to avoid killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and alcoholic intoxicants.

Rājagaha. The capital of Magadha and the scene of many of the Buddha's activities, now called Rajgir.

Sabbath. The last day of the week, i.e. Saturday, and one during which according to God's law everyone should take a rest from work. Today, most Christians consider Sunday to be the Sabbath.

Samaritans. A people whose religion differed in some ways from Judaism and who were despised by the Jews. Small communities of Samaritans still live in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Tathāgata. A term for someone who has attained complete Awakening, meaning both 'the thus come one' and 'the thus gone one'.

Temple. The grand temple in Jerusalem and the centre of the Jewish religion. Built in 559

BCE it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

Uruvelā. The village in Magadha where the Buddha attained Awakening, now called Bodh Gaya.

Vedas. The sacred scriptures of Brahmanism and now the most revered scriptures of Hinduism also. During the Buddha's time, there were three collections but subsequently a fourth part, the Artharva Veda, was added.

Sacred Texts and Abbreviations

The Pali Tipitaka

A

Aṅguttara Nikāya, ed. R. Morris, E. Hardy, PTS London

1885-1900

D

Dīgha Nikāya, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids, J. E. Carpenter, PTS

London 1890-1911

Dhp

Dhammapada, ed. O. Von Hinuber, K. R. Norman, PTS

Oxford 1994

It

Itvuttaka, ed. E. Windisch, PTS London 1889

Ja

Jātaka with commentary, ed. V. Fauseboll, London PTS

1877-96

M

Majjhima Nikāya, ed. V. Trenchner, R. Chalmers, PTS London 1887-1902

Mhv Mahāvastu, ed. E Senart, Paris 1882-1897

S

SamLyutta Nikāya, ed. L. Feer, PTS London 1884-98

Sn

Sutta Nipāta, ed. D. Andersen, H. Smith, PTS London 1913

Thi

Therīgāthā, ed. H. Oldenberg, R. Pischel, 2nd edition, PTS London 1966

Ud

Udāna , ed . P. Steinthal, PTS London 1885

Vin

Vinaya Pit Laka, ed. H. Oldenberg, PTS London 1879-83

The Bible

UBS 5th Revised Greek New Testament Reders Edition, 2014.

Good News Bible, Second Revised Edition, 1992.

Col Colossians

1Cor 1 Corinthians

Ep Ephesians

Gal Galatians

Is Isaiah

Heb Hebrews

Jam James

Jn Gospel of John

1Jn I John

Lk Gospel of Luke

Matt Gospel pf Matthew

Mk Gospel of Mark

1 Pt I Peter

Rev Revelations

Rom Romans

Thess Thessaloians

1 Tim. 1 Timothy

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_ *ow Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* , 2015.

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Notes

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2. Pages 25, 33, 36, 74, 79, 109, 110, 145, 153.

3. Jn.14,19.

4. *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal*, 2009, pp. x,xi.

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2. See Sujato and Brahmali's *The*

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revels that of 259 monks 113 were from

2014.

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3. Lk.I,1-3.

4.Matt.2,13-23.

Their Lives

1. *The Cross and the Lotus: Christianity*

17. Sn. 322-4.

and Buddhism in Dialogue,1985, p.2.2.

18. D.II,233. On the election of rulers in

2. S.II, 25.

early India see R. C. Majumdar’s

3. It.90.

Corporate Life in Ancient India, 1922,

4. Lk.2.39.

pp.97-112.

5. Matt.2, 16-18.

19. S.IV, 182.

6. Matt.I, 1-16; Lk.III,23-38.

20. D.II, 52; Sn.685; Vin.I, 82.

7. D.I, 93. The name Sakya, sometimes

21. M.III, 253.

Sākya, is actually derived from *śak*

22. Vin.II, 253 ff.

meaning to be able or capable.

23. Sn. 683; S.V, 369.

8. D.III, 83.

24. See M. Lal, *Settlement History and the*

9. Sn.422.

Rise of Civilization in the Ganga-Yumuna

10. M.II, 119.

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11. D.I, 90; II,165; Sn.423.

Four Seasons of Exploration in Kanpur

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13. Idib.

Environment 8, 1984.

14. Sn.422.

25. See K. M. Srivastava’s *Discovery of*

15. D.I, 91.

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16. *2500 Years of Buddhism*, edited by P.

26. Jn.2;1-12; 19;25-6.

V. Bapat, 1956, p.ix.

27. Mk.6;3; 3,31-2.

28. Matt.1,18-25.

69. M.I, 247.

29. Mk.6,3; Matt.13,55-56.

70. Sn.442-3.

30.1 Cor.9,5.

71. Sn.425, ff.

31. Jn.7,1-5.

72. Sn.436-8.

32. Mk.3,20.

73. S.I, 124.

33. Gal.1,19; Jude.1,1.

74. D.II, 151; M.I, 163.

34. Vin.IV,173.

75. D.II, 100.

35. Matt.1,18-25; Lk.1,26-38.

76. S.I, 116.

36. Matt.2, 9.

77. D.II, 72-137.

37. Condensed, M.III,120.

78. S.III, 90.

38. D.III:197.

79. Ud.58.

39. Matt.1, 20-21.

80. S.V, 348-349.

40. Mk.6, 3.

81. M.I, 456.

41. Lk.4, 22; Matt.13,55.

82. Sn.1014.

42. Matt.15, 22;

83. S.III, 95.

43. Lk.2:21.

84. M.I, 206; D.II, 131; A.I,136;

44. Lk.2:25-35.

M.III,238.

45. Sn.683-694.

85. M.I, 501.

46. Lk.2:41-52.

86. A.I, 276ff.

47. Lk.4,16-20.

87. Vin.I, 20.

48. A.I,145.

88. Lk.10, 1; 8,1-3.

49. M.I, 246.

89. Matt.19, 28; Lk.22,29-30.

50. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*,

90. Acts.4, 13.

2008, p.46.

91. Mk.9, 33-35; Mk.4,13; 6,52; 8,14-21;

51. 1 Cor. 11:14.

Matt.25-27.

52. Lk.3:30.

92. Matt.10,5-15.

53a. Is.53, 3.

93. Vin.I,21; Lk,10,1.

53b. Vin.IV, 173.

94. Matt.15,22-28; Mk.7,24-29.

54. M.I, 163.

95. Ud.66.

55. D.I, 115.

96. Lk.9, 5, also 10,10-12.

56. A.II, 38.

97. M.I, 490ff

57. A.I, 181.

98. Condensed, D.II,105.

58. S.V, 216.

99. S.V, 164.

59. D.II, 100.

100. Mk.14, 51-52.

60. M.III, 235.

101. D.II, 144.

61. Mk. 5, 41; 7, 34; 14, 36; 11, 9.

102. D.II, 145.

103. Matt.10, 5-10; Lk.9-1.

62. Matt.3, 7-12.

104. Jn.12, 3-6.

63. Mk.I, 4.

105. Matt.27, 3-5; Act.1, 18-19.

64. Matt.3, 11.

106. Vin.II,182.

65. Condensed, M.I, 163.

107. Vin.II,189.

66. Matt.4, 1-11; Lk.4, 1-13.

108. Ud.3-4.

67. M.I, 77-81.

109. Vin.II, 189.

68. M.I, 245.

110. Vin.II,191 ff

111. Mk.9, 2-9.

149. D.III, 38.

112. Vin.I, 4-6.

150. D.I, 179.

113. A.IV, 211.

151. Condensed, D.I, 119.

114. Is.45, 1.

152. Mk.6, 14-15.

115. e.g. D.III, 58ff; A.I, 109ff.

153. Mk.8, 27.

116. Vīpassī, Sikhī, Vessabhū, Kakusanda,

154. Matt, 11,19.

Kon Lāgamana, and Kassapa, D.II, 5; S.II,5.

155. Mk.2,17.

Later Buddhist tradition created many

156. Mk.5,24; Matt,8,18.

more.

157. Matt, 4, 23-25.

117. Vin.I, 43.

158. Matt.11, 20.

118. Vin.I, 9.

159. Matt.11,21-24.

119. D.I, 161ff.

160. Jn.6, 25-26.

120. S.I, 68.

161. Matt.5,29-30.

121. S.I, 68-70.

162. Vin.II,110.

122. M.I, 176.

163. Jn.6, 53-56.

123. M.I, 381.

164. Jn.6, 66.

124. Vin.I, 234-235.

165. Mk.6, 1-6.

125. M.I, 502.

166. Matt.5, 17-20.

126. A.IV, 187.

167. Matt.9, 14; Mk.2,18.

127. M.I, 369.

168. Mk.2,27.

128. See S. Dhammika *To Eat or Not to*

169. Lk.11, 37-52.

Eat Meat, 2016.

170. Matt.27, 11-14; Jn.18.33; 19,1-11.

129. See Pu Chengzhong, *Ethical*

171. Matt.21,8-9.

Treatment of Animals in Early Chinese

172. Matt.11,15-16. .

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173. Jn.8, 42-47.

130. M.I,171.

174. Lk.20,45-47.

131. M.I, 6.

175. Matt.23,33-34.

132. M.I, 108-109.

176. Jn.8,44.

133. M.II, 200.

177. Jn.12,1-8.

178. Matt.19,28.

134. D.III, 2-3.

179. Matt.10, 34.

135. M.II, 5.

180. Matt. 26, 40.

136. S.V, 321-322.

181. Matt, 26, 47-51.

137. D.I, 222.

182. Matt.10, 34.

138. A.III, 237.

183. Lk.22, 36.

139. S.V, 450.

184. Is.52, 7-15 to 53,1-12.

185. D.I, 4.

140. D.I, 151.

186. Sn.394.

141. S.III, 2.

187. Mk.1,122.

142. D.III, 40.

188. M.I,320.

143. M.II, 197.

189. A.III,308.

144. M.I, 378-379.

190. Mtt.14,60-63.

145. A.I, 161.

191. Mk.5,37.

146. Sn.720-1.

192. Mk.15,13.

193. D.II,106.

147. S.I, 162.

194. D.II,99.

148. S.V, 325-326.

195. D. II,126.

According to

198. D.II, 133.

archaeologist Dilip Chakrabarti, the large

199. Vin.I.25.

mound at Jharmatiya may be identified

200. D.II, 134; S.V, 81.

with Pāvā; *Relating History to Land in*

201. D.II, 137-8. Condensed D.II, 137.

Between Empires, Society in India 300 BC

The sal tree, *Shorea robusta*, has a mass of

to 400 CE, edited by Patrick Olivelle,

small jasmine-scented yellow flowers.

2006.

202. D.II, 154.

196. D.II, 127-8.

197. D.II, 101.

The Dhamma and the Gospel

1. Matt.5, 17; Lk.16, 17.

24. M.I,39. 25. S.I,43.

2. Matt.5, 17-20)

26. e.g. *Manusmr 1ti* 9,107; *Taittirīya*

3. Leviticus 19:18; 19, 34.

Sam1hita 6.3.10,5. For a fuller explanation

4. Matt.4, 23.

of this doctrine see *Sam1nyāsa Upanis 1ads*,

5. Acts 24,5; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.

translated by P. Olivelle, 1992, pp.47-50.

27. *Aitareya Brahman 1a* 7.13; *Manusmr 1ti*

6. S.V, 421.

9,107; *Taittirīya Sam1hita* 6.3.10,5.

7. A.IV,202.

28. D.I,63.

8. D.I, 71.

29. Dhp.288; 62; 174, 287.

9. D.I, 90.

30. Dhp. 187; 178

10. *Mahābhās 1ya* II, 4, 9.

31. D.III,180 ff. On the different ways and

11. M.I, 63-64.

reasons of worshiping the directions see

e.g. *Br 1hadāranyaka Upanisad* 3.7,10, and

12. Dhp.107; D.I, 9; A.IV,41 ff.

Chāndogya Upanis 1ad 1.3, 11; 5.6; 5.20,2.

13. Sn. 249.

Sigāla was probably worshipping the

14. Vin.I, 35. The three sacred fires were

directional gods as advocated at *Gautama*

the Āhavanīya, the Gārhapatya and the

Dharmasūtra 5, 11.

Daks Lin Lāgni.

32. Vin.II, 139. On the early Buddhist

15. D.I, 113.

attitude to Sanskrit see Bronkhorst 2011,

16. Dhp.396.

p.122ff.

33. A.I,163.

17. Dhp.406.

34. D.III, 80.

18. S.I, 166. Outside the four castes were

35. S.I,161-162.

the so-called fifth group (*pañcama*);

36. M.I,334.

outcastes (*can 1d 1āla, hīnajacca*), sub-37. S.IV,117-18.

humans (*vasala*), dog-eaters (*sopāka*), and 38. Matt.13,11-17.

scavengers (*pukkusa*), who were forced to

39. Jn.8,1-11.

do the most demeaning jobs and were

40. D.I, 87ff; MII,147 ff; M.II,163ff.

41. e.g. A.III, 369-70; Vin.II,161-2.

completely beyond the pale of ordinary

42. S.II, 114

society.

43.M.I, 134-135.

19. M.II,147ff. The idea of the divine

44. A.II, 200-201.

origin of the institution of caste can be

45. Ud.67-69.

found in *R1g Veda* X, 90, *Atharvaveda*

46. See Thanissaro Bhikkhu's *The*

XX.6, 6, *Bhagavad Gita* IV,13 and several

Buddha's Smile, Humour in the Pali

places in the *Mahābhārata* and the

Canon, 2015.

47. e.g. D.I,178; S.IV,398.

Purān 1as.

48. M.I, 231.

20. Sn.p.21.22. Ud.78.

49. Sn.827.

23. M.I,39.

50. M.II,168.

51. A.I, 187.

96. A.II, 70.

52. Sn.780.

97. A.III, 76-77.

53. D.III, 38.

98. A.III,222.

54. A.V, 194 and S.IV, 400. For more on

99. *lokismim1 hi appiyasampayogo va*

the Buddha's supposed silence see S.

dukkho, Ja.II,205.

Dhammika, *The View from the West*, 2017,

100. Sn.262.

pp.85-89.

101. *bharyā va paramā sakhā*, S.I,37.

55. Condensed, D.III, 55-6.

102. *aññamaññam piyamvādā*, A.II,59.

56. Mk.11, 12-14; Jn.2,1-11; Lk.5.1-11;

103. *pamodamānā eka cittā samagga*

Matt. 17, 24-27.

vāsam, Ja.II,122.

57. Mk.5, 25-32; 8, 22-23.

104. A.II, 62.

58. Matt.27, 45; Mk.15, 33; Lk.23, 44-45.

105. A.III, 295-8.

59. Matt.27, 52-53.

106. A.II, 61-62.

60. Mk.6, 5-6.

107. Matt.5, 31-32; 19,1-9; Mk.10,1-5.

61. Mk.8, 22-25.

108. M.I, 130.

62. Jn.10, 37-38.

109. Dhp.290.

63. Jn.9, 1-3.On this see Exodus 4, 11.

110. 1 Cor.13, 4-7.

64. Rev.16, 14.

111. Lk.10, 25-27. There is controversy as

65. Matt.12, 22-26.

to whether ‘neighbour’ referred to fellow

66. D.I, 211 ff.

Jews or all humans. In his ‘The Distinction

67. Vin.II, 110-111.

between Jews and Gentiles in Torah’

68. D.III, 4.

Rabbi David Bar Chaim quotes numerous

69. e.g. A.III,144; 295 ff; S.V,79-80; 381.

ancient and medieval rabbis including

70. Vin.I,301-2.

Maimonides to show that it was always

71. Matt.25,43-45.

understood to refer only to Jews. See

72. Acts.23, 7-9.

http://daatemet.org.il/en/torah-science-

73. Matt.5,8; 13,43; 22, 30; Jn.14, 2;

74. Matt.11, 23; 5,22; 25,41.

ethics/religion-ethics/gentiles-in-halacha/

75. D.I, 76.

For a more detailed discussion on the issue

76. Sn.1060; 278; D.II, 15.

see the entry Gentile in the *Jewish*

77. D.II, 63; III,103; S.V,370.

Encyclopaedia,1906.

78. A.I, 249; Dhp.173.

112. Mk.12,30.

79. A.I, 173.

113. 1 Jn.15,13.

80. A.I, 249; Dhp.173.

114. 1 Jn. 3,17-18.

81. S.IV, 206.

115. 1 Jn.4,20.

82. e.g.Matt. 5,21-22.

116. Lk.10,25-37.

83. Matt.3, 7; Jn.3,36; Jam.2,13;

117. 1 Jn.4,1.

Rev.14,10; 16,19.

84. e.g. Matt.5, 12; 6,5; 25,46; Lk.6,35.

118. Rom.5,5.

85. Jn.3.6; Lk.23, 46.

119. 1 Jn.4,12.

86. S.III,66-7.

120. Jn.15,10.

87. Lk.18, 28-30.

121. Matt.25.41-46.

88. Matt.23,9;10,35-36; 8,21;Mk.3, 31-35.

122. Matt.13,40-43; also Lk.12,49; 13,23-

89.1Jn.2, 15-17.

28; 2 Tim.4,1; Rev. 20,11-12.

90.1 Pt.2, 11; Col.3, 5-6; Jam.4, 4.

123. Jn.3, 36; also Jn.8,24;11,25;12,47-48.

91. Jn.12, 25.

92. Lk.14, 26.

124. Ja.2, 13.

93. D.III, 189.

125. Matt.12, 31-32.

94. Dhp.332.

126. D.I, 1-3.

95. A.II, 70.

127. D.I, 63;71.

128. M.I, 46.

170. Matt.7,13-14.

129. A.III, 379; S.V,344-345.

171. Lk.13,24.

130. A.III, 168.

172. Matt.7,21-23.

131. M.II, 98 ff.

173. 1 Pt.4,18.

132. M.I, 23.

174. Rev.7,1-4, also 14,1-3.

133. A.II, 147.

175. A.V,193-5.

134. M.I, 127.

177. Thi.513.

135. Sn.50.

178. Mk.10,24.

136. M.I, 126.

179. Lk.4,18.

137. It.20.

180. Lk.16, 19-31.

138. A.IV, 151.

181. Lk.6, 24-5.

139. A.I, 243.

182. Ja.5, 1-3.

140. A.III, 243-4; III,196; III,144.

183. Ja.1, 9-11.

184. Jam.2, 5.

141. A.I, 192.

185. Lk.1, 53.

142. M.II, 64.

186. Lk.16, 13.

143. Mk.16, 16; Jn.3,16; 8,23-24; 3,36;

187. Lk.32-34; Matt.6,19.

6,29.

188. Acts 2, 44-45.

144. Heb. 11, 6; Ep.2,8-10.

189. Act.4, 32-35.

145. Jam.1, 6-8.

190. Acts 4,32.

191. A.V, 180-1.

146. Matt.18, 3.

192. D.III, 188.

147. Sn.77.

193. A.IV, 282.

148. A.III, 53; II, 66; M.I,356, .

194. Lk.12, 16-21

149. S.II, 30ff; IV, 138-9.

195. 1 Tim. 6 ,9

150. M.I, 379.

186. Lk.16, 13.

151. Jn.20, 24-29; Lk.17,6.

187. Matt.6, 19-21.

152. M.I, 37ff.

188. Lk.14,13-14.

189. Acts 2, 44-45.

153. M.III, 11.

190. Act.4, 32-35.

154. M.I, 318-320.

191. A.II, 67-8.

155. Eph.2, 8; Jam.I,5; 6,44; Rom.9,14-18.

192. A.V, 180-1.

156. Matt.3, 7.

193. D.III, 188.

157. Matt.3, 10.

194. Lk.12, 16-21

158. Matt.5, 5.

195. 1 Tim.6, 9

159. 1 Thess. 4,16-17; 5, 3.

196. A.IV, 282.

197. Vin.I, 4.

160. Mk.14,62.

198. S.I,74.

161. Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Lk. 21:32.

199. A.III,53.

Paul make the same point at 1 Thess. 4.

200. A.II,194.

16-18.

201. Vin.I,20.

162. Mk.9,1.

202. Dhp.254.

163. 1 Jn.2:18.

203. Sn.1082.

164. Jam.5,8.

204. D.III,7.

205. A.I,121.

166. 1 Cor.10,11.

206. Jn.14,6; 3,36; Matt.10,33.

167. 1 Cor.7, 27-29.

207. Matt.12,30.

168. D.I,17.

208. Acts 4,12; 1 Tim.2,5.

169. S.II,181.

209. Matt.10,28.

210.Matt.13,42; Mk.9,43; Lk.16,26; Mk.

223.Dhp.1.

9, 48.

224. Mk.11, 24; Matt.7, 7-11.

211. M.I, 327.

225. 1 Jh.5, 14-15.

212. D.II,210.

226. Jam.4, 2.

213. D.I, 247.

227. D.I, 240.

214. D.I, 235.

228. A.III, 47.

215. A.V, 60.

229. Mhv.III, 402.

216. D.I, 18 ff.

230. S.I, 39.

217. D.III, 28.

231. S.V, 121-123.

218. A.I, 173.

232; S.V, 321.

219. D.I, 222.

233. A.V, 336-337.

220. M.I,168; 326; S.I,139;153.

234. M.I, 115.

221. Ja.VI, 208.

235.Sn.68.

222. A.V, 1-2.

Conclusion

1. Condensed D.II, 282.

2. M.I, 521.

3. D.I, 163.

4. Dhammika, 1994.

5. *Mediators Between Human and Divine, From Moses to Muhammad*, 1999, p.2.