

## Foreword

If our political leaders in Washington practiced the teaching of Jesus Christ, whom most of them worship in their churches on Sunday, they would not commit the wealth and resources of our country to subsidize the largest military machine in world history. They use more money in discretionary spending on it than all other governmental programs combined, including health, education, environment, science, agriculture, etc.— you name it, and if it's not military, it's short-changed.

Most of the money is being spent to prepare to refight World War II or the Cold War, for we have not a major enemy in the world. Most weapons being bought are as useless against terrorism, the tactic of necessity at the moment, as was the World War I inspired Maginot line against Hitler's panzer divisions in World War II. History has clearly shown the catastrophic error of judgment of the leaders of France. Do we American people need history to convince us of the folly of our leaders?

This rational assessment of our military situation has been established by the Center for Defense Information in Washington, a group of high ranking U.S. military officials who have heeded President Eisenhower's warning against the military-industrial complex. Being retired, they are no longer under the authority of our political leaders, the great majority of whom have sold their souls for 30 pieces of silver to get themselves elected with the help of that complex.

Christ's saying, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," is certainly true of our political leaders who have so clearly shown where their heart is— in war, the greatest cause of unnecessary suffering in our world. Is

it also true of the American people? This is in question because we have insistently called for campaign finance reform. Those who have sworn to represent us in Washington have betrayed us. Yet it is also true of us if we permit this betrayal of our ideals and our interest to continue.

Christ, as Buddha before him, was a very logical, practical teacher. What they taught has no meaning unless it is put into practice, as they intended it to be.

We Americans are not the only people in the world to pursue the use of force in world affairs, and to commit our treasure and our heart to it. It is a world problem, and it demands a world-wide solution.

This solution is offered by the Year 2000 campaign to Redirect World Military Spending to Human Development, a movement led by Dr. Oscar Arias, Nobel Peace Laureate and former president of Costa Rica, a brave and wise little nation that has managed to exist without an army or navy.

Over 100 organizations throughout the world are endorsing this campaign, including, in the U.S., the Center for Defense Information, American Friends Service Committee, Lutheran World Relief, Maryknoll Sisters Office of Social Concern, Unitarian Universalist Associates, and World Watch Institute.

In the comprehensive comparison of the teaching of Buddha and Christ in this book will be found the philosophic and religious basis for world peace, the best reasons why anyone who is not opposed to their teaching should support the Year 2000 Campaign.

# Introduction

This account started with a fascinating personal discovery, followed by a study over many years, of the identical message of Buddha and Christ. Soon it led to an even more interesting idea:

What is their message?

Many books have been written about the similarity of their teaching. Before making this study, however, I had never read one like this that cites chapter and verse of the Scriptures written about them.

A lifetime, though often errant, follower of Christ, I was a U.S.A. I.D. Foreign Service officer and lived for many years in India, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. I had close friends who were Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists. I visited their temples, read their Holy Scriptures and discussed their beliefs with them. Although all the eastern religions were fascinating, Buddhism interested me most, not only because in outward appearances it was so different, but also because the basic teaching of its founder was so familiar. As a result not only of personal experience but also of study of the Scriptures, it became apparent to me that the message of Buddha and Christ is so similar as to be called identical for all practical purposes.

As a layman, I realize the last statement may be anathema to theologians. Should this happen, it is well to remember that Christ did not think highly of the theologians of his day, the Pharisees.

This realization dawned on me, more by intuition than scholarship, while living next door to a beautiful Buddhist wat, or temple, in Southeast Asia in the early 1970s. My first inkling of this possibility began ten years earlier while my family and I were living in India. As happened there to many other West-

## Introduction

erners also, some of our Hindu and Muslim friends informed us that Christ, as a youth, came to India, did not die on the cross, but was rescued by his disciples, later traveled back to India, and is buried in Kashmir.

We considered their assertions a part of culture shock, wondered how they thought they knew more about our religion than we did, and concluded it was a way of cutting Christ down to the size of their innumerable Hindu gurus and Muslim Sufi saints. The assertion that Jesus had traveled to India before his ministry in and around Jerusalem became more believable, however, as the years went by, and I had accepted it as a probable fact before leaving India in 1967.

One of the reasons for accepting that assertion as a fact was a book, *Naked They Pray* by Pearce Gervis, a Westerner who had studied old and modern writings on Yoga ("modern" being at that time 1958, when the book was published by Cassell and Co., London). The author visited the holy places of the Himalayas to question men who had "given up the world" to meditate and pray. Like these men, he wrote, Jesus had in this locality, searched for spiritual meaning and found the perfect realization of his oneness with God. This account, as well as that Jesus went to Puri, in South India, and Benares to study the "Vedas" and "Laws of Manu," were recorded in Hindu and Buddhist Shastras as well as certain Yoga manuscripts, the author stated.

Christ's rescue from the cross, and later death and burial in Kashmir, however, did not seem reasonable to me, even after reading a scholarly study supporting the theory in the publication *Look East* in its issue of June 1972 in Bangkok. The viewpoint and evidence presented by the author of that article, J.N. Sadhu, was later presented in far greater detail by two later books—*Jesus Lived in India*, Element Books, Ltd., 1986 and 1994, Rockport, MA, and *The Jesus Conspiracy*, a bestseller from the same publisher, which make this theory of history quite reasonable.

Both those books are thoroughly scholarly and tell their version of Christ's life with compelling intensity. When compared to such high drama, the following study of mine may seem, at first glance, of no importance or interest at all. Each of those books cite Christian Gospels, Buddhist Scriptures and other reliable historical records to prove that Christ's teaching reflects that of Buddha. While such comparison is the basis of my study and is presented comprehensively and in depth, it is only a minor matter in the melodrama of Christ's rescue from the cross as told by the authors of those two books. They cite what can be considered valid evidence that he did not die on the cross,

## *The Drum of Immortality*

highlighted by the following:

Jesus was declared dead just a few hours after his crucifixion. His legs were not broken, a procedure that hastened death, as were the two thieves on either side of him.

Joseph of Arimathea went in boldly to Pilate and craved the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple, and it seems likely that the centurion in charge of the crucifixion was also.

Pilate marveled if Jesus was, in fact, dead, and had the centurion confirm the death. Only then did Pilate give the body to Joseph, (Mark 15:43-45), who then took him down from the cross and carried him to a sepulchre. There came also Nicodemus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight (John 19:39).

As both these substances were extensively used for healing wounds, and not embalming, the assumption is that they were placed on his body and held in place by the linen he was wrapped in, the Shroud of Turin. Scientific evidence is presented supporting the theory that this Shroud is authentic and that the body enclosed in it was not dead but was revived by medicinal herbs placed around it. In the following days, he appeared several times to his disciples who founded the Christian religion, then went off with other secret disciples, eventually going back to India, where he is buried in Kashmir.

The above story, told in fascinating and credible detail by the authors of the two books, Holger Kersten and Elmar Gruber, may be entirely correct logically and historically.

That said, it makes no spiritual difference whatever whether Christ died on the cross, or was rescued and died later of old age in India. In either case, he was ready to die for what he believed in. As there is no record of any further teaching by him in India, that day on the cross finished his mission on this earth: he had successfully delivered the message of "him who sent me." The rescue from the cross story, while highly exciting to those looking for entertainment rather than meaning in life, trivializes the great truth of his Gospel.

The deep significance of Christ's life is to be found only in what he taught. His death on the cross, or apparent death, or physical resurrection, is important only to later church leaders. Though originally founded on Christ's teaching, the Christian church often prefers to worship Christ as God rather than follow what he taught as a man who believed, as do his true followers, that he was sent by God to give a Divine message to the world.

Studying the pages of *Jesus Lived in India*, I was led to what must be the

## Introduction

most authentic and comprehensive study ever conducted on the similarity of the teaching of Buddha and Christ. The author, Albert J. Edmunds (honorary member and American Representative of the International Buddhist Society of Rangun) was at work on it a century ago. The study was edited with parallels and notes from the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka by M. Anesaki, Professor of the Science of Religion in the Imperial University of Tokyo. It was published by the Yuhokwan Publishing House, Tokyo, under the title *Buddhist and Christian Gospels, Being Gospel Parallels from Pali Texts, Now First Compared from the Originals*. The third and complete edition was published in 1905.

The only way I could see a copy of this book was when my local library obtained it from another library a thousand miles away. Even with the most tender and reverent care, I could not prevent the edges of some of the ancient pages from crumbling and disintegrating in my hands. Its scholarship is even more comprehensive and awesome than that of *Jesus Lived in India*. So once again, the report on my study, which follows, seemed of no importance at all. I felt very humble in the face of such scholarship. My own study seemed worthless except from the standpoint of " 'Tis a mean thing, but 'tis my own."

And then I realized that what I have to present is not a mean thing, and is not my own. It is an accurate comparison of the Dhammapada of Buddha and the Gospel of Christ, both of which are so simple and eloquent as to be clear even to the uneducated, to the homeless beggars, fisherman and other common folk who were their first disciples and passed their message down to us.

The phenomenal simplicity of this teaching is what many scholars miss, now as in the time of Christ when they were known as scribes and Pharisees. Some modern scholars, such as those described in *The Five Gospels* (Macmillan Publishing Co., New York: 1993), are still searching "for the authentic words of Jesus." But for most of us followers of Christ, those words have never been lost. Those words govern our lives, and such modern discoveries as *The Dead Sea Scrolls* and the *Naj Hammadi* manuscripts amount to no more than interesting footnotes which add little substance.

There are many different translations of the Gospels of Christ, and the same is true of the Dhammapada of Buddha. Any of these translations will get their message across. What I consider the best have been used—the King James translation of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the translation of the Dhammapada given to me a generation ago by a good friend, a young Buddhist novice monk at Wat That Khao, in Vientianne, Laos. Later reproduced by the Buddhist Relief Mission in Japan, the book has been printed by

## *The Drum of Immortality*

MITR SIAM PRESS, 89/69 Techavanich Road, Bangsue, Dusit, Bangkok 10800, Thailand. Any Buddhist Temple, and there are many around the world, can undoubtedly help anyone interested in obtaining a copy. The book contains the original Pali text and translates it into Lao, French, and English: it presents Buddha's basic teaching in its original simplicity, without commentary or anything else to distract from the original.

The majority of Buddhists consider the Dhammapada as the most authentic record of the teaching of Buddha, just as most Christians acknowledge that the four New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the most authentic records of the Gospel of Christ.

The comparison that follows is concerned with Christianity and Buddhism only insofar as they reflect the teaching of their founders. So it is less scholarly than the 1905 study, and far narrower in scope. But it is also much easier for ordinary readers to understand. Scholarship often cannot see the forest for the trees.

In that part of this teaching which is referred to later in this study as "Democracy in Religion," their message is shown to have great significance today, two years before the dawn of the third millennium since the birth of Christ, and over two and a half milleniums since the birth of Buddha, when the ideas of religious fanatics are seizing political power in many areas of the world. Thomas Jefferson, who opposed such religious and political despotism in his day, will be shown to be among the most loyal and effective followers of Christ, as the Emperor Asoka of India was one of the most loyal and effective followers of Buddha.

The dire need for a practical application of the joint teaching of Buddha and Christ in the world today, particularly in the U.S.A., is nowhere stated more forcefully than in the best selling, *Double Cross*, by Sam and Chuck Giancana. Another testimonial, which agrees in major respects, is *On the Trail of the Assassins*, by Jim Garrison, basis for the movie *JFK*. The intelligent, honest and courageous authors show modern conditions as depraved as during the Roman Empire.

Those of us Americans unaffiliated with the CIA who were on official duty in Vietnam and Laos during the Cold War, had personal knowledge of the catastrophic results of this depravity. On our return home (especially the young GIs), we were welcomed as "war criminals", even though the real criminals who ordered us there were in Washington and Moscow. Although I was aware of some of the lurid details revealed in the book *Backfire, The CIA's Secret*

War in L... by Roger Warner, I was fortunate in being able to concentrate instead on the wonderful peace of a devout Buddhist civilization being torn apart by two maddened Super Powers.