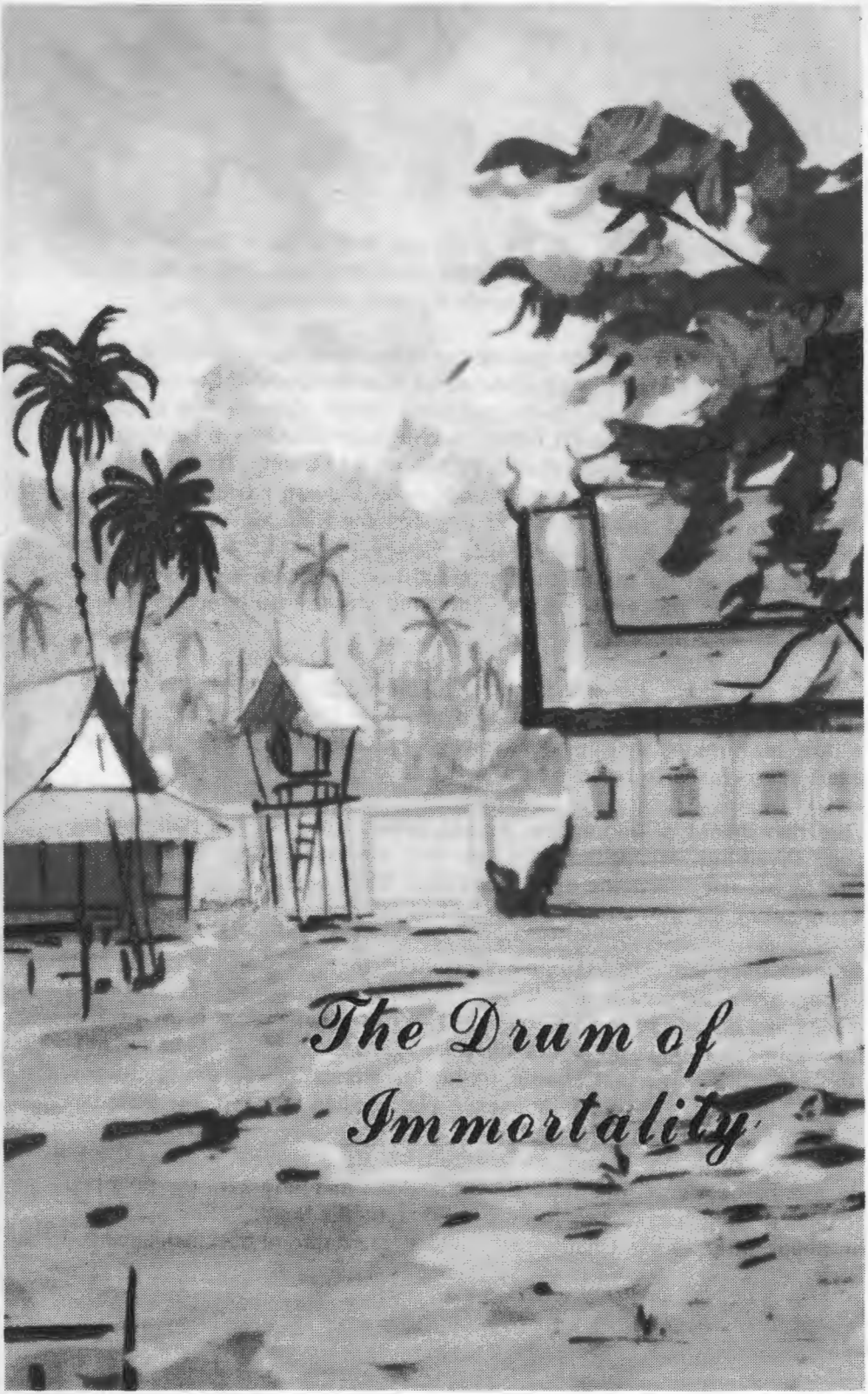
The Drum of
Immortality

For Larry Woodson
a good friend from
auld lang syne — Hugh

I will beat the drum of Immortality
in this blind world.

- Gautama Buddha

COVER: A partial reproduction of a painting done in color over 20 years ago by my friend, Xay Kaignavongsa, who worked, as I did, for the U.S. Mission to Laos. Xay left the country in 1979 and settled in San Diego, California where he has worked as a teacher with the public schools.

The scene conveys the feeling of great peacefulness which existed in the Vientianne area just north of Thailand, an island of peace as the War in Southeast Asia surged around it. Recent travellers there report that the kindly charm, which Theraveda Buddhism helped create, still exists. But they add that it seems doomed as shock troops of the materialistic Global Market Economy come charging like Panzer battalions over the new bridge across the Mekong.

THE DRUM OF IMMORTALITY

A Study of the Identical Message of Buddha and Christ

by

Hugh Fincher

I

The story of the life of my friend, Chantho Sourinho, is a fitting introduction to this study of the teaching of the two most influential leaders in history. Chantho's life dramatically demonstrates what can happen when people follow the sacred precept which is the same whether it is called Christian Love or Buddhist Compassion.

Now President of the International Lao-American Organization, Chantho came to the U.S. in 1973 to study at the State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He has helped settle hundreds of Lao refugee families in the U.S. Now, as a member of the Board of Directors of the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center of Washington, D.C., he is still deeply involved in helping them solve their problems of adjusting to life here.

As one of his many projects in this country, in 1982 he was instrumental in founding Wat Buddharam in Murfreesboro, the first and only Buddhist temple in Tennessee. He prepared a pamphlet stating that the purposes of the wat, the Lao word for "temple", include "to cooperate with other religions" and "to exchange knowledge" with them.

This study certainly fulfills those purposes, although I had already begun it before Chantho was my language teacher in Laos, and long before he came to the U.S. How he happened to leave Laos and come here is itself an inspiring illustration of the ties that bind sincere Buddhists and Christians.

A young American Christian who met Chantho in Laos befriended him upon recognizing his great talent, and helped him obtain a scholarship to the Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. That Christian prefers to remain anonymous here.

This single act of Christ-like kindness made it possible for Chantho to emulate Buddha's compassion at the end of the war in Southeast Asia and help the peoples of his country, including his own, the Lowland Lao, find new homes in our land. Now he is actively engaged in collecting medical and educational supplies and taking them back to help the people of Laos.

This pamphlet is produced as a token of welcome to America to Chantho and the fellow immigrants he represents. The intent is to help them feel more at home here, and also so our culture can be enriched by their heritage as it has been enriched by many other ethnic groups who have found freedom here. As a former teacher of a public school course, "Naturalization for Citizenship", I am able herein to explain vital aspects of our religious freedom which have not been included in the textbooks for such courses.

By reflecting on this study, Buddhists and Christians can not only gain an understanding of the other's religion but also a better appreciation of their own. And new hope can be found here by those without any religion at all.

II

While a resident of Thailand many years ago, I heard this story:

In the last century, when the country was still called Siam, Christian missionaries from Western countries arrived and began trying to convert what they considered the poor, misguided heathen. As the missionaries represented various sects and denominations, and competed among themselves for converts, a great deal of confusion developed concerning what this new religion, or religions, was all about.

The situation came to the attention of the King, who decided to find out why the peace of his realm was being disturbed. He invited all the missionaries to come and visit him and explain their conflicting viewpoints, and listened attentively as each one offered his explanation.

Later, after the King had heard them and deliberated on what they had said, he summoned them all together and announced:

"What you tell me to do is wonderful.

What you tell me to believe is nonsense."

This story was related to me as being true, and I have no reason to doubt it. The King, as I remember, was said to be either the great Mongkut, or his even greater son, Chulalongkorn. Its historical accuracy, however, is beside the point. Like a fable of Aesop, or a parable of Christ, the story dramatizes a common-sense, self-evident truth applicable to all human nature, not just one incident.

If the practical-minded King had invited representatives of all the worldwide sects of Buddhism - not just the Theraveda of his own country - I think he would have told them the same thing. For the various branches of Buddhism are as dissimilar as the various branches of Christianity.

Half a century ago, scholars considered Buddhism as having more adherents than any other religion in the world, with Christianity running a close second. In spite of the Communist Revolution in China, this may still have some validity.

From the point of view of many fundamentalist Buddhists, Christianity is a faith which persecutes and tortures unbelievers, conducts wars between the sects, and sacrifices one life to atone for the sins of others. While there certainly is some truth in these accusations, most relate to the past, and none have anything to do with the message of Christ.

On the contrary, many fundamentalist Christians consider Buddhism unworthy even to be called a religion as most of its adherents do not regard Buddha as God; are really atheists; and believe in annihilation of the human being. There is also some truth in these accusations, but what Buddha tried to annihilate was lust and hatred and delusion; he believed in reincarnation and had a view of the universe every bit as logical and profound as do those professing the Western idea of God.

In spite of such widely-held beliefs as those mentioned above, this is an effort to show that these two world religions, if each followed the teaching and example of its founder, would be essentially the same.

The last statement may be anathema to many of the clergy or other spokesmen espousing either one of the religions or the other. But it must be remembered that these individuals represent organizations. They are not only interested in promoting the teaching of the leader they follow. Their livelihood, their very life often depends upon protecting and promoting their organizations - bureaucracies similar to those of government or big business. The demands of furthering the unselfish, unworldly teaching of their leaders are not always the same as furthering the needs of their bureaucracies. When the two are in conflict, the bureaucracies often win. It's difficult to fight City Hall.

On the other hand, the influence of Buddha and Christ would be far less today, perhaps non-existent, without the assistance of the *Sangha*, the Order of monks and nuns that Buddha established, and the Church that Christ built through his apostles. What these still existent organizations tell us to do and what they tell us to believe are both wonderful - as long as they, trying courageously to further their organizations in a hostile world, do not veer too far away from the teaching of their founders.

III

Science can take us to the moon, but it can't help us escape from the hell we often experience on earth. It can answer millions of questions, but can never even attempt to answer the most important questions in our minds: What am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

Looking into a mirror is the logical first step to find an answer. But it is self-evident that you must look further than at your reflection. That image changes from year to year. What is the "I", the self that still exists, at least in memory, although what can be seen in the mirror is vastly different from that which could be seen in childhood? It will also be different, we know, as old age progresses, and vastly different for others to see after we die.

Is this "I" - this self, or soul, or ego, or spirit, whatever you wish to call it - just a product of the body, coming into being as the body develops and ceasing to exist when the body dies? No one can answer this question for us. How we answer it decides how we live.

No one ever knew so much about this matter as Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ.

IV

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 because the basic teaching of its founder was so familiar. As a result not only of personal experience but 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.

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. (Anyone who may disagree with the viewpoint expressed in this pamphlet should blame me, not my friend Chantho nor Wat Buddharam.)

Thomas Jefferson, who lived and died a follower of Christ, is the spiritual father of the United States of America. He still inspires not only Americans but people of all the world. Instrumental in disestablishing the Anglican Church from power in Virginia, he thought so highly of this achievement that he mentioned it specifically in the epitaph he wrote for himself: "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and father of the University of Virginia."

Still, Jefferson was a follower of Christ far more discerning and loyal than some politicians today who call themselves Christians but strive to mold America and the world in their own image - not that of Christ. They are not trying to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's, as Christ told

us to do. They are trying to assume the power of Caesar by using the Cross of Christ, as the Emperor Constantine did in battle, as a sign under which to conquer, not love, one's neighbor. In contrast to that type of Christianity, Jefferson wrote in his old age, "To love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself is the sum of religion". He not only believed in the two great commandments of Christ, he acted in accordance with them all his life.

Yet Jefferson has been criticized for reading and interpreting the Gospels of Christ in a manner not sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority. Writing more from experience than scholarship, I have never seen nor heard of the results of his efforts except that the clergy was offended, and still is, because he considered himself as qualified as they to understand the meaning of very plain and simple English.

As such a great and good person as Thomas Jefferson has been criticized for studying the Gospels with a free and rational mind, I know this effort of mine is an invitation to trouble. For I have not only studied the *Gospels* in such a manner, but also the *Dhammapada* of Buddha, and have had the temerity to compare their meanings.

Most devout fundamentalist Christians and Buddhist are among the best and kindest people on earth. If this exercise of what I consider my religious freedom should offend them, I am sorry. But I hope they will realize that my respect for the Scriptures and my intent are the same as theirs: to follow the commands of Buddha and Christ and spread the Doctrine/Gospel of love and spirituality to a materialistic world, even though it sees little value in such feelings.

We are all deeply indebted to scholars for their translations of the teaching of Buddha and Christ. I have studied three different translations of Buddha's *Dhammapada* and four of Christ's *Gospels*. With only minor differences in the various translations, the message of the two leaders seems clearly understandable to anyone with common sense. How could it be otherwise? The first disciples of these leaders, who passed the teaching down to us, were men of low estate and education - homeless beggars, fishermen, etc.

Buddha cautioned those who followed him not to accept his ideas just out of respect for him, but to decide for themselves. If Christ's reported words seem contradictory, which they do, decide for yourself what he meant. If you can read the language it is written in, who else can tell you what it means? Preachers may help, but it's yours to decide.

As each of us came into this world alone, and will leave the same way, unaccompanied by monks, nuns, priests, scientists or scholars, I suggest you study these teachings for yourself. What follows is a report of my study. I hope it can be of help to you.

V

One day not long after moving from Vietnam to Laos in 1971, I became aware of faint, distant sounds similar to those a person could hear almost every day and night in Saigon as U.S. bombers unloaded their cargo on the surrounding jungles. My wife and I lived in an old French-built three-story apartment building in Vientianne with a back veranda which overlooked the Mekong River, about a long city block away, and the grounds of a Buddhist temple, Wat That Khao, in between.

Hearing this low, booming sound every day, I finally realized it might not come from as far away as it first seemed. So I walked toward the river, in the apparent direction of the sound, and was amazed to find out that it originated on the temple grounds.

A young man in a yellow-orange robe was pounding a big drum with a stick that looked like a baseball bat with padding on the end. The drum, made from a hollowed-out section of teakwood log, was about three feet in diameter and six feet long. It was suspended by chains, horizontally, from the rafters of a little raised pavilion. Later, I learned that the tree from which it came was chosen because of the spiritual effect it had on its beholders when they selected it in the forest. The soul of the tree was believed to remain in the drum. On that day, all I knew was that the experience opened my ears and eyes to great beauty and pleasure. So I walked toward the pavilion, probably with my mouth open. In a moment, the monk stopped striking the drum, turned toward me, and said "Hello" in fairly clear English. I became friends with him and other novices and monks there and began teaching them English while they taught me the Lao language, folklore, and the precepts of the Buddha.

Except for morning and evening rush hour traffic on the road in front, few sounds could be heard on our back, third-floor veranda that could not have been heard over 2500 years ago by Siddhartha Gautama when he became the Buddha and founded the Sangha, the order of monks and nuns that built the temple and its compound below. The wind rustled the palm fronds and randomly toyed with the bells hanging down from the eaves. It was said that bells ringing in the erratic breezes frightened away evil spirits. Sometimes, the voice of a boatman far out on the river would carry across the water, and in the early morning, crowing roosters greeted the dawn. But the most peaceful sound of all was that of the drum. It drove away painful thoughts and gave a message of hope as it reverberated throughout the neighborhood, bringing joy to all and encouraging us to be kind to each fellow creature who shares our life.

Looking out over that beautiful temple compound from my veranda one day, and listening to its peaceful sounds, I suddenly realized that Jesus of Nazareth, the poor carpenter's son who became the Christ, had almost certainly seen such a place and heard such sounds. It was not just a perception of the mind that all religions are the same, devoid of mystery like two plus two is

four. This came before I carefully compared the text of the *Dhammapada* with the *Gospels*, to be listed later. This came before I had even heard of the *Dhammapada*, before a monk friend at Wat That Khao had given me my copy of it, before I had read Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's own translation and assessment of it.

My realization was an absolute certainty that the spiritual heritage of these people was the same as mine. I had shared it with them since the day I entered the Cradle Roll of the church of my mother and father. It was a comprehension with my whole being that I was not in a strange place - no matter how exotic were the sights and sounds around me. I was completely, inextricably, forever, a part of these surroundings.

Not only that, but I knew, as surely as I knew where I was, that I had been here before. The psychological phenomenon of deja-vu is a pale and fleeting comparison to what I experienced. For the first time in my life, I began to believe that reincarnation is not just a theory but a fact. I had lived here before, in a previous lifetime.

As a background to this subjective feeling was an observable fact. Although I had tried diligently to learn Spanish in Texas, Hindi in India and Vietnamese in Saigon, I had never gotten to first base with any of them. But after a few months in Laos I was pleasantly surprised to find out that, with little effort, I could not only communicate in the Lao language but think in it. My gift was small, compared to the linguistic talents of other foreigners, but it still seems a miracle to me.

How better can one explain such individual skills or handicaps that we all have than by postulating experience in a prior life? Is there any more logical explanation than this for any other good or bad thing that happens to us beyond our control? And most things are beyond our control. We do not give ourselves a fear of heights, or burial alive, nor by our will fall in love at first sight, or give ourselves musical ability or high or low intelligence. All we have freedom to do is to decide how to react to either the good or bad fortune that befalls us.

I could not have been so much at home in that faraway land had I not first felt a closeness with the spirit of Christ. His presence, to me, was the same as that which prevailed in the next door temple life. The dogmas and rituals, the symbols and clothing which unite flocks of followers of one religion and separate them from followers of another no longer existed for me. All that mattered was an other-worldly peace presiding over a deep and compassionate concern for the welfare of all living creatures.

The emotional conviction of this unity of the message of Buddha and Christ came before I had consciously thought about most of the facts which show how reasonable it is. Here are some of those facts:

One of the greatest conquerors of history, the Indian Emperor Asoka, renounced his bloodthirsty ways when he saw the truth of Buddha's teaching. He erected stone monuments and markers along the roads of his empire, admonishing his subjects to be kind to all creatures. Those monuments can still be seen in India today, and are ignored just as often as are the Ten Commandments in the West. About 200 years before Christ, Asoka sent out Buddhist missionaries to all the known world. His monks established missions not only in China and other parts of the Far East, but in Persia, Alexandria, and other places near Jerusalem.

The Scripture is silent about where Jesus was between the age of twelve (when he ran away to be found by his parents discussing theology in the temple) and the beginning of his ministry about the age of thirty. A youth interested in religious matters would surely have travelled, hundreds of miles if necessary, to pursue exciting ideas about love for all living things being preached by Buddhist monks.

There is a belief in India, among both Hindus and Muslims, based not only upon tradition but upon a footnote in the Koran that Jesus, as a young man, went there with other Buddhist pilgrims from the Palestine area. Basically, what Christ taught is to focus the mind on the eternal while showing love for flesh and blood creatures in this world - which is exactly what Buddha preached 500 years before. The fact that Buddhism is not concerned with Western ideas of God is of no more significance than the fact that Western religious and political leaders have throughout history been devoutly killing each other because they can't agree upon what the word "God" means.

It seems highly probable that, during the most impressionable years of his life, Christ studied Buddhism, perhaps living in a monastery either as a novice or a monk. How else can one explain his celibate ideas about sex and his dependence on others to provide him food and shelter? It can be no accident that the basic teaching of Buddha and Christ, both by word and by example, was love for all regardless of religion, race, sex, or any other factor. And love for all life, such as the sparrow on the housetop on which God has his eye.

The Way of Christianity leads to Heaven. The Way of Buddhism leads to Nirvana. Practical laymen, both Buddhist and Christian, see no difference, and would be happy to go, no matter what the place is called.

VI

This study leads to a conclusion far removed from the New Age viewpoint of the "human potential" movement in which Americans go to Asia to search for their spiritual dimension or seek wisdom under the guidance of Eastern gurus who come here and, in collaboration with American psychological "feel good" gurus, amass fortunes setting up hand-holding, chanting, breathing and hot tub seminars, and publishing books and tape recordings which promise

self-fulfillment salvation. That movement, by its emphasis on the lone individual is basically selfish. While both Buddha and Christ taught us to seek Enlightenment, or the Kingdom of Heaven, within ourselves, they emphasized that this could not be done without showing as much deep concern for others as we do for ourselves.

Such practices, however, are little different from those of any member of any religious activity who seeks salvation for himself alone. It is far easier to say a prayer instead of physically caring for the sick, or to recite a mantra or a creed instead of feeding the hungry.

Both Buddha and Christ specify that the focus of the mind must be on the eternal, not the temporal. At the same time, they command us not to withdraw from this world just to enjoy our meditation, but to do all we can to ease some of the pain being suffered by our fellow creatures around us. These are the two basic teachings of each, which Christ summarized in his Great Commandments of love for God and our fellow man.

Some Buddhists say that when a person has controlled his mind to such an extent as to reach the *unconditioned*, or *Nibbana*, he suddenly realizes there is neither this world nor another world - in the past or future. He has then reached *Ultimate Reality*, or *Enlightenment*, according to both the Theraveda and Zen Schools. Hindu mystics call this same experience *samadhi* or *moksa*, or the union of the *Atman* (the individual soul) with the *Brahman* (the universal soul). Muslim and Christian mystics call it union with God.

This Ultimate Reality permits one to see Absolute Truth not to be confused with the relative truth which is all most of us see.

We great unwashed multitudes, who have never seen the Light and sometimes try to touch the garments of those who have, are according to the Chinese sage, Chuang-Tze, like frogs living in a well who cannot even imagine what the ocean may be.

As one with a frog-like view, although I have never seen the ocean of Absolute Truth, I have been told about it by witnesses whom I consider reliable. So I believe this ocean of mystic truth exists, call it what you will. We all have a hope of experiencing it, even if we have to wait until after death.

The concept of Absolute Truth can perhaps be better understood when compared to a tree rather than an ocean. When Shakespeare saw a tree in winter, he reacted by calling its branches, stripped of leaves, "bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang." This is the despondent reaction to the sorrows of life of most of us, perceived by "the greatest psychologist who ever lived", as the bard has been called. But the sight of such a tree caused the conversion at the age of 16 of the great French mystic, Brother Lawrence. It inspired him to reflect that new leaves would appear soon, then the flowers, and later the fruit. The thought made him so awe-struck by the great power that had given that tree life that

he ever after "practiced the presence of God," and still inspires millions of us who seek Salvation.

Materialists believe that, when the body disintegrates at death, this is the end of the person. Mystics such as Brother Lawrence believe that everything, whether a tree or a person, has a deeper reality than what can be seen. What that deeper reality is, and what it means, is what all mystics - of all religions, or none - say we should control our minds to contemplate.

Most of humanity has not experienced a profound mystical perception, and too much emphasis has been given this part of the teaching of the Buddha and Christ. They undoubtedly had phenomenal psychic abilities, and many of their reported miracles, usually called "psychic powers of mind control" by Buddhists, merely demonstrate what modern parapsychologists call Extra Sensory Perception (ESP) - clairvoyance, pre-cognition, mental telepathy, hypnosis, etc. Science has proved beyond doubt that these phenomena exist. And Science, it must be noted, is respected nowadays even more than the Vatican as spokesperson for Supreme Truth on Earth. Giving miracles scientific terminology, however, makes them no more understandable. Long before scientists nudged clergymen out from the throne of power, common ungifted folk were so amazed at ESP powers that they considered Buddha and Christ as God. It seems logical to conclude that in both cases these people were wrong - that is, if one believes a single power is in charge of the universe, as the great majority of mankind so conceives.

We citizens of our materialistic world-wide civilization today may consider ourselves superior to our ancestors who believed in miracles. But are we? Long ago they were amazed at the marvels they saw, but at the same time they absorbed some of the message of compassion for all beings preached by Buddha and Christ. And passed it down to us!

Most of us, on the other hand, have abandoned compassion for profits in the global market economy.

We do not believe in the miracles performed long ago to relieve the suffering of flesh and blood creatures. Instead, we believe in the sanctity of the free market economy and are amazed to see Superman fly through the air like an angel and Dinosaurs that have been brought back to life to scare the wits out of everybody on earth. And even better yet is the miracle of the profits such marvels bring.

Buddha and Christ gave perhaps greater emphasis to Compassion than they did to mysticism. It is certain that they did not teach one without the other. Some of their followers seem to follow one teaching to the exclusion of the other, almost as if they were of two separate religions.

In this respect, there is an old Sufi Muslim thought which can be expressed like this:

Each faith is but a separate means
By which the truth is found;
Some comprehend the means as the end,
And thus the truth confound.

That is certainly a wise observation. But even wiser is the Sufi story of Abou Ben Adam. Perhaps, like Abou, the names of us non-mystics are not inscribed among those who love the Lord. But our names may be added later if we ask, as Abou Ben Adam asked the angel, that our names at least be inscribed among those who love our fellowmen.

VII

Christians consider as Holy Writ not only the Four Gospels but the entire New and Old Testaments of the *Bible* - a vast literature in which a person can find almost anything he wants to, much of which has nothing to do with the teaching of Christ. Similarly, Buddhists consider as Holy Writ not only the *Dhammapada* but the entire *Tripitaka*, of which it is only one of 31 books. Also there is other Buddhist literature which, like that of the *Bible*, is so vast that it can conceal the down-to-earth simplicity of Buddha's teaching in the *Dhammapada*. So it must be emphasized that this is a study not of Buddhism and Christianity but of the teaching of their Founders.

When placed in juxtaposition, as is done in the following tables, the deeds and words of Buddha and Christ tend to emphasize each other and become more meaningful and inspiring. As millions upon millions of words have been written about the great religious leaders, for this comparison I have relied chiefly on their own words - upon what the majority of their followers consider the most reliable record of the teaching of each - the Dhammapada of Buddha and the four Gospels of the Bible's New Testament. What is most interesting is the simplicity of their identical basic message. There are only 423 verses in the Dhammapada and 678 in the Gospel of Mark. (The other three Gospels are variations of Mark). In the lists below, (Dh.) is the abbreviation for Dhammapada. For the four Gospels, the abbreviations are Matthew (Mt.), Mark (Mk.), Luke (Lk.) and John (Jn).

A cursory glance will show that the ideas on both sides of the page are essentially the same, just expressed in different ways. They are listed not only to be glanced at as a curiosity, but to be studied and meditated on. For over two millenniums these ideas have inspired most of the human race.

The similarities listed are just some of the ones I have noticed. Others can easily be found by other students. While differences exist, they seem to me so few and unimportant that they can, for all practical purposes, be ignored by rational persons.

The ideas are listed under 22 different categories, from "Action is the Test of Truth" to "Democracy in Religion". They are not intended as the final word on this matter but as an invitation and starting point for your further study and meditation.

For most of my life, I was mentally tormented, as millions of others are, by the conflicting claims of fundamentalists of many religions. So I went back towards the source of the Christian religion of my ancestors, primarily the Gospels, and have been rewarded by finding it the same as the source of Buddhism, primarily the Dhammapada.

The closer one fights his way to the source, the more at peace the mind becomes.

The brevity of the books make comparison of the contents not only more easily comprehensible, but more reliable. A reader can easily check the contents of the *Dhammapada* against the Gospels to verify that the verses chosen are representative of the whole. This would be impossible were there thousands upon thousands of verses, on thousands upon thousands of subjects, as in the entire *Bible* and the entire *Tripitaka*.

Under each subject heading, the words and deeds of Buddha are on the left, those of Christ on the right. Though separated by 500 years, their basic teaching links them as inseparably as the philosophy of Plato links him to Socrates, his teacher, as it seems to me Buddha was the religious teacher of Christ. When placed in juxtaposition, as is done in the following tables, their deeds and words tend to emphasize each other and become more meaningful and inspiring.

There are many loyal and diligent Buddhists and Christians today, but there are hundreds of millions of others whose minds and hearts have been captured by the mass media of the materialistic global market economy and its emphasis on love of money, pride, power, and sex. Perhaps this study can remind them of other values which gave a meaning to life to our ancestors.

1. ACTION IS THE TEST OF TRUTH

BUDDHA

"Though much he recites the sacred Texts but acts not accordingly, that heedless man is like a cowherd who counts other's kine; he has no share in the blessings of the Holy Life."

Dh. 19

"Not by matted hair, nor by family, nor by birth does one become a **Brahmana*. But in whom exist both truth and Righteousness."

Dh. 393

*Saint

"Neither going about naked, nor with matted locks, nor with dust on one's body, neither fasting, nor sleeping on the ground, nor besmearing oneself with ashes or dirt,nor squatting on the heels can purify a mortal who has not overcome doubts."

Dh. 141

"The man who gathers flowers (of sensual pleasures) whose mind is distracted, death carries him off as a great flood the sleeping village."

Dh. 47

"By effort, earnestness, discipline, and self-control, let the wise man make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm."

Dh. 25

"Whosoever was negligent before, but afterwards practices vigilance, such a one illumines this world like the moon emerging from a cloud."

Dh.172

"Whosoever, not freed from stain, void of self-control and truth,should don the yellow

CHRIST

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. . . .A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock."

Mt. 7:16-24

"And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Mt. 7:26-27

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son go work in my vineyard. . .He answered and said, I will not; but afterward repented, and went. . .And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered, and said, I go, sir; and went not. . . Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"

Mt. 21-28-31

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's

robe, is not worthy of it."
Dh. 9

"He should not regard the faults of others, things done and left undone by others, but his own deeds done and undone."
Dh. 50

"Even though he be gaily decked, if yet a man cultivates tranquility of mind, is calm, subdued, destined for the final release and of pure conduct, laying aside the cudgel towards all living beings, he is a *Brahmin, a recluse, a monk."
Dh. 142

*Saint

"Not by a shaven head does an undisciplined man, who utters lies, become a monk. How will one be a monk who is full of desire and greed?"
Dh. 264

"Many, on whose neck is the yellow robe, are ill-natured, and uncontrolled; they on account of their evil deeds, are born in a woeful state."
Dh. 307

"As a flower that is lovely, beautiful, and scent-laden, even so fruitful is the well-spoken word of one who does it."
Dh. 52

2. *BELIEF IN GOD*

BUDDHA

Most Buddhists, including the oldest branch, the Theravedas, do not and never have considered that Buddha is God in the sense that

eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"
Lk. 6:41

"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. . .When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received the seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
Mt. 13:18-23

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."
Mt. 5:20

CHRIST

With the help of some inspiring passages in such books as the Psalms, Job and Isaiah, Jesus radically changed the idea of God he inherited, with the Old

fundamentalist Christians consider their religious leader God. It is self-evident, however, that non-fundamentalist followers of both leaders revere the person and consider that his message was and is divine.

Often accused of being an atheist by Westerners because he never mentioned their idea of God, Buddha urged others to seek Enlightenment, as he had done. This was tantamount to the Hindu *samadhi* where a person (the soul, the *Atman*) finds union with the Divine (the *Brahman*, a term meaning God and all his Creation.)

"Enlightenment" and "*samadhi*", according to students of mysticism, are both the same as the "union with God" of Muslim and Christian mystics.

Testament, from a basically fierce, vengeful, tribal deity to that of a loving Father of all. His idea of God inspired a disciple to ask: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen:"
I John 4:20
(a separate book from the Gospel of John)

"I and my Father are one."
Jn. 10:30

"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."
Jn. 14:20

When addressed as "Good Master", ". . .Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God."
Mk. 10:18

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."
Jn. 7:16

NOTE: It must be remembered that Buddha's ideas grew from Hinduism as Christ's did from the Old Testament of the *Bible*, and that both revered and preserved what they considered the best of their inheritance.

Though deeply aware of the evil and folly of men, Buddha and Christ basically viewed life as rational and just. Christ conceived of the power behind the phenomena of existence to be a loving and Heavenly Father.
Buddha viewed that power, that Architect, as the House Builder of the Law of Karma or the Wheel of Dharma, which decrees that each creature be rewarded, or punished, in each succeeding life according to its actions in past ones.

In addition to the sayings of Christ quoted above, the following also testify that he did not consider himself the only son of God as "Born Again" Christians say, quoting John 3:16, but that anyone could become a son (a spiritual child) of God: Jn. 5:30, Jn. 5:24, Jn. 12:44, Lk. 18:19, Jn. 7:28, Mt. 19:17, Jn 1:12, Jn. 8:42, Mt.

12:32, all of which prove he did not consider himself God (his guidelines for becoming a child of God were substantially identical with Buddha's for the attainment of Enlightenment).

The Koran (s. III 55 Section 6) promises God will make those who follow Christ superior to those who reject faith. A footnote below it says Muslims are the true Christians, for they follow, or should do so, the true teachings of Christ "which did not include the blasphemy that he was God or the son of God in the literal sense".

3. ***COMMANDMENTS:***

BUDDHA

Yah kha - Do not kill
Yah khi lak - Do not steal (property)
Yah khi dtua - Do not lie
Yah mao lao - Do not drink (or use drugs) to excess
Yah ow khong khon eun - Do not take what belongs to another (such as a wife, husband or child)

CHRIST

". . .Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. . .And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. . ."
Mk. 12:30-31

Above are the five Buddhist Commandments I learned in the Lao Language from Buddhist friends who tried to practice them. The first three of these Commandments are identical to three of the last five of the *Bible's* Ten Commandments. The last one above includes the Biblical injunction against adultery but broadens it to include children also.

Christ's second Great Commandment includes all the five Buddhist ones above, plus other situations also, such as in William Blake's comment, "A truth that's told with bad intent beats any lie you can invent".

The first of the Great Commandments above reflects Christ's change in the concept of God as expressed in the first five of the Old Testament Commandments. He conceived of God as a loving Father, not as a jealous, vengeful being concerned with graven images or worship on a particular day (the sabbath). He criticized ritualism, saying ". . .The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."
Mk. 2:27

It has been observed that in the second Great Commandment above, one must love one's self before loving one's neighbor.

"For the sake of others' welfare however great, let not one neglect one's own welfare, let one be intent on one's goal".
Dh. 166

4. ***EVIL OVERCOME BY A GOOD DEED:***

BUDDHA

"Whoever, by a good deed, covers the evil done, such a one illumines this world like the moon freed from clouds."
Dh. 173

CHRIST

Two criminals were crucified, one on either side of Christ. One of them said, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43

5. ***FEW GO TO HEAVEN***

BUDDHA

"Blind is the world; few are those who clearly see. Like birds escaping from a net, few are they that go to heaven."
Dh. 174

CHRIST

". . .wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
Mt. 7:13-14

6. *HOMELESS ONES*

NOTE: For the priceless examples and lessons they provided humanity, the two leaders asked nothing in return except food, clothing and shelter. Buddhist monks and some groups of Christians still live in this manner.

BUDDHA

"He who in this world, giving up sensual pleasures, would renounce worldly life and become a homeless one; he who has destroyed cravings and Becoming - him I call *Brahmana**."

Dh. 415

*Saint

"He who is not intimate with either householders or homeless ones, he who wanders without an abode, he who is without desires, him I call a *Brahmana*."

Dh. 404

"He who sits alone, he who rests alone, he who walks alone, he who is strenuous, he who subdues self alone, will seek delight in the forest depths."

Dh. 305

CHRIST

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. . .Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . .But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Mt. 6:28,31,33

"And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

Mt. 8:20

7. *LOVE FOR ALL CREATURES*

NOTE: Love for all creatures is the heart of the teaching of both Buddha and Christ. Not just by words of wisdom did they preach it. They lived it. It was the central act of all we know about them. Each sacrificed his life for it. In the following comparison, this central act is listed first, as it gives a profound and compelling significance to the verses that follow. In the Scriptures, the first verses to be quoted are those advocating return of good for evil. For, of all our fellow creatures, the most difficult to love are they that do us harm. This is the point which separates those who earnestly desire Enlightenment/Kingdom of Heaven from others who prefer revenge and pride and other earthly pleasures.

BUDDHA

Born a Prince, heir to the throne of a prosperous kingdom just south of the great Himalayas, Siddhartha Gautama was provided with every delight this world can offer, yet, as he matured, he realized that this world of pleasure is just a mirage that covers a cruel truth: No matter how happy his subjects seemed to be, each of them grew old, got sick, and died. He felt great compassion for them, and realized that was his fate also, no matter how privileged he was at the moment. He resolved to do everything he could to relieve the great pain he saw beneath the mirage of pleasure. He gave up his life as a Prince and fled to become a homeless seeker after truth in the forest.

"He who, without anger, endures reproach, flogging and punishments, whose power and the potent army is patience, him I call a *Brahmana*."

Dh. 399

"He who is friendly among the hostile, he who is peaceful among the violent, he who is unattached among the attached, him I call a *Brahmana*."

Dh. 406

(Buddhism has been called the Protestant version of Vedantic Hinduism. The words "*Brahmana*" and "*Brahmin*", as used by Buddha, are terms for a saint, not to be confused with a member of the top of the four castes in the Hindu caste system).

CHRIST

Born the son of an humble carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth was so fascinated with the meaning of life around him that at the age of 12 he could discuss theology with the learned priests at the temple. The Scriptures are silent about his activities from his twelfth year until he began his ministry about 30 years of age. No matter what the theologians may say (and remember, some of their predecessors, the Scribes and Pharisees, were the enemies of Jesus) common sense tells us he was influenced by Buddha. Rather than go along with the power politics of his day (the same as it is now), he chose to be crucified rather than deny the truth as he saw it.

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

Mt. 5:44

"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

Mt. 5:46

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Mt. 6:14

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Mt. 5:39

"Ah: happily do we live benevolent among the hateful! Admist hateful men we dwell unhating."
Dh. 197

"Overcome anger by loving-kindness, evil by good; overcome the stingy by generosity, and liars by truth." Dh. 223

"As an elephant in battle withstands the arrows shot from a bow, even so shall I endure abuse. . ."
Dh. 320

"They lead the trained horses or elephants to crowds. The king mounts the trained animal. Best among men are the trained who endure abuse."
Dh. 321

"Unto a *Bramana*, that (nonretaliation) is of no small advantage. When the mind is weaned from things dear, whenever the intent to harm ceases, then and then only sorrow subsides."
Dh. 390

"He who has laid aside the cudgel towards beings - whether feeble or strong - he who neither kills nor causes to kill, him I call a *Brahmana*."
Dh. 405

"All tremble before the rod; all fear death. Comparing others with oneself one should not slay, nor cause to slay."
Dh. 129

"Whosoever with a rod molests not creatures desirous of happiness, himself seeking happiness, shall obtain happiness hereafter."
Dh. 132

"Then came Peter to him and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Seven times?
Mt. 18:21

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."
Mt. 18:22

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
Lk. 6:31

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?"
Lk. 12:6

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."
Mt. 10:29

That Christ's love was not restricted to his fellow humans was perhaps most dramatically demonstrated by one of his most sincere and well-known disciples, St. Francis of Assisi, who called the wolf his brother and is said to have preached to the birds, some of which landed on his shoulders. The saint was undoubtedly inspired by Mark's Gospel: "and he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."
Mk. 16:15

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."
Mt. 5:7

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."
Mt. 5:9

"He who inflicts punishment on those who are harmless and offends those who are unoffending, he speedily comes to one of those ten states."*
Dh. 137

* Pain, disaster, etc.

"Though gaily bedecked, if he should live in peace, (with passions) subdued, (and senses) controlled, . . . laying aside the rod (in his relations) towards all living beings, he is a *Brahmana*, a recluse, a monk."
Dh. 142

"He is not therefore an *Ariya* (Noble) in that he harms living beings; through his harmlessness towards all living beings is he called an *Ariya*."
Dh. 270

"By inflicting pain on others, he who wishes his own happiness is not released from hatred, being himself entangled in the tangles of hatred."
Dh. 291

"He abused me; he beat me; he defeated me, he robbed me," the hatred of those who cherish such thoughts is not appeased. . . . Hatreds never cease by hatreds in this world. By love alone they cease. This is an eternal law."
Dh. 3 & 5

Buddha compared mindless intolerance of other religions to a man who looks up and spits at heaven; the spittle does not soil the heaven, but comes back and defiles his own person.

Because of his love for all creatures, Buddha earned the title by which he is best known, The Compassionate One."

After commenting that a person should love one's neighbor as oneself, a lawyer asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Christ replied, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" Lk. 10:30-36

Because of his love for all, particularly his self-sacrifice for the poor and helpless, Christ is known as "The Lamb".

In Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan, above, love is not restricted by ethnic or religious boundaries. This is the identical viewpoint of Buddha and distinguishes them from many other religious leaders.

8. *THE MIDDLE WAY*

BUDDHA

In his search for Enlightenment, Prince Siddhartha Gautama abandoned his wife and family and the riches of the kingdom he was to inherit from his father, the King. He fled into the forest and tortured himself by living on a few grains of rice a day, plucking out his hair and beard, sleeping on thorns and among decomposing human corpses which had been exposed to be eaten by birds and beasts. As clothing, he wore some of the cloth the bodies had been wrapped in. The saffron robes of monks today emulate Buddha's clothing and are reminders of how doomed is the body, how transitory is life. Similar burial customs still survive in the Towers of Silence in Bombay where bodies are exposed to be eaten by carrion birds. Gradually, Buddha began to realize that he had learned nothing from all the punishments he had inflicted on himself. Then, one day, perhaps being unusually hungry, as Will Durant, the great historian, observed in a kindly, timeless jest, he decided on The Middle Way, which included physical comfort and good food.

Buddha's Middle Way starts with the Four Noble Truths: (1) all who live must suffer old age, sickness and death; (2) the cause of this suffering is the craving for existence; (3) to stop the suffering, one must stop the craving; and (4) the way to stop the craving is the eight-fold path to Enlightenment, which is: right knowledge, intention to resist evil, refraining from injuring others, respecting life, having a livelihood that doesn't injure others; keeping one's mind free of evil, controlling thoughts and feelings, and concentrating on things eternal.

The *Dhammapada*, explains this eight-fold path in more detail, as do the Five Buddhist Commandments.

Before he chose the Middle Way, Buddha practiced austerities (noted above), which was a common religious practice in the civilization he grew up in.

"Neither going about naked, nor with matted locks, nor with dust on one's body, neither fasting, nor sleeping on the ground, nor besmearing oneself with ashes and dirt, nor squatting on the heels, can purify a mortal who has not overcome doubts."

Dh. 141 1/

CHRIST

Jesus of Nazareth at first practiced austerities similar to Buddha and John the Baptist, his forerunner. "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered." (Lk. 4:1-2) One can conjecture that perhaps he was as hungry as Will Durant suggested Buddha was. At any rate, we do know that he gave up, as Buddha had done earlier, his fasting and praying and searching for truth in the wilderness.

He began living a Middle Way, not a life of gluttony and drunkenness, in spite of what his detractors said. He defended himself in these words: "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children." (Lk. 7:33-35) To enjoy one's meal does not make one gluttonous, nor drinking wine in moderation a winebibber. Buddhist laymen interpret Buddha's commandment against drinking in this manner, although monks abstain altogether, as do many devout Christians.

Some parts of the *Bible's* Old Testament books inspire feelings of awe and reverence. Other parts emphasize the need for blood sacrifice - usually animals, but sometimes people such as Isaac, Abraham's son (who escaped death at the last minute because the Lord God provided a ram to be killed instead).

Born into such a tradition, Jesus was deeply influenced by it. He had a premonition of his own death, but hoped he would be spared at the last minute, as Isaac had been.

The night of his arrest, which led to his crucifixion, Jesus went into the garden of Gethsemane: "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Mt. 26:38-39

So he took the Middle Way - willing to die for what he believed, but not welcoming suffering as did many of his followers in later years. Roman officials accused all the Christian martyrs being executed so dramatically in the Colosseum of seeking only notoriety.

2/

NOTE 1: These quotations from the Dhammapada show that Buddha was well aware of the practice of austerities (which he had once done himself before realizing how useless it was). Many "Holy Men", as they are still called in India, try to gain notoriety perhaps as ardently, or more so, than spiritual truth. Between self-tortures, such men still wander the dusty roads of India, naked as St. Francis often was.

NOTE 2: Before being condemned, all that many Christians had been required to do was to pledge allegiance to the government of Rome, consisting principally of its Emperor and its other gods. The Roman officials were probably correct about some of them who could have followed Christ's example of considering his kingdom not of this world, and that one should render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. All

through history, notoriety has appealed to many as preferable to dying unknown. Even the great Saint Francis of Assisi started his religious career apparently seeking notoriety as well as salvation, according to one of his realistic admirers, Biographer Morris Bishop.

In a similar modern situation, Christians who attend church are required to recite the Creed, (which is not the teaching of Christ). One who was taught in childhood can recite it, as a wiser adult, to do honor to the church of his ancestors while at the same time unable to believe that part of it which contradicts the teaching of Christ. The Nicene Creed is not so much a religious document as an edict produced by command of Emperor Constantine for political purposes. And anyone is grievously wrong to believe literally that part of the Apostle's Creed which states Jesus "died and descended into hell"; Jesus himself said to the thief who was dying with him on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Lk. 23:43). Also, that part of the Creed which claims Jesus is the "only" son of God, though based on some scriptural passages is at variance with others such as St. Mark 1:1 and St. John 1:12.

There is so much suffering in the world that it seems irrational for people to add to it, even for religious or notoriety purposes. Wouldn't it be more compassionate to devote one's time to relieving the pain of others rather than inflicting it on oneself?

9. *MONEY*

BUDDHA

"Of a truth, the misers do not go to heaven; fools do not praise liberality. The wise man, however, rejoices in giving, and thereby he becomes happy hereafter."
Dh. 177

"Delightful are the forests where worldlings find no pleasure. There the passionless will find delight, for they seek no sensual pleasures."
Dh. 99

"Riches ruin the foolish, but not those in quest of the Beyond. Through craving for riches, the witless man ruins himself, as (if he were ruining) others.
Dh. 355

CHRIST

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: . . .But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: . . .For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
Mt. 6:19-21

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."
Mk. 10:25

". . .the love of money is the root of all evil. . ."
I Timothy 6:10

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?. . ."
Mt. 16:26

10. *NON-ATTACHMENT*

NOTE: Buddha said that there is no fire like lust, no grip like hate, no net like delusion, no river like craving (Dh. 251). As both he and Christ had warm, close friends and showed compassion to all, what is meant by their quotations below would appear to mean not an end to love but an end to the love of a physical mother, or father, or child, or friend. Perhaps it means an emotion similar to what is felt by a mass of people on New Year's Eve when singing "Auld Lang Syne"; each person seems to forget the individual self and become one with all those singing.

BUDDHA

"Folk entwined in craving are terrified like the bound hare. Held fast by fetters and bonds they come to sorrow again and again."
Dh. 342

"Hence hold nothing dear, for separation from the beloved is painful; Bonds do not exist for those by whom naught is loved or not loved."
Dh. 211

"From affection springs grief. from affection springs fear; For him who is wholly free from affection there is no grief, much less fear."
Dh. 213

CHRIST

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
Mt. 10:37

"And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.:
Mt. 10:38

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."
Mt. 10:39

11. *PRIDE AND POWER*

NOTE: The craving for pride and power and the lust for money and sex rule our world today as they have throughout all history. An individual has little opportunity to change history, but can change his own views and actions.

BUDDHA

Buddha found a monk with dysentery, lying in filth. He washed the sick man and told the other monks that whoever would nurse him should nurse the sick. (In recent times in Laos, and presumably other countries, Buddhist wats, or temples, care for those who are physically and mentally sick.)

CHRIST

"He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.
Jn. 13:4, 5

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."
Mt. 23:11

12. *REINCARNATION*

BUDDHA

In historic times, the majority of mankind has believed in the theory of reincarnation which, in essence, is a spiritual equivalent of the more recent scientific theory of the origin of the species. In the older and more important theory, which Buddha adapted from Hinduism, development of an individual does not stop with the species. What a person does with the life he now has raises or lowers his status in the next life.

The person who became Buddha said he lived many lives before he was born for the last time as Prince Siddhartha Gautama and found Enlightenment.

"Be alert! Be not heedless! Lead a righteous life. The righteous live happily both in this world and in the next."
Dh. 168

"There is no evil that cannot be done by a lying person, who has transgressed one precept (truthfulness), and who holds in scorn the world beyond."
Dh. 176

CHRIST

Reincarnation is rarely mentioned in Christian tradition. Eternal salvation or damnation, as well as one can judge from listening to sermons, is based on behavior only in this one short life. But what could one human being - even Hitler - do in one short life to deserve eternal torture? Wouldn't being reborn enough times to suffer what each of his victims did be punishment enough?

The belief in reincarnation is far more merciful and just, and is thus more consistent with the preponderance of the teaching of Christ. It is reassuring to hear his view on the matter, quoted below, which opens the possibility that, no matter what other Scripture says, sinners do get another chance, as in Buddhism.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

"Likewise, his good deeds will receive the well-doer who has gone from this world to the next, as kinsmen will receive a dear one on his return."
Dh. 220

"Here he grieves, hereafter he grieves, in both worlds the evildoer grieves. He grieves and is afflicted, perceiving the impurity of his own deeds."
Dh. 15

"Here he rejoices, hereafter he rejoices, in both worlds the good-doer rejoices. . ."
Dh. 16

"Here he laments, hereafter he laments, in both worlds the evildoer laments. 'Evil have I done', thus he laments. Still more he laments, having gone to states of woe."
Dh. 17

"Long is the night to the wakeful; long is the league to the weary; long is the circle of rebirths to fools that know not the sublime Truth."
Dh. 60

In spite of a better life next time for the good person, Buddha encouraged the effort to escape from the pain of this world altogether and find a better existence in Enlightenment.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them.

Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."
Mt. 17:10-13

(This is not the only, but is the major reference to reincarnation. Elias is another name for the Prophet Elijah, who had lived many years before. John the Baptist, a prophet who was a contemporary of Jesus, had recently been beheaded.)

Christ also had a purpose of finding a better life than that of this sad world. He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."
Jn. 14:2

13. *SELF-CRITICISM*

BUDDHA

"What should be done is left undone, what should not be done is done; the corruptions of those who are puffed up and heedless increase."
Dh. 292

CHRIST

"Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy way like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws.

"Applying oneself to that which should be avoided, not applying oneself to that which should be pursued, and giving up the quest, one who goes after pleasure envies them who exert themselves."

Dh. 209

We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us."

General Confession
Used By Many Christians

"Easily seen are other's faults. But hard indeed to see are one's own; like chaff, one winnows other's faults. But one's own one hides, like a crafty fowler conceals himself by camouflage. . As a flower is lovely but scentless, even so fruitless is the well-spoken word of one who does it not."

Dh. 252 & 51

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? . . Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine eye?"

Mt. 7:3-4

14. *SEX*

NOTE: Obsession with sex and a lust to enjoy it have created a population explosion that threatens the existence of civilization.

BUDDHA

Prince Siddhartha Gautama left his wife and family to seek Enlightenment and lived celibate ever after, as Buddhist monks and nuns still do.

"It is not a strong bond, say the wise, that is made of iron, wood, or hemp. Far greater an attachment is that longing for jewels and ornaments, children and wives."

Dh. 345

"The man who gathers flowers (of sensual pleasures), Whose mind is distracted, and who is insatiate in desires, the Destroyer brings under his sway."

Dh. 48

CHRIST

Jesus never married, and said: ". . .there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. . ."

Mt. 19:12

Catholic priests and nuns continue the celibate tradition.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Mt. 5:28

"For as long as the slightest brushwood of passion of man towards woman is not cut down, so long is his mind in bondage, like the milch calf unto its mother cow."

Dh. 284

Accused of being a "wife deserter" by modern Western women, Buddha knew his wife and son would be well taken care of by his father, the king. Tradition says his wife and son later became his disciples. What greater gift could he have given them than hope for the eternal?

"But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage."

Lk. 20:35

15. *SPREAD THE GOSPEL*

BUDDHA

Buddha told his disciples: Go and wander for the good of men out of compassion for the world. No two go to the same way. Preach the doctrine.

CHRIST

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Mk. 16:15

16. *TAKE NO DELIGHT IN THE HOMAGE OF MEN*

BUDDHA

"That which brings gain is one thing; another is the way that leads to *Nibbana*.* Thus understanding, let the monk, the disciple of the Awakened One, take no delight in the homage of men, but give himself over to solitude."

Dh. 75

**Nirvana*

"The fool desires undue reputation, precedence among monks, authority in the monasteries, and honor in the families about." Dh. 73

CHRIST

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus to himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men. . .I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be

"Let the laymen and the monks both think highly of what I have done. In every work, great or small, let them follow me; such is the aspiration of the fool; his self-seeking and pride increase." Dh. 74

17. *GOOD WORKS*

BUDDHA

"The perfume of flowers blows not against the wind, nor does the fragrance of sandalwood, Tagara, and jasmine. The fragrance of the virtuous does blow against the wind; the virtuous man pervades every direction."

Dh. 54

CHRIST

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Mt. 5:16

18. *TEMPTATION BEFORE MINISTRY*

BUDDHA

When he was seeking Enlightenment, tradition says the tempter, Mara, tried to turn Buddha from his purpose.

CHRIST

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. . ."

Lk. 4:1-2

19. *VIGILANCE*

BUDDHA

"The defilements* of those who are ever vigilant, who discipline themselves day and night, who are wholly intent on *Nibbana*, are destroyed."

Dh. 226

*Sins

CHRIST

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

Mt. 24:42

abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Lk. 18:11-14

20. *WORTHLESSNESS OF THE BODY*

BUDDHA

"Before long, alas! this body will lie upon the earth; Cast aside, devoid of consciousness, even as a useless log."

Dh. 41

"Even the gaily decked royal chariots wear out; surely this body too will go to decay; But the Teaching of the righteous goes not to decay; thus do the righteous make it known to the Good."

Dh. 151

"Behold this beautiful body, a mass of sores, a heaped-up lump, diseased, much thought of, in which nothing lasts, nothing persists."

Dh. 147

"As one would view a bubble, as one would view a mirage; even so if a person looks upon the world, the king of Death sees him not."

Dh. 170

CHRIST

In the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, verse 56, Jesus says that the world is a carcass. This Gnostic Gospel, discovered in 1945 on the bank of the Nile near Naj Hammadi in Upper Egypt, is considered by many scholars every bit as authentic as the four Gospels of the New Testament. In verse 29 of this Gnostic Gospel, Jesus says that it would be a great marvel if something as priceless as the spirit came into being because of the poor body. (This reinforces the same idea of America's greatest philosopher, William James, who said that it is not the body that creates the self, but vice versa).

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Mt. 16:25

NOTE: It should be remembered that the heart of their teaching was to relieve the suffering of flesh and blood creatures. But they showed even more love and compassion for the agonized spirits entrapped in their bodies.

21. *THE ERROR OF MILITARISM*

NOTE: One of the imponderable mysteries of history is that it seems likely Buddhism and Christianity could not have become world religions without the help of two of the great conquerors of history, Emperor Asoka of India and Emperor Constantine of Rome.

BUDDHA

"Right Livelihood" is one of the steps Buddha included in his Eight-Fold Path to

CHRIST

The Jews turned against Jesus of Nazareth because they did not want a Messiah who

Enlightenment, already mentioned under the topic, "The Middle Way". This step specifically prohibits military service by Buddhists. Born a prince, a member of the warrior Kshatriya caste, Buddha knew he would never have found Enlightenment had he continued under the military thought processes that ruled the world then, and still do.

Hundreds of millions who have been at least exposed to Buddhist tradition and have called themselves Buddhists still choose to ignore this great and vital teaching.

Buddha's stand on militarism is a radical break from the Hinduism into which he was born. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord Krishna convinces the brave but reluctant hero, Arjuna, that it is his duty as a warrior to go out and kill his cousins and the friends he loves in the battle of the Mahabharata.

Even Gandhi, before he became a mahatma, was convinced by this sacred story that he should support the British in World War I. That was before he espoused the cause of non-violence that made him one of the greatest saints of history. Gandhi's non-violence had its basis in Jainism which, long before, had perhaps also influenced Buddha, or been influenced by Buddha.

Some orthodox Hindus regard Buddhism as just a rather unimportant offshoot of their own great religion, as some Jews regard Christianity. Yet the differences are more vital than the similarities.

questioned their way of life, but one who would lead them to political freedom by casting off the yoke of Rome, as Moses had led them out from bondage under Pharaoh long before. When they accused the man who became Christ before the Roman governor, Pilate asked him, "Art thou the King of the Jews". . .Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. . ." (Jn. 18, 33 & 36).

The perversion of Christ's message by Constantine, who used the Cross to conquer his fellowmen by force, not love, as Christ had done, still persists.

Christ's true teaching on this point survives only through the wisdom and courage of a few organized groups such as the Quakers and the Mennonites. They have helped make conscientious objection to military service in time of war legal grounds for avoiding it and doing alternate service. Members of other Christian Churches usually support the military and consider using violence in defense of one's home a lesser evil than being subjected to conquest. The real world, they feel, is too dangerous a place for us to start experimenting with crackpot ideas of pacificism, even if recommended by the Prince of Peace.

Those who pray every Sunday that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven are probably aware that they are visualizing world peace. It is much easier, however, to think about peace, and pray for it, than to do anything to help bring it about. After all, isn't that the responsibility of political leaders?

22. DEMOCRACY IN RELIGION

BUDDHA

The Compassionate One attacked the Hindu caste system which provided common people no means of salvation except by paying the *Brahmins* (the priestly caste) to perform ceremonies. He said that birth could not make a *Brahmin* (in the sense of one who is more worthy than others), but good works and wisdom. He said that the lowest person in the social order, the outcasts, could find Enlightenment in the same way as one born into the *Brahmin* caste. He preached a religion for the common people. To break the chains of their religious bondage, he cast aside the priestly language of Sanskrit, as John Wycliffe and Martin Luther later bypassed the Latin unknown by most Christians, and brought Jesus' ideas to all humanity, both kings and commoners, in their own familiar daily speech. Buddha used simple words and expressions, easily understood by persons with little or no education.

By the actions described above, Buddha so angered the *Brahmins* that, after his death, they virtually exterminated his teaching in India.

CHRIST

The man who became known as the Son of God, because most people would rather worship him then try to follow his example, chose as his first followers men of little or no education or social status.

His sermons and parables, though vividly eloquent, were so clearly and simply expressed as to be easily understood, even by children. He preached a message of love for everyone, even one's bitterest enemies. As he was dying, he forgave those who killed him.

He opposed the religious leaders of his society, the scribes and Pharisees and priests, as Buddha had opposed the *Brahmins*.

These leaders became so angry that they had him crucified, trying to exterminate his teaching. They succeeded only partially, however, as had the *Brahmins*.

NOTE: Thomas Jefferson angered much of the clergy by disestablishing a state church and replacing it with freedom of religion, the most elemental and sacred freedom a human being can enjoy.

Jefferson added to this injury to the clergy the insult of interpreting Christ's Gospel as he understood it.

Many clergymen felt Jefferson had no right to read the simple English of the King James version of the Gospel and decide for himself that it meant anything other than what they told him it meant in their dogmas.

Their reaction was similar to that of a non-Christian clergyman who once wrote, "Anyone who, while reading Sacred Scriptures, is tempted to choose therefrom whatever may suit him with which to challenge the authority of the Representative of God among men, is as one dead."

How different was Buddha! He told his followers not to accept any of his teaching as true solely out of respect for him, but to examine what he said and make up their own minds as to the truth.

Both Buddha and Christ taught that to think in his heart about what he actually is is not only a person's right, but his responsibility. It is at one's own peril that he lets some other human being - whether in the guise of the state or of organized religion - tell him what the truth is.

To darkness are they doomed who devote themselves only to life in the world, and to greater darkness they who devote themselves only to meditation.

- Isha Upanishad

If someone were in rapture like St. Paul's, and there were a sick man needing help, it would be better to come out of rapture and exercise practical love by serving the one in need.

- Meister Eckhart