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Foreigners, WASP or Latino, are an important catalyst to the national Asian churches, but only a catalyst. We must model in such a way that indigenous works, indigenous leadership, and indigenous missions emerge. The aim is not missions. This is too small. Nor is it church growth. This is too limited. The aim is the discipling of the peoples—indigenous squatter discipling movements. These will not emerge from highly financed mission programmes. Missions that would catalyze these must be missions of workers who choose lifestyles of voluntary poverty among the poor. [p. 61](#)

God is calling for Latin missions with commitments to lifestyle of non-destitute and incarnational poverty (and for many, years of voluntary singleness) to catalyze indigenous movements of churches among the unreached squatters of Asia.

HOW MUCH COULD GOD DO?

God will do what we ask. As you read, would you bow and pray for:

1. Two incarnational workers in every squatter area.
2. A church in every squatter area.
3. A movement in each city among the poor.
4. Transformation of slums and squatter areas in some cities.
5. Incarnational workers from among the poor who can affect economic and social structures and political options.
6. Mission leaders to make the squatters a priority.
7. A major thrust from Latin America to the Asian squatter areas.

Abraham prayed for a city.

God heard.

Nehemiah prayed for a city.

God gave.

Jonah spoke to a city.

What are we trusting God for?

Viv Grigg is director of SERVANTS International Resources. [p. 62](#)

Concepts of Salvation in Buddhism

Tissa Weerasingha

This detailed and somewhat technical account of salvation in Buddhist thought reveals the gap between Christian and Buddhist language and concepts. While the Christian evangelist preaches salvation as rebirth the Buddhist seeks for deliverance from rebirth. The former assumes the reality of personhood in man and God, the latter rejects the self as impermanent and without identity. The idea of forgiveness of sins is meaningless to him. Most Buddhists have never heard the gospel because they have misheard it. The author of this article cautiously suggests some bridges in understanding of proclaiming the gospel to Buddhist seekers.

Buddhism embraces a wide body of religious phenomena, and the canonical texts found in four major languages—Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. There are two main schools within Buddhism, Hinayana and Mahayana. The concept of salvation or liberation in Buddhism is contained in the term *Nibbana* (skr-Nirvana).

THE MEANING OF SALVATION IN BUDDHISM

To be properly understood *nibbana* has to be seen in the context of the other major doctrines of *anicca* (impermanance), *anatta* (no-self) and *dukkha* (suffering).

According to the doctrine of *anicca*, all conditioned things or phenomenal processes that make up the sphere of existence (*samsara*) are impermanent and constantly in flux. This covers everything that is animate, inanimate, organic and inorganic. According to the doctrine of *anatta* (no-self) the empirical person is without a self or lasting identity. The concept of self is an imaginary notion that produces thoughts of desire, which is the root cause of suffering. The 'person' is an aggregate of five factors which are constantly in flux—sensation, perception, consciousness, volition and matter. These are called the five *Khandas*. The clinging together of these five factors is what causes human existence. Human existence is sorrowful. The cause of sorrow (*dukkha*) is craving or desire which leads to rebirth. *Nibbana*, which literally means extinction, is the highest goal of the Buddhist way of life and constitutes what we call salvation. Salvation is the extinction of the fires of greed, hate and delusion and consequently the deliverance from *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth. p. 63

Salvation in the Hinayana (Lesser Vessel) School

Nibbana is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism. In a real sense it defies definition. Although it is a cry for bliss, no amount of rational speculation can explain it. Narada claims that it has to be expressed intuitively.

However clearly and descriptively one may write on this profound subject, however glowing may be the terms in which one attempts to describe its utter serenity, comprehension of *Nibbana* is impossible by mere perusal of books. *Nibbana* is not something to be set down in print, nor is it a subject to be grasped by intellect alone; it is a supramundane state (*Lokottara Dhamma*) to be realised only by intuitive wisdom.

A purely intellectual comprehension of *Nibbana* is impossible because it is not a matter to be arrived at by logical reasoning. The words of the Buddha are perfectly logical, but *Nibbana*, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, is beyond the scope of logic. Nevertheless, by reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of life, the logical conclusion emerges that in contradistinction to a conditioned phenomenal existence, there must exist a sorrowless, deathless, non-conditioned state.¹

Gautama Buddha describes this deathless realm:

There is, O monks, a realm, where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind, neither the sphere of Boundless Space, nor the sphere of Boundless Consciousness, nor the sphere of Nothingness, nor the sphere of the Neither-Perception-Non-Nonperception, neither this world nor the next world, neither sun nor moon: this, O monks, I call neither a going, nor a coming, nor a standstill. Without bases is it, without continuity, without support; this is the end of suffering. Hard is it to perceive the Deathless Realm, not easy is it to perceive the truth. Yet penetrated by the Master is the craving. To nothing more the seer is attached.

¹ Ven. Narada Thera, *The Way to Nibbana* (The Buddhist Missionary Society, Malaysia), p. 63.

There is, O monks, an Unborn, Unoriginated, Unformed, Uncreated. For if there were not this Unborn, Unoriginated, Unformed, Uncreated, there would be no escape possible from the born, originated, formed, created.²

Nibbana is not nihilism. The *Dhammapada* states:

Nibbana is neither eternalism nor nihilism. In *Nibbana* nothing is eternalized nor is anything, except passions, annihilated.³ p. 64

From the Buddhist perspective *Nibbana* is not necessarily seen as a negative but a positive outcome. The *Dhammapada* further states:

Nibbana = *ni* + *vana*, lit., departure from craving. It is a supramundane state that can be attained in this life itself. It is also explained as extinction of passions but not a state of nothingness. It is an eternal blissful state of relief that results from the complete eradication of the passions. Metaphysically *Nibbana* is the extinction of suffering; psychologically it is the elimination of egoism; ethically it is the eradication of lust, hatred and ignorance.⁴

Some may ask why, then, *Nibbana* is referred to as Void. To answer this question we must refer to Buddhist anthropology. According to Buddhism there is no individual eternal identity. What is referred to as 'I', 'Me' or 'Mine' is nothing more than five factors such as volition, mental formations, consciousness, perception and matter which are in a constant state of flux. So the void is not the void of a self, since the self never had a beginning to begin (the doctrine of *anatta*). The 'voidness' is the voidness of passion and ignorance, not because it is nothingness or annihilation.

There are two spheres of *Nibbana*. Depending on whether the person who is liberated is dead or alive. The distinction is between Pre-mortal and Post-mortal *Nibbana*. In Pre-mortal *Nibbana* 'Extinction of Impurities' (*kilesaparinibbana*) is reached at the attainment of Arahathship or Holiness, which generally takes place during one's lifetime; in the *Suttas* it is called *saupadisesanibbanna*, i.e. 'Nibbana with the Groups of Existence still remaining'.⁵

In Pre-mortal *Nibbana* the factors which bind a person to re-birth are destroyed. In Post-mortal *Nibbana* the extinction of the Five-Khandhaprocess (*Khandha-parinibbana*) takes place at the death of the Arahath, called in the *Suttas* *an-upadisesanibbanna*, i.e. 'Nibbana without the Groups remaining'. In Post-mortal, the person also arises no more.

Existence itself is sorrowful and the attainment of salvation means ultimately deliverance from existence itself. The cycle of rebirth continues because it is fuelled by ignorance and desire. And in order to achieve liberation, both ignorance and desire have to be rooted out. The store of unwholesome *kamma* (*akusala*) keeps on feeding rebirth. The only way to cancel the unwholesome *kamma* is by generating action—in turns free from hatred, delusion and greed. These actions are called *kusala*. p. 65

The ignorance that is referred to is the ignorance that is related to not understanding the true nature of existence. The realization about the sorrowfulness of all existence is what brings enlightenment. When enlightenment is attained one becomes a saint (*arahat*).

² Nyanatiloka, *The Buddha's Path to Deliverance*, 4th edn. (Kandy Offset Printers, 1952, Ud. VIII, 1–3), p. 37.

³ *Dhammapada*, Pali Text and Trans. by Narada Thera (Lam An Thu Quan, Vietnam, 1963), p. 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

⁵ Nyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha* (Kandy Offset Printers, 1981), p. 23.

According to the Hinayana School, attainment of salvation is by following the Eightfold Way which enumerates the precepts and rules of conduct which will bring people closer to liberation.

Salvation in the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) School

The Mahayana School, which arose from four hundred years after the Buddha, is a modification of the original teachings. While in the Hinayana, the historical Buddha was considered a natural man, in the monastic Mahayana he is treated as a projection of the Absolute. The Mahayana is the 'Greater Vehicle' because it allows for the assistance of other powers in the quest for liberation. Therefore it also incorporates the possibility of the transference of *karmic* merit. Connected to this is the idea that most Mahayanists reach for an intermediate goal of being *bodhisattvas*—people who help others on the path to deliverance. Obtaining their own deliverance is only a secondary goal. The Mahayanist has a greater this-worldly orientation because of the desire to help others. It must be said that the ultimate goal, however, even of the Mahayanist is total extinction between *nirvana* and *samsara*. The internal diversity within the various sects of Mahayana defies any exhaustive description. I will therefore briefly comment on some of the emphases regarding *nirvana* in some of the sects.

(1) *The Pure Land Traditions*. These traditions gave *nirvana* an other worldly interpretation. Moreover, the idea of salvation by 'other power' because of faith in Amida. By being born in the Pure Land people could attain enlightenment and even come back as *bodhisattvas*.⁶

The Pure Land is a place ideally suited for Buddhist practice. In that Pure Land people could attain enlightenment and even back into the world.

(2) *East Asian Buddhism*. In the Tien-tai and Hua-yen theories we find a recurrent, distinctively East Asian interpretation of *Nirvana*. Just as the Confucians sought harmony within the social order and the Taoists harmony within the natural order, so the Tien-tai and Hua-yen Buddhists understood enlightenment in terms of harmony.⁷ p. 66

(3) *Zen Buddhism*. The Zen school de-emphasized the role of formal doctrine and religious texts and focused on the interpersonal aspects of the enlightenment experience. There was division as to whether it was a sudden or gradual experience.⁸ It stressed meditation as a means to bring realization of the Buddha nature and enlightenment.

(4) *Esoteric Tradition: Dharmakaya*. In terms of their understanding of *nirvana*, the esoteric traditions added an important dimension to their otherwise generally Mahayanistic outlook, *namely, that enlightenment should be understood as participation in the enlightenment of the Buddha-as-reality* (the *dharmakaya*).⁹

As in Hinayana the concept of *Nirvana* in Mahayana is divided into two spheres. In active *nirvana* (*apratishita*) the individual has attained sainthood, but chooses not to become extinct but rather live on as a Transcendent *bodhisattva* in order to assist others on the road to liberation. A transcendent *bodhisattva* is no longer bound by natural laws and is able to appear at will in any place at any time.

⁶ Joseph M. Kitagawa and Mark D. Cummings, eds. *Buddhism and Asian History* (Macmillan, New York, 1987, 1989). Part 5: 'Nirvana', by Thomas P. Kasulis, p. 402 ff.

⁷ Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

⁹ Wolfgang H. Schumann, *Buddhism: An Outline of its Teachings and Schools*, translated by Georg Geuerstein (Quest Book, 1974).

In static *nirvana* (*pratishita*) the liberated one loses individuality, at the moment of death. He is now in the Absolute.

The realization or awareness that one is already liberated does not arise because of ignorance and craving. Therefore in order to attain liberation these two causes have to be rooted out. The realization is that *sunyata* (emptiness) is the reality in all appearances. Even buddhahood and *nirvana* are seen as illusory ideas useful for the purpose of attaining liberation. This realization alters the attitude of the person radically.

A Comparison of the Hinayana and Mahayana views of salvation

The differences may be summarized as follows.

In relation to the concept of liberation, while Hinayana insists that it is only by one's own efforts, the Mahayana system allows for obtaining assistance from outside powers in order to achieve deliverance. In the Mahayana tradition, the *bodhisattvas* actively participate in the liberation of others.

The concept of the liberating insight in Hinayana is the 4 Noble Truths; in Mahayana it is awareness. While in Hinayana, one has to create one's own liberation, in Mahayana, one has to become p. 67 conscious of one's own absoluteness which has been there from the beginning.¹⁰

The transference of karmic merit is prevalent in Mahayana and not in Hinayana except in practice.

In Hinayana, liberation is understood as the exit from the cycle of births while in Mahayana it is a becoming conscious of one's own buddhahood and then assisting others to achieve the same.

The common ground and core of meaning in relation to *nirvana* may be summarized as follows.

The final goal is extinction.

Liberation is only achievable by eradicating *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred), *moha* (delusion).¹¹ It is an everlasting state of happiness. Help is available on the path, even though limited to instruction regarding the way in Hinayana. There is both a psychological and ontological aspect to liberation.¹²

Both schools divided *nirvana* into two spheres—post-mortal and pre-mortal, and active and static *nirvana*.

Nirvana is not a place or a heavenly realm to go into. It is something that can be experienced in the here and now. There is no self or person to become extinct; it is the extinction of the fires of passion, greed and hatred. This extinction is an immortal, eternal state of bliss and happiness. The 'immortal' is that something which latently remains beneath the surface of the phenomenal world.

PATHS TO SALVATION IN BUDDHISM

The doctrine of the Buddha is a path or vehicle used to cross from the shore of worldly experience, ignorance, suffering and craving to the other side of transcendental wisdom. This is liberation from suffering or extinction. The Four Noble Truths explain the origin and cessation of suffering and the Eightfold Path enumerates the way that leads to the

¹⁰ Cf. Schumann, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹² Schumann, *op. cit.*, Heinrich Dumoulin and John C. Maraldo, *Buddhism in the Modern World*, (MacMillan, New York, 1976), p. 17; Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

cessation of suffering. The way to deliverance is called the Middle Way because it teaches that in order to attain liberation one must avoid two extremes—self-mortification on the one hand and sensual indulgence on the other. The Middle Way is a humanistic ethic, is rooted in discipline and self-reliance and hence its appeal to **P. 68** intellectuals. There is no Supreme Being who acts as a deliverer. Although there are different types of beings, such as spirits, gods and animals, being born as a human being is the most conducive state to achieving liberation. And *arahats* (saints) are superior to all these divine beings also. The *buddhas* stand at the top of the ladder. The path involves discipline, meditation, concentration and intuitive insight to the nature of all existence at which point one is enlightened.

The Hinayana Path of Salvation

The Hinayana way of salvation is salvation purely by one's own efforts, by following the *Middle Way*. The path to deliverance is by the termination of the karmic process of action-reaction utilising the Noble Eightfold Path which can be divided into three stages:

MORALITY (*sila*) is right speech, right conduct, right livelihood;

CONCENTRATION (*samadhi*) is right effort, right awareness, right meditation;

WISDOM (*pragna*) is right view, right resolves.

Morality is not mere manifestation of physical phenomena, but constitute a state of mind and volition which results in Right Speech, Right Conduct and Right Livelihood. There are, however, the five Moral Rules (*panca-sila*), the Ten Vows (*dasa-sila*) and the Eight Vows (*ata-sila*) which are prescribed rules of conduct. There are also 250 precepts for monks and 348 for nuns contained in the Buddhist Canon, the *Vinaya*.

Concentration refers to the attainment of calm and perfect peace of mind and spiritual development. It is the state of mind of total absorption of thought in a single object.

Wisdom is the third stage on the way of deliverance and involves obtaining a penetrating view of the true nature of existence. When this penetrating wisdom is suddenly achieved ignorance disappears and one is able to see the true nature of things that all is *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*.

The Mahayanic Paths of Salvation

The Mahayanic ways of salvation should be understood in the light of two important philosophical developments. Firstly, Mahayanic Buddhology with its *Trikaya* (Three Bodies) doctrine and the doctrine of the transference of *karmic* merit. This is connected to the **p. 69** *bodhisattva* idea in which the *bodhisattva* voluntarily takes suffering on himself to bring liberation to others. I point out the key points in the ways of salvation in Mahayana.

(1) The Way of Self-Discipline. This is the way for the specially gifted and corresponds to the Eightfold Path of Hinayana.

(2) The Way of Wisdom. This is recognition of the illusory nature of existence and *intuitive* identification with the reality of all being. This is considered to be omniscience which is synonymous with enlightenment. The sage sees emptiness as the sole reality in all appearances and this Wisdom—realization of emptiness—radically alters the attitude of a person. After this realization he is not threatened by future rebirths.

(3) The Bodhisattva Way. This is one of three ways of liberation for those who need assistance on the path to liberation. To become a *bodhisattva* there are ten stages.

The basic principle is that the accumulated merit of the *bodhisattva* can cancel the evils of the seeker, if the seeker were to ask for his help. Hence one has to invoke the *bodhisattva's* help and it will bring the seeker to a re-birth closer to emancipation.

There is a reliance on the *mahakaruna* (Great Compassion) of the *bodhisattva* who *never refuses help*. Nevertheless it is a difficult path for the *bodhisattva*, because it requires self-denial on his part. By giving away his karmic merit he gains more merit and so a *bodhisattva's* store of *karmic* merit is inexhaustible.

There are two types of *bodhisattvas*—earthly and transcendent. The earthly are human beings recognizable by their compassion. Everyone may be one. The transcendent are those who have attained liberating wisdom and sainthood from which there is no relapse and at the moment of their death refuse to enter static *nirvana* but instead accept active *nirvana* so that they can continue to work for the benefit of the world.

(4) The Way of Faith. This is the effortless way for the masses. By hearing and trusting in the name of a *buddha* such as Amida or Avalokiteswara, one may be born in a Pure Land. Here the believer matures to wisdom and attains *nirvana*, since he is relieved of unwholesome *karma*. There are numerous paradises. In the future Buddha *Maitreya* will establish a Pure Land on earth.

(5) The Cultic Way. The idea is that performance of ritual leads to liberation. This is for people of weak will. The belief is that ritual leads to liberation. It is the most unassuming form of Buddhism. The worship of relics, stupas, and offering flowers are all acts of merit. p. 70

Stages of Attainment on the Path.

(1) *Sotapanna* (Stream-Winner). This is the first stage and it refers to the one who has attained freedom from the three fetters which are personality-belief, sceptical doubt about his path and attachment to the rules and rituals. He can no longer be reborn below the human level.

(2) *Sakadagami* (Once-Returner). This is the second stage of attainment. Here the individual has overcome the fourth and fifth fetters, namely sensuous craving and ill-will. He needs to return once only to this world as a human being.

(3) *Anagami* (Non-Returner). The one who is fully free from the above five fetters, so that he need not return to the earth. He will be once reborn in heaven.

(4) *Arahat* (Saint). This is the final stage on the road to liberation. One becomes free from the five higher fetters, namely, craving from fine-material existence, craving from immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness and ignorance. The *arahat* is exempt from re-births and attains *nirvana*. This release must be achieved in this order.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF SALVATION FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In dealing with Buddhism and the concept of salvation, it is important to make some comments about its approach to the world and to the individual. Buddhism is essentially world-denying, the world is considered vain and empty. Furthermore, the reality of individual selfhood is denied and rejected altogether.

The Nature of Salvation

The total dissimilarity between the nature of salvation in Buddhism and Christianity is evident when we see the Buddhist concept of the person. The individual is merely an aggregate of Five *Khandas*. There is no real objective individuality. Salvation itself is the

realization of this No-Selfness (*anatta*) and the awareness of 'voidness' (*sunyata*). We could say that Buddhist salvation is obliteration of individual personality. The belief in individual personality is considered an erroneous belief. The nature of this salvation experience has nothing to do with experiencing deliverance from sin or receiving forgiveness. The relentless, impersonal law of *karma* operates and one stores up or diminishes one's capacity of merit by good works.

The moment of salvation is the eradication of ignorance and desire, even the desire to be liberated rather than freedom from sin. p. 71

In Buddhism, there are the obscure and dispersing feelings of ecstasy, of mystical deliverance, of nirvana. This is not concrete and well defined, but a state of existence, in the same way that a human being is nothing concrete, neither a thing nor a person, but actually nothing other than sum of states. Thus, the possession of salvation is a state of existence, a state in itself. But, what kind of state? All Buddhism affirms that to ponder on this is heresy, indeed the prime heresy.¹³

In terms of a future consummation eschatologically, there is no place for souls in Buddhism. It negates the concept of eternal life and discourages speculation as to the beginning and end of the world. The reason being that it is assumed that such speculation does not contribute positively towards the goal of achieving liberation. The contrast in regard to the ultimate state in Buddhism and Christianity is therefore quite stark. *Nibbana* is extinction or non-becoming while the ultimate state in Christianity is fullness of becoming in heaven. *Nibbana* is not a place to go. It is merely a state of being or rather nonbeing (Post-Mortal *nibbana*).

That the ultimate reality of *Nibbana* is formless and empty while in Christianity the ultimate is a personal God with whom in salvation there is restoration of true fellowship with man. In Buddhism, as Otto has stated, 'the Absolute is possessed in Nirvana while in Christianity the Absolute is not in salvation'.¹⁴ The Absolute is a personal Creator *God*.

CONCLUSION

The Means of Salvation

Buddhism is proud of the fact that it has a means of salvation which is based on self-deliverance through knowledge and wisdom. Even the Buddha did not ask for faith in himself nor in his teachings. To attain liberation what is necessary is to understand the Four Noble Truths and follow the Noble Eightfold Path by right action. The idea of revelation is limited to the revelation that the historical Buddha received when he was under the Bo tree and obtained enlightenment.

The self-deliverance of Buddhism is based on the law of *karma*, cause and effect. It is ethical retribution through *prajna* (wisdom), p. 72 *samadhi* (concentration) and *sila* (morality). There is no principle of grace or forgiveness strictly speaking. Even though ultimate liberation is the fruit of one's own doings in recourse to other powers such as *bodhisattvas* there is an accommodation to this position. The *bodhisattvas* look after the ones who seek their help graciously and the transference of karmic merit alters the self-deliverance concept substantially. Even though the liberating insight has to be gained ultimately by the follower.

¹³ Rudolf Otto, *Buddhism and Christianity—Compared and Contrasted*, ed. & trans. Philip C. Almod (The University of Queensland, Australia), p. 99.

¹⁴ Otto, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

The *Lotus Sutra* describes exhaustively the divine powers of the *bodhisattvas* and their ability and willingness to help those in need. The East Asian Buddha Amitabha, it is claimed, created a Buddha Paradise called the Western Paradise of Pure Land Buddhism in order to help in salvation. The follower who is reborn in this Paradise is cleansed, matures and obtains *nirvana* by 'grace' of the Transcendent Buddha. The Buddha Paradise though is only an intermediate state to liberation. And the follower must receive liberating wisdom from the Transcendent Buddha to attain *nirvana*.

Even in Hinayana Buddhism, which claims to be the system of liberation by self-effort, when the Buddhist repeats the words 'I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the *Sangha*, I take refuge in the *Dhamma*' there is an elevation of the Buddha to a level of a deity as a factor in salvation.

A Comparison of Ethical Implication in Buddhism and in Christianity

Linked to the concept of salvation in Buddhism is the virtue of compassion. It is at the heart of the process of the attainment of liberation. However in relation to the Buddhist analysis of the individual as being nothing more than a composition of Five Factors in constant flux, one must raise the question as to how this virtue can be manifested. Can states of existence devoid of individual personality express love and compassion?

Moreover, a sense of moral responsibility can arise only where there is an 'I' or a person. When the 'person' is a mere process rather than an entity, can even a guilty conscience arise? As Otto has well said:

Guilt must be lacking where there are only states of existence, which drift in infinite enchainment through the ocean of rebirth, like the waves of an ocean, in accord with a spiritual law of nature.¹⁵ p. 73

Furthermore, as Callaway has pointed out, good and evil are possible in Christianity because it supplies an objectively real and eternally unchanging criterion of morality. This criterion of morality is God himself.¹⁶ Herein lies the lack of Buddhism. It is not surprising therefore that in Buddhism we do not find a clear definition of sin. Sin is, if at all, some act that brings about a reaction because of the law of *karma*. One may counter and query what the purpose of the Buddhist prohibitions are. The prohibitions are tools to be used for aiding concentration so that ignorance may be dispelled. If there is a strict dichotomy between good and evil, it would serve as a hindrance to attaining liberation. For, when one attains liberation, one is delivered from the illusory belief in the evil and the good. In fact, since there is no God to obey or disobey, there is no sin from which to be delivered.

Moral accountability is based on individual personality and identity with the freedom and capacity to choose. The Buddhist anthropology negates this. The virtue of compassion is exalted in Buddhism and is at the heart of the process of liberation especially in Pure Land Buddhism and the Bodhisattva ideal. However, viewed from the Mahayanistic monistic perspective, it becomes reduced to compassion of oneself.

Seen from the standpoint of Christian pluralistic realism, the Buddhist doctrine of compassion leads each man to practice an exclusive form of self-love.

According to Buddhism the goal is to escape from the trap of suffering which is due to the cycle of rebirth. Salvation is that state of being unfettered. It is liberation from suffering rather than liberation from sin. Even the concept of sin is completely differently

¹⁵ Otto, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁶ Tucker N. Callaway, *Japanese Buddhism & Christianity* (Shinkyo Shuppansaa, Protestant Publishing Co., Tokyo, Japan, 19578), pp. 212, 213.

defined in Buddhism. it is merely an evil act with evil consequences, as against the Christian definition of transgression of God's law. The cleansing of sin is done through the practice of morality (*sila*) based on the *dhmma* (teaching). There is no hint of an encounter with the Supreme Being for moral regeneration or cleansing. Sins cannot be forgiven, for what one sows, one reaps. But they can be counteracted by good deeds according to the law of *karma*.

If we were to summarize, we could say that the Buddhist concept of salvation or *nirvana* is freedom from desire, ignorance, delusion, hatred and rebirth. It is not a place, but a state of being. Actually, no definition can be given of *nibbana* in the same way that we can define p. 74 the concept of eternal life in Christianity. In comparison to heaven, *nibbana* is not a place. In fact *nibbana* refers to non-reality while heaven speaks of reality. In heaven there is a perfecting of our state; corruption will put on incorruption, mortality will put on immortality; but in the concept of *nibbana* one moves into the formless and the void. Heaven speaks of eternal life and activity while *nibbana* is nonactivity and the point of the extinguishing of life.

The Proclamation of Salvation to the Buddhist

In formulating our Christian doctrine of salvation in the Buddhist context, the following should be emphasized.

While according to Buddhism the fundamental course of suffering in this world is ignorance of the true nature of existence, we need to press the claim that it is man's rebellion against God that is the root cause of the human predicament. It is therefore a Creation and Fall message that speaks to the Buddhist analysis.

The Buddhist definition of sin has no vertical dimension to it. Even though the law of *karma* is being the retribution, the sin is committed against oneself and not against a Supreme Being, or even against the cosmic law of *karma*. Hence we need to proclaim human depravity and moral accountability to a Holy God. The Buddhist anthropology of man as a sum of states weakens moral accountability.

Since the law of *karma* is the final point of orientation of all things, true repentance to the Buddhist must involve the rejection of the supremacy of the law of *karma* and submission to the authority and omnipotence of Christ. Salvation must be seen as the dethronement of the existing centre of one's life and enthronement of Christ.

The over-riding emphasis of Buddhism is self-deliverance. In this context the doctrine of justification by faith has particular relevance. At this point, it is appropriate to insert a missiological observation from our own experience of serving in the midst of a shame-orientated culture. There are two-dimensions to our message to the Buddhist. First is the omnipotence of God in Christ as the Lord of all. His sovereignty and supremacy is over all created beings, spirits, demons, cosmic powers. A recognition of this authority is usually seen in the case of power encounters. At this point, the Buddhist has an awareness and realization of the supremacy of Christ. The second dimension to the message is that the supremacy of Christ demands moral accountability to a holy God who judges sin and sinful man. This awareness of guilt, and the need for moral regeneration, in shame-oriented cultures is a later awareness. It comes as a consequence of the understanding of p. 75 God's holiness, his law, his justice and his love. Therefore in shameoriented cultures we may be expecting too much if we look for a rapid awareness of guilt when we have not laid the foundation of the omnipotence and sovereignty of God. For this reason, it may be helpful to view the process of conversion in two stages; the first being a recognition of Christ's authority resulting in a rejection of previous Buddhist practices, and the second being the experience of moral regeneration.

The Buddhist's so-called progression into *nirvana*, the absolute, is in reality a regression into the void. In order to maintain his logical consistency, since he had denied a transmigrating soul (as in Hinduism), the Buddha had to affirm that the ultimate state is extinction. The biblical proclamation of salvation as the bliss of fellowship with God and the ecstasy of union with one's Master, though it seems to be contradictory to the Buddhist notion of salvation, may be the most appropriate doctrine to fill the Buddhist void.

Finally, another concept related to salvation in Buddhism needs mention. The concept of *pattidana* or transference of karmic merit and the related *bodhisattva* ideal. This is particularly relevant in proclaiming the message of the Cross. Karmic merit transference, which in a sense is a departure from the strict law of moral causation, has developed in both forms of Buddhism. This is a usable bridge for the biblical doctrine of imputation. In the Buddhist practice, an individual may transfer his karmic merit, even to another dead person, to cancel that dead person's demerits, by volitional action. It is called the *kusala/akusala* phenomenon. This is further developed in the *bodhisattva* ideal. Where *bodhisattvas* are helpers of salvation, they postpone their own liberation, in order to liberate others. They are saviours and transferers of merits. In the proclamation of the salvation message, one might ask whether it would be considered sacrilegious, or creative theology, if at least as a starting point we were to proclaim Christ as the Immortal, Infinite, Uncreated, Unoriginated Supreme *Bodhisattva*? His *kenosis*, incarnation, substitutionary death and glorious resurrection generated an infinite quantum of *kusala* (merits) which is able to cancel the evil *akusala* (de-merits) of man. This 'karmic Christology' may be the answer the Buddhist void is waiting for. May God enable us to theologize and communicate with sensitivity and caution, precision and concreteness.

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Responses to Lostness in Modern Japan

Hisakazu Inagaki

At a first reading this article may appear to have little relevance to the theme of salvation and lostness. However, its importance lies in the clarity with which it discusses the conflict between the pragmatic modernity and utilitarianism of Japan as a modern industrial power and Japanese traditionalism based on animist culture and ancestral worship. The people of Japan who are no longer finding spiritual values and the basis for national identity in modernity are turning to their traditional pagan values in search of personal and national salvation. The author of this article shows how in the present ecological crisis the traditionalists are arguing for an organic view of nature as a living organism. In the growing tension between modernity and traditionalism he discusses the significance of the revival of the kokutai ideology surrounding the enthronement of the new Emperor. He calls for a much deeper understanding of the gospel as the basis for inner reformation of the thought and culture of Japan.

We may add that this discussion is very relevant for other developing nations in Asia and Africa but also for the post-Christian cultures of the West. It is significant that though the