All About No-thing
A Critical Summary of the Teaching of the Dalai Lama

About the Dalai Lama

The incumbent Dalai Lama is the 14th and was born as Lhamo Thondup on July 6, 1935 in Taktser in the region of Dokham in NE Tibet. In Tibetan Buddhism every Dalai Lama is considered to be a reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva[1] of compassion. When the 13th Dalai Lama died a search was conducted, led by the Regent, for Avalokiteshvara's fresh reincarnation. Tibetan culture is riddled with the occult. Shamanism and belief in demonic powers is pervasive and it is commonplace for people to seek guidance through divination practices such as choosing balls of dough in which different answers have been secreted or throwing three dice (with numbers or letters on them) or using a rosary. Great importance is placed on omens. For example, it bodes ill if a snake or scorpion crosses one's path, but things are indeed 'looking up' if one sees geese, ducks or swans flying overhead. Magic also pervades Tibetan astroscience and medicine.

Given this it comes as no surprise that the "finding" of the new Dalai Lama also involved occult guidance. For example, the allegedly mysterious rotation of the corpse of the 13th Dalai Lama some days after his death from a southward facing to a northward facing direction, the Regent's vision of a monastery and a house with a fancy tiled roof and the purported way in which four year old Lhamo, when offered alternatives, consistently chose objects that had once belonged to the 13th Dalai Lama.

Lhamo was recognized as the Dalai Lama at the age of four and after paying a substantial ransom to Chinese authorities it was permitted for him to be taken to Potala Palace in Lhasa where he was raised. His name was changed to Jetsun Jamphel Nigawang Lobrang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, meaning "Holy Lord, Gentle Glory, Compassionate, Defender of the Faith, Ocean of Wisdom", though he is often simply called Kandun, "The Presence".

Lhamo's installation as Dalai Lama meant that he became part of the Gelukpa (Gelugpa = "System of Virtue") sect of Tibetan Buddhism, often popularly referred to as the "Yellow Hats". This is the latest of the four major Tibetan Buddhist sects the other three being in order of origination, Nyingma ("Old School", often called the "Red Hats"), Kagyu ("Teaching Lineage") and Sakya ("Gray Earth"). The Dalai Lama insists that all four schools totally adhere to the same teaching of the Buddha.

At the age of 15 Tenzin Gyatso was enthroned as the leader of Tibet. When he was 16 Tibet was taken over by China. In 1959, at the age of 24 he escaped from Tibet, disguised as a soldier.

The Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism

The Dalai Lama recommends learning about Tibetan Buddhism via the Nalanada tradition[2], studying major texts written by Nalanda masters such as Nagarjuna, Arya Asanga and Chandrakirit (*Many Ways*, 112).

The various sects of Tibetan Buddhism assign to an important group of deities, best known as *chos skyong* (the Tibetan equivalent of *dharmapala*), "protectors of the religious law", the task of protecting the Buddhist religion and its institutions against enemies, and also of maintaining the integrity of its teachings. These *chos skyong* typically have a strong demonic aspect. They are represented as carrying military weapons (sword, lance, "banner of victory", trident, battle-axe, bow and arrow, club, snare), magical weapons (e.g., the *khram shing* - a notched stick with magical drawings, magic ball of thread, magic dagger), various vessels (such as the skull cap filled perhaps with human blood, or brains and blood), jewels, and musical instruments.

The Dalai Lama is protected by a group of *chos skyong* which includes dPal Idan lha mo (the equivalent of Shri-Devi in Sanskrit), a black goddess who in representation may be associated with devouring human corpses and severed heads. Another deity protecting the Dalai Lama is Yamantaka ("destroyer of Yama"), portrayed as trampling a number of creatures including a man, and possessing thirty-two arms and sixteen legs.

In the Chronicle of the 5th Dalai Lama it is claimed that three "royal demons" of a white, black and yellow colour existed in the country of *Yu gur* (in the Minyag province) out of which one, evidently the white one, was transferred to Tibet under the name of *Pe har*. It was during the reign of this Dalai Lama that this royal demon moved to his present residence at the Nechung monastery near Drepung. This monastery continues to be the official residence of the state oracle of Tibet who is called upon to "channel" the power and prophetic ability of the supposed protectors of the nation. When the medium is in a trance state he is often possessed by a spirit which substitutes for Pe-har Gyalpo, who is thought to be the spirit of Dorje Drakden, the man who warned the 13th Dalai Lama of an assassination plot against him and warned Tibet about the imminent danger to Tibet of China.

The Dalai Lama deals with the Nechung Oracle several times a year and in his autobiography claims that every time he asked the Oracle questions the answer given was correct.

Religion and Spirituality

The Dalai Lama claims that he is a Tibetan before he is Dalai Lama and a human before he is a Tibetan. For this reason, he claims, that he has a special responsibility towards furthering inter-religious harmony. He reasons that since the majority of mankind do not practise religion that he is "concerned with finding a way to serve all humanity without recourse to religious faith" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 20). He also claims that all religions are capable of facilitating the human quest for happiness. He confesses that when he was young, in his ignorance of other religions, he had thought Buddhism was the best way. However, he claims, that while for him personally Buddhism remains the most precious path it is not the best religion for everyone.

The Dalai Lama distinguishes between religion and spirituality and maintains that the latter has to do with inner qualities. On this basis he claims that religion is something one can perhaps do without. He issues a call not for a religious but for a spiritual revolution involving "a radical re-orientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self towards concern for the wider community of beings with whom we are

connected, and for conduct which recognizes others' interests alongside our own" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 24).

The Dalai Lama considers ignorance to be the greatest obstruction to inter-religious harmony. He advises that the best way to overcome this is through dialogue. He speaks of how this has helped him to admire Christian teachings. However, his conception of what constitutes Christian teaching has been shaped especially by his dialogue with Catholic mystics. The Dalai Lama promotes the value of going on joint pilgrimages with members of different faith traditions and welcomes a "parliament" of world religions. But he is against the formation of a 'super' or 'world' religion. With respect to each religion's claim to "one truth and one religion" he maintains that at the level of human society "we must accept the concept of 'many truths, many religions', whereas "in the case of a single individual, there can be only one truth, one religion" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 235).

The Dalai Lama believes that "harmony among the different religious traditions is of utmost importance" because they all "share a common aim of helping people to become good human beings and lead a better life" (*Joy of Living*, 1). Accordingly, he postulates that when people wage war in the name of religion it is because they are not putting its meaning into practice, not using this meaning to transform undisciplined minds (*Joy of Living*, xii-xiii). Here he presumes to understand "the meaning" of all religions and presumes that all religions are essentially opposed to any violence. This is at best a highly dubious assumption and, in reality, plain wrong.

The Dalai Lama also errs when he evaluates other religious founding figures through the grid of his own Buddhist mindset:

> Basically all the great teachers including Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad and Moses, were motivated by a desire to help their fellow beings. They did not seek to gain anything for themselves, nor to create more trouble in the world (*Widening the Circle*, 4).

Given such basic misconceptions of other religions it is not surprising that he should assimilate them with respect to the central Buddhist concern with transformation of the mind:

> In terms of training the mind, all major religions are the same. They all have the same potential to transform the human mind. A clear indication of this is that all of major religious traditions carry the message of love, compassion, forgiveness, contentment and self-discipline. The message is the same, but in some cases, the meaning may be a little different because of their different philosophies.
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> There may be major differences in the philosophy of different religions but we cannot say that one religion is better than the other. As I mentioned earlier, all religions have the same potential to transform the mind. Each of us have different mental dispositions. So you see there are different methods to approach it. Nevertheless, the result or the effectiveness is more or less the same (*Many Ways, 5).*

Having said this, the Dalai Lama does see Buddhism as involving a greater focus than other religions on the inner emotional life:

> I am slightly puzzled as to why you [sc. Jeanne Tsai, Professor of Psychology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis and St. Paul] keep insisting that there is this fundamental difference between Easterners and Westerners in terms of emotional management. What we are talking about may be a factor of spirituality. The differences may not

> really lie in different cultures as such, or ethnicity, but rather differences in the legacy of religious traditions.
> For example, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, where the primary focus is on a Divinity and the whole spiritual orientation is toward achieving transcendent union, there is less emphasis on correcting the internal emotional life or creating equilibrium within oneself. Genuine faith toward God the creator, and acting from genuine love for God, leads to genuine love for other human beings. Then such things as killing, stealing, or raping are against your belief in God. That's a very powerful message about becoming a good human being.
> But the ultimate aspiration of a practicing Buddhist is the attainment of nirvana. The emphasis is within oneself, so then these negative emotions and the resulting actions become important; now we have to know what's going on within the mind. In Buddhism, then, the aim is different. From the cultural perspective, you see, Buddhists have a fundamentally different orientation toward emotion. From that point of view, even subtle degrees of grasping the reality of self and the world become obstructive and negative.
> So maybe the difference really comes from the fundamental orientation toward the transcendent or toward internal development (*Destructive Emotions*, 252-253).

Ethics

The Dalai Lama argues that spirituality, not religion, is the foundation of ethical practice since love and compassion necessarily presume ethical restraint. By contrast, just because some who are anti-religion are anti-moral doesn't mean all such people are without a sense of right and wrong. Further, he argues, history shows that "religious belief is no guarantee of moral integrity" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 27).

The Dalai Lama argues that it is possible to establish binding ethical principles if "we take as our starting point the observation that we all desire happiness and not to suffer". From this he concludes that "each individual has a right to pursue happiness and avoid suffering" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 29).

He argues that it is an individual's *kun-long*, his or her overall state of heart and mind, that determines whether action is ethical or not. He explains how Buddhists approach ethical dilemmas in the light of the "union of skilful means and insight". By "skilful means" is meant "efforts we make to ensure that our deeds are motivated by compassion" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 157-158) and by "insight" is meant how, using our critical factors, one takes into account the different factors involved in adjusting the ideal of non-harming to the ethical situation.

The Dalai Lama does not count external enemies as particularly important. Rather, the real enemy is our disturbing emotions. However, the Bible strikes a balance that is absent from the Dalai Lama's preoccupation with the mind. For, though sin is attributed to evil of our hearts, we also have an external enemy who must be taken seriously, namely demonic powers led by Satan (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:10-12, 16; 1 Peter 5:8).

But even the nature of the enmity posed by the disturbing emotions is diluted by the Dalai Lama. For he insists that they have no independent existence and that they do not abide either in the body or in our sense faculties. That is, they are not an expression of who we are – a conception alien to biblical thought.

The Dalai Lama's assumption that nothing has independent existence helps explain his downplaying of the threat posed by external enmity:

> When we think of someone as an enemy, we normally tend to think of him or her as having independent existence. We also think of the harm done by that enemy as having independent existence. But if your enemy shoots and wounds you, it is actually the bullet that strikes your body, not the enemy. Just as a weapon is wielded by a person, so the person is controlled by the disturbing emotions residing within him or her. Normally we get angry with the person. Why do we never get angry with the basic cause of harm, the disturbing emotion? Why do we not get angry with the bullet that actually strikes us? Why do we hate only the person who stands between these two? You might answer that the person contributed to what happened. In that case, you should be angry with yourself; because you also contributed to what happened. If you had not been there, no one could shoot or otherwise harm you. The suffering you experience is not just a result of the weapon with which you were hurt; your own body is also responsible. The enemy provided the weapon, but you provided the target with your body (*Joy of Living*, 98-99).

Tell that to the innocent woman who has been raped! What an absurd position this philosophy leads to! Contrast this with the biblical view that people as created beings do have a God-given intrinsic existence and substance and that they are responsible before God and accountable to him for what they do. But the Dalai Lama wants even innocent victims to see themselves as guilty. He continues,

> If someone hurts you, remember also that in the past you have similarly harmed other sentient beings and that as a result you are being harmed today. It is just the ripening of your own past misdeeds. Although you are being harmed by other sentient beings **it is your own fault; you are responsible for it** (*Joy of Living*, 99; my emphasis).

He also teaches that "once you control your own mind, it is as if you had destroyed all external enemies" (*Joy of Living*, 79). However, this involves making an effort to maintain mindfulness and failure to do this means that the merit one has accumulated in the past is lost "as if it had been stolen by thieves" (*Joy of Living*, 80). Once again, there is no assurance of 'salvation'. Indeed, the Dalai Lama even encourages the development of fear in the mind through meditation on the nature of impermanence and the sufferings of *samsara*, since such fear motivates a person to be mindful.

The Dalai Lama teaches that there are three levels of morality (*How to Practice*, 191-192):

1. The morality of individual liberation.
2. The Bodhisattva morality.
3. Tantric morality.

Householders can make Bodhisattva and Tantric vows but they practise a householder's version of the vows of individual liberation. The Dalai Lama refers to the Kalachakra Tantra, a principal Tantra of the New Translation Schools in Tibet, which "states that if there are three teachers of Tantra, one with householder's vows, another with the vows of a novice monastic, and a third with the vows of a full-fledged monastic" then the vows of the monastic are the highest. The Tantric system emphasizes monastic morality (*How to Practice*, 191-192).

The Dalai Lama explains how Tantric Buddhism makes it possible for sexual intercourse to be used in the spiritual path, by causing a strong focusing of consciousness "if the practitioner has firm compassion and wisdom". That is, the practitioner, having

achieved a high level of practice in motivation and wisdom" can engage in sexual intercourse with a consort without detracting "from the maintenance of that person's pure behaviour." The Dalai Lama states that through "special techniques of concentration during sex, competent practitioners can prolong very deep, subtle and powerful states and put them to use to realize emptiness. However, if you engage in sexual intercourse within an ordinary mental context, there is no benefit" (*How to Practice*, 195).

The Dalai Lama states that because Buddhas have full bliss within themselves they don't need sexual intercourse for bliss. Consequently, though in a *mandala* deities are often depicted in union with a consort this should not be misunderstood. This is just an appearance for the sake of those who "can make use of a consort and the bliss of sexual union in practising the quick path of Tantra" (*How to Practice*, 196).

Similarly, he maintains that the wrathful aspect of the Tantric Buddha Vajadhara in a *mandala*, in addition to his peaceful aspect, is just an appearance for the sake of trainees to use afflictive emotions, like lust or hatred, in the process of the path, e.g. meditating on one's own body in a fierce form (*How to Practice*, 196).

Indeed, the Dalai Lama teaches that it is alright for a practitioner to make spiritual use not only of meat and alcohol but even of human excrement and urine "for the sake of developing real knowledge" since a "yogi's meditation transforms these into real ambrosia." But he adds, "For people like us, however, this is beyond our reach. As long as you cannot transform piss and shit, these other things should not be done!" (*How to Practice*, 193-195).

The Dalai Lama discusses whether women can attain Buddhahood. He concedes that in the Buddhist scriptures a person, after countless rebirths, eventually has a rebirth in which his *karma* has enabled him to have "the physical marks and beauties of a Buddha" and that in this ultimate final lifetime it is necessary to have the body of a male. However, he says that a woman can achieve Buddhahood, even in this lifetime, if she does so using Highest Yoga Tantra (*How to Practice*, 207). In another place the Dalai Lama repeats this viewpoint stating that "the highest Buddhist system" is Maha Anuttara-yoga Tantra (*Many Ways*, 30).

Dependent Origination

The concept of dependent origination (*ten del* in Tibetan) was articulated by the Madhyamika (Middle Way) school of Buddhist philosophy. This doctrine teaches that it is possible to understand how things and events come to be in three different ways:

1. *According to the principle of cause and effect*: "all things and events arise in dependence on a complex web of interrelated causes and conditions" so that "no one thing or event can be construed as capable of existing in and of itself" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 37). So a pot is dependently originated because it cannot exist independently of its causes and conditions. This principle of causality is accepted as a natural law by Buddhists (*Art of Happiness*, 38). The Dalai Lama also states: "… once the existence of something is necessarily dependent on causes and conditions and on others, then it is contradictory for it to exist independently. For, independence and dependence on others are contradictory" (*Key to the Middle Way*, 69).

2. *According to the mutual dependence existing between parts and whole*: "Without parts there can be no whole; without a whole the concept of parts makes no sense." However, the "parts themselves must be considered to be wholes composed of their own parts" (37).

3. *According to fact that all things and events lack independent identity*: The words "action" and "agent" presuppose each other as do "parent" and "child". Individuals are called "farmers" because of their work on the land and others are called "doctors" in dependence on their medical work.

> When we look for something we can describe as [a pot's] essence, we find that the pot's very existence – and by implication that of all other phenomena – is to some extent provisional and determined by convention. When we ask whether its identity is determined by its shape, its function, its specific parts (that is, its being compounded of clay and water), we find that the term 'pot' is merely a verbal designation. There is no single designation which can be said to identify it. Nor indeed the totality of its characteristics. We can imagine pots of different shapes that are no less pots. And because its identity can only be established in relation to a complex nexus of causes and conditions, it is better described as being in some sense emergent, or contingent. In other words, things and events do not exist in and of themselves but rather they are dependently originated (*Ancient Wisdom*, 38-39).

The Dalai Lama finds this same dependency applying to non-physical phenomena. So, for the perception of a flower to occur there must be a sense organ, a condition (the flower itself) and something directing the focus of the perceiver to the object. The causal interaction of these factors results in a cognitive event. The event we call "perception" can only be understood "in the context of an infinitely complex series of causes and conditions". The same is true of consciousness.

The Dalai Lama argues that the phenomenon of time also points to the concept of dependent origination. It is merely a convention to speak of time past, present and future. It is impossible to pinpoint the present, but if the present cannot be posited then how can we talk intelligibly about the past and future, since these depend on the present. The Dalai Lama maintains that when we analyse our experience of time it is an experience of only the present and that it exists in dependence on the past and the future.

From such philosophizing the Dalai Lama concludes that "if all phenomena are dependent on other phenomena and if no phenomena can exist independently, even our most cherished selves must be considered not to exist in the way we normally assume" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 41).

The Dalai Lama recognizes that every human being naturally and correctly has a strong sense of "I". He sees to analyse the actual object we call self. He argues that this cannot be identified with such components as mind, body or speech since these are possessions of self, hence "my mind", "my body" and "my speech". He reasons that if the self exists as an independent phenomena it must do so outside the mind-body aggregate. Since this is untenable it must be concluded "that our notion of self is a label for a complex web of interrelated phenomena" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 42).

Consequently, the self is adequate only as a convention, existing only in dependence on the labels and concepts we apply to the term. He insists that our notion of an

independently existing self is as mistaken as seeing a coil of rope in the dark and taking it to be a snake. Just as the snake is not really there, neither is the self.

He observes that the concept of self is relative. So, when people blame themselves saying, for example, "Oh on such and such a day I really let myself down", they suggest there are two distinct selves, the one who erred and the one who criticizes. Then again a single individual's personal identity assumes many different forms. In the Dalai Lama's case there is a self that is a monk, a self that is Tibetan, a self that is from the Amdo region of Tibet, etc. with some of these selves pre-dating others, e.g. the self that is Tibetan preceding the self that is a monk. He concludes that there is no one characteristic that finally constitutes one's "self". He also denies that self is the sum of these characteristics since "if I were to relinquish one or more, the sense of 'I' would remain" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 44).

But having concluded that nothing has inherent existence he quickly insists that he is **not** saying that reality is but a projection of the mind, apart from which nothing exists. The phenomena still exist: "The 'identitylessness' of phenomena points rather to the way in which things exist: not independently but, in a sense, interdependently" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 45). Indeed, he teaches that the Buddhist view of the middle way is that "phenomena abide in the middle way, not truly or inherently existent and also not utterly non-existent" (*Key to the Middle Way*, 62).

He tentatively appeals to quantum theory as supporting the notion of dependent origination since at the subatomic level it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the observer of an object and the object itself.

He argues that dependent origination means the whole universe is like a living organism in which each cell works in balanced cooperation with every other cell to sustain the whole. Similarly, "our every action, our every deed, word and thought, no matter how slight or inconsequential it may seem, has an implication not only for ourselves but for all others too" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 47). He also argues that dependent origination also means that we need to move away from our natural tendency to treat things and events as solid, independent, discrete entities and even to see that it is an exaggeration to make a sharp distinction between "self" and "others", a distinction he attributes to conditioning. This in turn means that "my" interests and "your" interests are inseparable. Consequently, if we wish for our own happiness it becomes a practical necessity to consider the happiness of others.

The Dalai Lama stresses that it is very wrong to dismiss everyday experience as nothing but an illusion. The discrepancy between perception and reality does not mean that behind the phenomenal is a realm that is somehow more 'real'.

Whereas the Bible begins, "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1) and makes it clear that God himself is uncreated, without cause, Buddhism stretches to the limit the idea that **everything** has a cause. Indeed, the Dalai Lama explicitly states:

> Since things arise and come into existence in accordance with their causes, the Buddhist scriptures contain no presentation of a self that experiences happiness and suffering independent of causes. Likewise, they do not assert an independent creator of the universe. **Assertions of an independent self or an independent creator contradict the presentation that things arise merely in dependence on their causes** (*Joy of Living*, 166; my boldfacing).

Logically, then, there is no such thing as a beginning and consequently the realization of mind and body must be explained without reference to God. The next point is of vital importance to grasp. It is precisely because Buddhism commits itself to radical philosophical atheism and contends everything has a cause that all phenomena is understood to have no intrinsic existence, that is, the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. Consequently, for Buddhists emptiness is one and the same as dependent arising. By contrast, it is precisely because biblical Christianity holds out the personal Creator's self-revelation that it insists things and people, for all their interdependence, do have a God-given and God-sustained intrinsic existence and substance.

These points cannot be overemphasized and clarify that at the foundational level Buddhism and Christianity lie at polar extremes. It is impossible that both of these religions can be right. One is right and one is wrong. There is no middle ground.

There is indeed a sense in which all things have a relative and dependent nature. For Christ "is before all things and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). That is, the Lordship of Christ is the key to the integration and maintenance of the entire created order. Yet, with this qualification things do have an intrinsic and substantial existence **because they are created**. It is essential we assert this, for it is not difficult to see where the Dalai Lama's logic is leading: that the root of suffering is ignorance, the misconception of self, that is, of self as having an intrinsic or substantial existence. By contrast, the self, created in the very image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27-28) is of immense value so that Paul can say:

> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

The Dalai Lama endorses the encouragement of Buddhist scriptures to take refuge in the Three Jewels, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha (the Spiritual Community[3]) which he claims are "infallible objects of refuge" (*Joy of Living*, xxi).[4] He maintains that the actual refuge is *nirvana*, the cessation of suffering. The path to reaching this state involves disciplining the mind by cultivating positive qualities. He maintains that this begins by coming to understand that "objects to which we are attached, which we have previously considered to be entirely good, do not have any intrinsic or substantial existence" (*Joy of Living*, xx). Indeed, the Dalai Lama states that "no other religious tradition explains that things lack intrinsic existence and that everything is dependent on something else". This is the Buddhist concept of emptiness and, the Dalai Lama contends, it is by "realizing emptiness, the real nature of all phenomena" (*Joy of Living*, xxi) that the state of liberation is achieved.

The Buddhist doctrine of dependent arising involves lamentable implications. It involves the view that disturbing emotions are not inborn or intrinsic qualities of the mind. Ironically, the Dalai Lama says that the mind has primordial qualities, namely clarity and awareness and he therefore distinguishes between clarity of the mind and other qualities of the mind which he dubs "extraneous factors" (*Joy of Living*, 171). However, it is difficult to see how this claim avoids self-contradiction. For the doctrine of dependent arising involves the conviction that absolutely everything has a cause. Therefore, what is the cause of the clarity and awareness of the mind?

The Dalai Lama goes on to claim that things have a natural and innate mode of existence and he describes as "the logic of suchness" (*Joy of Living*, 171), those investigations which are aimed at understanding the mode of existence of external or internal phenomena.

By now it should be apparent that Buddhist and Christian conceptions of reality and delusion are poles apart. The Dalai Lama says all phenomena are empty and selfless, that this is reality and that it is a delusion to treat things as having intrinsic existence. Biblical Christianity says the reality is that things and people do have intrinsic existence and that it is a delusion to think that they don't.

The Dalai Lama says that the perception of things as having intrinsic existence involves wrong consciousness. He also says that to remove the contaminated causes of this misconception, our ignorance, is to attain the state of peace known as nirvana. He categorically states, "**The foundation of all Buddhist teaching and practice is the principle of dependent arising**" (*Joy of Living*, 175; my boldfacing). He continues:

> … the whole Buddhist way of life is derived from the notion of dependent arising. The Buddhist conduct of nonviolence, seeking not to harm others, its view of selflessness, and the meditation practices related to them all rest on the foundation of dependent arising (*Joy of Living*, 176).

The Dalai Lama acknowledges that Shakyamuni Buddha occasionally taught that living beings and other phenomena do have inherent existence. However, he contends that this is but "the thought of Buddha's scriptures, but they are not *his own* final thought" (*How to Practice*, 148). Here the Dalai Lama is insinuating that the Buddha was communicating at a conventional level, accommodating his teaching to the level of his hearers.

The Dalai Lama himself, having commented on the benefits of dialogue with Christians, recognizes the divergence of Buddhism and Christianity at the foundational philosophical level, noting that

> when it comes to a philosophical or metaphysical dialogue I feel that we must part company. The entire Buddhist worldview is based on a philosophical standpoint in which the central thought is the principle of interdependence, how all things and events come into being purely as a result of interactions between causes and conditions. Within that philosophical worldview it is almost impossible to have any room for an atemporal, eternal, absolute truth. Nor is it possible to accommodate the concept of a divine Creation. Similarly, for a Christian whose entire metaphysical worldview is based on a belief in the Creation and a divine Creator, the idea that all things and events arise out of mere interaction between causes and conditions has no place within that worldview. So in the realm of metaphysics it becomes problematic at a certain point, and the two traditions must diverge (*Good Heart*, 82).

The Dalai Lama elaborates on his conception of causation:

> There are vast differences or varieties or types within the meaning of causes and conditions. But, primarily, we have two kinds of causes. The first is called a substantial cause – a cause that is primarily responsible for bringing into function, or production, the nature of a particular object, the entity of a particular object. The second is what we all the cooperative condition, which is an existing factor for the coming into existence of that particular object.
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> Therefore, within the universe of mind, whether it is a positive or a negative mind, a positive or a negative emotion, in both cases, there are two main causes. These are:

> first, the substantial cause which is responsible for the production of the entity of that very nature of the mind; and second, the cooperative cause which is a kind of circumstantial factor which gives a particular mind the opportunity to arise. Aryadeva, in his 400 verses, clearly said that negative or afflictive emotions, which arise from a substantial cause, are difficult to extinguish. However, negative emotions which arise from cooperative conditions or circumstantial factors are easier to handle. Dependent on immediate circumstances and factors, they can be subdued and eliminated. Examples of these emotions are: hatred, anger, attachment, and, on the positive side: compassion and a sense of caring (*Many Ways*, 9; cf. *Open Heart*, 58-59*).*[5]

The Dalai Lama further explains that there are two levels of impermanence (*Many Ways,* 10):

1. The grosser level referring "to transitory states of a particular object in the sense of disintegration of its continuity."
2. The subtler level which involves "momentary disintegration rather than disintegration in terms of its continuity."

He explains: "Unless a subtle level of change occurs, it is not possible for [an] object to undergo a grosser level of change" (*Many Ways,* 11) So when a mountain crumbles we know that at the subatomic level a particular rock is constantly undergoing change. It is this subtler level of impermanence that is invoked in saying that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.

Notwithstanding this doctrine of dependent origination the Dalai Lama states that *nirvana* itself "is unconditioned, not dependent on causes and conditions" (*Many Ways*, 101), the ultimate state of mind.

The Two Truths

The Dalai Lama cites Nagarjuna:

> Doctrines taught by the Buddhas
> Rely wholly on the two truths,
> Conventional worldly truths
> And truths that are ultimate (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 31).

Accordingly, he teaches that all phenomena have two modes of being (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 32; *How to Practice*, 142-143; *Many Ways*, 96):

1. The nominal or conventional entity of the phenomenon.
2. The final mode of being, its emptiness of inherent existence.

The Dalai Lama applies the two truths to the mind itself. He states that the "mind itself a conventional truth; the reality of the mind, its emptiness of inherent existence, is its ultimate truth" (*How to Practice*, 178). But in the end this doesn't make sense because the eternal pre-existence of pure mind (the primordial "clear light mind") is presupposed without any explanation as to which gives rise to "pure mind" or Buddha nature, the two being just alternate names for the same reality (*Many Ways*, 127).

Non-Self

The Buddha next summarises a doctrine that lies at the very core of Buddhist philosophy: "The root of suffering is ignorance, which here means the misconception of self" (*Joy of Living*, xv). He explains:

> Because of beginningless conditioning, the mind tightly holds to "I, I" even in dreams, and through the power of this conception, self-attachment and so forth occur. This false conception of "I" arises because of one's lack of knowledge concerning the mode of existence of things. The fact that all objects are empty of inherent existence is obscured and one conceives things to exist inherently; the strong conception of "I" derives from this. Therefore, the conception that phenomena inherently exist is the afflicting ignorance that is the ultimate root of all afflictions (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 26).

The Dalai Lama endorses the analysis of Chandrakirti who in the *Madhyamakavatara* (Entering the Middle Way) argues

> the first there's attachment to the self, then grasping at things and becoming attached to them as 'mine.' At first, there is a solid, independent 'I' that is very big – bigger than anything else; this forms the basis. From this gradually comes, 'This is mine, this is mine, this is mine.' Then, 'We, we, we.' Because of our taking this side, come 'others, our enemies' (*Many Ways*, 142-143).

Speaking of the impermanence of true sufferings, he maintains that it is the very nature of true sufferings that they disintegrate and change from moment to moment, because "[whatever] is produced through cause and effect is subject to momentary change and disintegration" (*Joy of Living*, 8). So, the collection of physical and mental components we think of as our body and mind is also impermanent by nature, changing from moment to moment, because it is dependent on causes, especially ignorance. He argues that since it is especially ignorance which produces this collection of physical and mental components that suffering is intrinsic to the nature of this collection. Consequently, as long as "we" (this collection) remains the product of ignorance "we" are finally subject to destruction.

The Bible repudiates this philosophical conception of the "self" which reduces it down to just a collection of physical and mental components. As we noted before, the self, as per other created "things", does have intrinsic or substantial existence precisely because *it is created by God and recognized and treated as a created entity by God*. Consequently, although at one level our self experiences constant change – loss of hair, mood shifts, rethinking of positions, etc. – it is still a permanent self. It is NOT impermanent by nature, in utter and complete opposition to Buddhism. Buddhism ultimately opposes existence per se and, in a circular manner, defines it as an expression of suffering, that is, "pervasive suffering of conditioning". This pervasive conditioning means that our mind and body operate "under the influences of karma (tendencies created by previous actions) and emotions such as lust and hatred", subject to causes and conditions beyond our control, so that simply to exist as a sentient being in the cycle of *samsara* **is** to suffer (*Widening the Circle*, 89). By contrast, the Bible teaches that God created the universe of existence, including our own bodies and minds and while suffering is a part of the experience of the fallen universe, including our bodies and minds, suffering does NOT belong to their essential nature.

The Dalai Lama reasons:

> …to suggest that a permanent indivisible self could be one with the impermanent parts that make up mind and body is ludicrous. Why? Because the self is single and indivisible, while the parts are numerous. How can a partless entity have parts? (*Open Heart*, 151).

The Dalai Lama explains that the common Buddhist understanding of selflessness is "that there is no self which is self-sufficient, self-supporting and inherently existing" (*Many Ways*, 60).

The Dalai Lama's advice for guarding against disturbing emotions and the development of attachment is to "remain like a piece of wood" (*Joy of Living*, 82), which from a biblical standpoint constitutes a depersonalized and therefore dehumanizing response. Indeed, the Dalai Lama states: "Through meditation on wisdom you should be able to see yourself as free from an intrinsically existent self" (*Joy of Living*, 83). Given his self-devoid mind emphasis it is no surprise that the Dalai Lama, at odds with biblical wholism and in tune with Greek dualism, treats the body as trivial, something merely borrowed and not something to which we should be attached. In fact, he even encourages his readers in meditation to refuse to think of the body as beautiful or handsome but rather as "a collection of extremely unpleasant substances", as "a machine for producing filthy substances" (*Joy of Living*, 84; cf. *Many Ways*, 55-56). However, he does want practitioners to be efficient in the way they use their bodies in spiritual practice and for this reason speaks against extreme asceticism and self-mortification.

The Dalai Lama's warped understanding of human relationships and his perverse, even vile denegration of the God-given body and its God-given capacity for pleasure is expressed in the following statement:

> When we enjoy the sexual embrace, we are clasping no more than a skeleton covered with flesh and skin. It has no essence other than that. The apparent beauty we find in our partner does not exist independently by itself, nor does he or she possess it right from the beginning. We are frightened by a skeleton, even though it does not move. Why then do we not fear it when it is alive and moving? Instead of being attached to such an ugly thing, why do we not pay attention to the enduring peace of nirvana? It is not surprising that we do not recognize other bodies as filthy; but it is amazing that we do not think of our own bodies as dirty. Why is it that we prefer our bodies, with their various unpleasant secretions, to lovely fresh lotus flowers that unfold when the rays of the sun are freed from the clouds? We flinch from touching places soiled with excrement. Why then do we like to touch the bodies from which that excrement is produced? We do not like the worm and maggots that naturally grown in the dung heap, so why are we attached to bodies whose very nature is also unclean? (*Joy of Living*, 143)

He goes on to portray normal family life as obscene. Indeed, poking fun at the whole idea of having children, he concludes, "Therefore, Buddha Shakyamuni himself has said that whether you are rich or poor, leading a household life is like being afflicted with a disease" (*Joy of Living*, 144). He immediately commends those who leave household life to become monks and nuns devoted to spiritual practice.

The Dalai Lama pleads with his readers to give up attachment to their bodies, reminding them that objectively speaking it "is like a piece of wood" (*Joy of Living*, 163) and that "it has many faults and is by nature made up of unpleasant, filthy substances" (*Joy of Living*, 164). While biblical Christianity, with its wholistic view of the person, has a high view of the body, for the Dalai Lama it is at best but a tool and therefore disposable.

The Dalai Lama insists that "our collection of physical and mental components that make up the person… are the results of disturbing emotions and misguided or

contaminated actions, which is why they are referred to as contaminated objects" (*Joy of Living*, 174).

Christians should not be confused by such talk. For if we think in post-Fall terms we may be mistakenly think there is some truth in what the Dalai Lama, given the corruption of man's nature resulting from the Fall. However, Christians need to understand that whereas Genesis 1 teaches that prior to the Fall God created everything good, including people with their bodies, the Dalai Lama insists that the very fact of being people with physical and mental components **is** contamination and misery (suffering).

It is the Dalai Lama's claim that it is the misconception of self which generates negative *karma* and forces rebirth. He teaches that when someone reaches the understanding that nothing has intrinsic existence that person "will be able to see everything as a dream or an illusion" (*Joy of Living*, 177). Yet again, biblical revelation is at odds with this view. Reality is real. Yes, all people are deluded but their delusion concerns their inability to acknowledge God, especially as he has revealed himself in Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). Thus the Dalai Lama corrupts genuine knowledge seeking to turn it into ignorance. He is a prime example of what the prophet Isaiah inveighed against:

> Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,
> who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
> who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20).

The Dalai Lama teaches that friend and enemies exist only as mere designations and since they lack intrinsic existence one should not treat either friends or enemies seriously. He goes on to say that neither the cycle of existence nor *nirvana* has true or intrinsic existence. He concludes by saying that it is the very seeing of ourselves as having intrinsic existence which is the source of self-centeredness (*Joy of Living*, 179). Biblical Christianity responds that the Dalai Lama's failure to see people as having intrinsic existence as creatures accountable to their Creator is the source of his own essentially suicidal philosophy. For if he continues to deny his accountability to God he will **not** experience ultimate happiness and peace but will be destroyed forever as the object of God's wrath.

The Dalai Lama states, "Conventionally, a merely imputedly existent 'I', a nominality, remains. This imputedly existent 'I' which is a mere nominality, can achieve resources, such as food and drink, and can own and use things, such as clothing" (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 43).

The Dalai Lama cites the seventh-century Indian scholar-yogi Chandrakirti:

> Beings are powerless like a bucket traveling up and down a well
> Through initially exaggerating oneself, "I"
> And then generating attachment for things, "This is mine" (*Widening the Circle*, 100).

The Dalai Lama insists that it is because of the discrimination of self and other and attachment to objects that we wander through various states of cyclic existence, good and bad, "like a bucket traveling powerlessly up and down a well" (*Widening the Circle*, 100). He insists that it one regards people and things as having inherent existence then it "will not be long before desire and hatred enter the picture" (*Widening the Circle*, 101).

The Dalai Lama insists:

> … Buddhists do value the existence of a self that changes from moment to moment, designated in dependence upon the continuum of mind and body. All of us validly have this sense of "I." When Buddhists speak of the doctrine of selflessness, we are not referring to the nonexistence of this self. With this "I", all of us rightfully want happiness and do not want suffering. It is when we exaggerate our sense of ourselves and other phenomena to mean something inherently existent that we get drawn into many, many problems (*How to Practice*, 149).

The Dalai Lama reasons:

> If… an independent, substantially existent self or soul exists, we should be able to pinpoint it. Upon investigation, we should be able to find such a person or soul. Furthermore, if the self is permanent, particularly in the sense of a person who is independent and substantially existent, we cannot refer to the disintegration of that self, the ageing of that self, because it is asserted that it is totally independent from the psycho-physical aggregates and is permanent (*Many Ways*, 14).

The Dalai Lama discusses the implications of the doctrine of non-self with respect to suicide:

> Perhaps, when you realize that your aggregates are the cause of all your sufferings, you might think that suicide is the way out. Well, if there were no continuity of mind, no future life, all right – if you had the courage, you could finish yourself off. But, according to the Buddhist viewpoint, that's not the case; your consciousness will continue. Even if you take your life, this life, you will have to take another body that again will be the basis of suffering. If you really want to get rid of your sufferings, all the difficulties you experience in your life, you will have to get rid of the fundamental cause that gives rise to the aggregates that are the basis of all suffering. Killing yourself is not going to solve your problems (*Many Ways*, 140).

Emptiness

The Dalai Lama also makes it clear that the Buddhism he espouses is ultimately committed to philosophical monism:

> Gradually, the state of mind that understands emptiness through a mental image becomes nondualistic and transforms into the nonconceptual and direct vision of emptiness… That ultimate state of thorough pacification possessing the characteristics of total cessation of all elaborations is called the Buddha's Truth Body (*Joy of Living*, 176).

Similarly, he explains that when a person achieves enlightenment, that is, a state of omniscience, subject-object duality and conventional appearances cease to exist since the mind of enlightenment merges with emptiness (*Many Ways*, 88).

He also emphasizes that to attain happiness one must develop the Buddhist view of emptiness: "…in order to attain nirvana and gain liberation from the cycle of existence, it is necessary to cultivate the view of emptiness" (*Joy of Living*, 177).

Victor Chan summarises:

> Emptiness and compassion. Wisdom and method. These are the twin pillars of the Dalai Lama's practice – everything we need to know about spiritual practice. He often uses a metaphor to illustrate their central importance. Just as a bird needs two wings to fly, a person with wisdom and no compassion is like a lonely hermit vegetating in the

> mountains; a compassionate person without wisdom is nothing more than a likeable fool (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 169).

The Dalai Lama, using the image of molding clay, suggests that emptiness makes things soft so as to be reshaped by compassion (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 170).

The Dalai Lama explains a tantric approach to realizing emptiness via the *Magical Array Tantra* from the *Repetition of the Names of Manjushri Tantra* (*How to Practice*, 174):

> The perfect Buddhas arise from *A*.
> *A* is the supreme of letters.

He explains that in Sanskrit the letter *A* is a negative particle indicating emptiness, the absence or negation of inherent existence. In saying that the "perfect Buddhas arise from *A*" the thought is that the Buddhas are drawn from meditating on the emptiness of inherent existence. He also observes that in Highest Yoga Tantra the letter A "refers to the indestructible drop within which a Buddha body is achieved", that is, a dramatic change in consciousness that occurs when very subtle wind (inner energy) and very subtle mind are united (*How to Practice*, 174-175).

In discussing the whole issue of emptiness and independent existence the Dalai Lama distinguishes between two main schools of thought, arguing for the third of these (*Many Ways*, 123-125):

1. *The Cittamatra School* (Mind-Only School). Nothing has an external existence, everything is substantially the same with the mind.
2. *The Madhyamika School*. There is an external reality. However, the external object and the internal mind are equal in that there is no distinction between the object and the mind. This is so because neither has an inherent existence. So neither provides a basis on which grasping or attachment can stand.

The Dalai Lama teaches that it is the failure to believe in emptiness and "our grasping at things, considering them to be true and inherently real" which explains how attachment and anger arise. He argues:

> When… we are angry with something, we feel that the object is out there, solid, true and unimputed, and that we are likewise, something solid and findable. Before we get angry, the object looks ordinary, but when our mind is affected by anger, the object looks ugly, completely repulsive, nauseating; something we want to get rid of immediately – it appears *really* to exist in that way: solid, independent and very unattractive. This appearance fuels our anger. Yet, when we see the same object the next day, when our anger has subsided, it seems more beautiful than it did the day before; it is the same object but it doesn't seem as bad. This shows how anger and attachment are influenced by our grasping at things as being true and unimputed. Thus, the texts on the Middle Way (Madhyamaka) philosophy state that the root of all disturbing negative minds is the grasping at true existence; that this assists them and brings them about; that the closed-minded ignorance that grasps at things as being inherently real is the basic source of all our suffering. By grasping at true existence, we develop various kinds of disturbing negative minds and create a great deal of negative karma (*Many Ways*, 142).

Happiness

Victor Chan recalls:

> In many of his lectures and interviews, the Dalai Lama invariably brings up the subject of emptiness. He says over and over that everything that the Buddha taught can be reduced to the essential idea of fusing emptiness with compassion. This is the formula for happiness: Emptiness + Compassion = Happiness (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 134).

The Dalai Lama believes that it is palpably clear that "the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness" (*Art of Happiness*, 13; cf. *Open Heart*, 5). This is an unsurprising conclusion given the anthropocentric and anti-theistic stance of Buddhism. By contrast, Jesus provided a theocentric life-purpose, namely to love God with every fibre of our being and our neighbour as ourselves. Loving God in this way involves delighting in him and in this we find ultimate happiness. But the purpose of our life is to love God and love people not to seek happiness *per se*.

The Dalai Lama makes the following points about happiness:

1. It is relative. That is, what is happiness for one person may be suffering for another, e.g. for most of us a life sentence in prison means suffering, while for a criminal facing the death penalty this may be a happy reprieve.
2. The word "happiness" is used to describe very different states, e.g. experiencing pleasure or with reference to a perceived ideal state such as winning the lottery or in relation to the simple joys of family life.

Much of what the Dalai Lama says about happiness could have been written by a Bible-believing Christian:

- "…even if money brings us happiness, it tends to be the kind which money can buy" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 52).
- Possessions often bring us more, not less difficulties.
- The experience of happiness at a deeper level can overwhelm unhappy experiences, e.g. the wounded soldier who celebrates victory in contrast to the defeated and wounded soldier.
- Aesthetic experiences depend on the senses (e.g. enjoying music and the arts) and fall short of the happiness we long for.
- We must distinguish between transient and lasting happiness.
- A great deal of internal suffering is due to our impulsive approach to happiness, e.g. misery in a marriage because one married partner has pursued self-interest, without concern for the spouse's interests.
- The principal characteristic of genuine happiness is inner peace, something the Dalai Lama claims to possess. "… the greater our peace of mind, the greater our ability to enjoy a happy and joyful life" (*Art of Happiness*, 26).
- Inner peace can be developed in adverse circumstances.
- No external factor can create inner peace, e.g. by a doctor's prescription.
- Our basic attitude and the actions we engage in are essential conditions of inner peace.
- Altruism is an essential component of those actions which lead to genuine happiness.

The Dalai Lama teaches that unless "we tame and eliminate the disturbing emotions in our minds" (*Joy of Living*, xxiii) we will not experience joy and lasting peace, even if we are born in favourable states of existence, as a human being or a god (deva).

The Dalai Lama teaches that "the principal source of happiness, courage, and success in life" is the cultivation of a "noble mind wishing to benefit others" (*Joy of Living*, 2), that is, compassion. He does not expect that ordinarily people will experience happiness in their present state of existence but in some future rebirth, after living many more lives (*Joy of Living*, 33), and so teaches that "if we wish to achieve a well-placed rebirth as a human or celestial being over successive lives in the future, we must cultivate a good heart" (*Joy of Living*, 3).

The Bible is at complete odds with the Dalai Lama's belief that people can save themselves by bettering themselves. The Bible repudiates the Dalai Lama's concept of "a good heart" which can be cultivated, according to him, without any need to glorify God and give thanks to him, the very evils which render us without excuse as we stand before God as our Judge (Romans 1:21). Consequently, the Dalai Lama is actually teaching people how to develop "an evil heart", papered over with 'niceness'. The Bible is insistent that the evil of our hearts is so radical that we can only experience liberation as the recipients of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Dalai Lama teaches: "…if you follow the bodhisattva's way of life, it is 100 percent certain that you will find lasting peace and happiness" (134).

The Dalai Lama makes it clear that the cultivation of happiness and the minimization of suffering is going to take a very long time, that is, many more rebirths in the cycle of existence. He advises his readers to accept the laws of nature as they are and to transform the mind in a way that does not contradict them. As we have already noted the Bible begins with the personal, self-revealing and sovereign Creator as its foundation and by contrast with the Dalai Lama urges not acceptance of and compliance with the laws of nature but rather acceptance of and compliance with the Will of God. The mind must be transformed in a way that involves radical and willing obedience to the divine Will (Romans 12:1-2).

"The Dalai Lama's method for achieving happiness is based on the revolutionary idea that negative mental states are not an intrinsic part of our minds; they are transient obstacles that obstruct the expression of our underlying natural state of joy and happiness" (*Art of Happiness*, 242).

Human Nature

The Dalai Lama believes that human nature is basically gentle and disposed towards kindness and compassion. He argues for this on the following grounds (*Art of Happiness*, 53-54):

1. The Buddhist doctrine of Buddha Nature - the fundamental, underlying state of mind that Buddhists claim is present in all sentient beings (not merely humans) and which they believe is completely untainted by negative emotions or thoughts.
2. The mutual feeling of affection between a mother and her newborn babe.
3. Our physical structure is more suited to feelings of love and compassion since these feelings benefit our health and their opposites are destructive to our health.
4. Such feelings enhance our emotional health.

The Dalai Lama also believes that human nature has negative aspects, since where there is sentience, hatred, ignorance and violence arise naturally. However, he claims these occur "on a secondary or more superficial level", arising "when we are frustrated in our efforts to achieve love and affection" and "not part of our most basic, underlying nature" (*Art of Happiness*, 55).

He argues, "If distressing emotions such as anger were in the very nature of the mind, then from its inception the mind would always have to be angry. Obviously, this is not so" (*Widening the Circle*, 15).

He comments, "Once we know that defilements do not dwell in the nature of the mind, it is possible to remove them through generating antidote to them, attitudes that, like medicine, can counteract them" (*Widening the Circle*, 21).

He maintains that the mind is intrinsically pure by nature and that such disturbing emotions "are only temporary flaws", which can only be removed by a transformation of the mind (*Joy of Living*, x). He insists that a distinction must be made between consciousness as such and the thoughts and emotions it experiences. In contending against the idea that the mind is inherently destructive he argues:

> Under the influence of a strongly negative thought or emotion, the mind may seem to be characterized by a single quality. But if, for instance, hatefulness were an inherent characteristic of consciousness, then consciousness must always be hateful. Clearly this is not the case (*Ancient Wisdom*, 86).

He regards the mind as much like water in a lake. The mud from the lake's bottom might make it appear dirty when the water is stirred up, but the nature of the water is not dirty. When the mud resettles the water is clear once again.

He says,

> The nature of water is not polluted by filth, no matter how dirty. In the same way, the nature of even a troubled mind is not polluted by defilements. The mind of clear light of any being is not polluted even by afflictive emotions like hatred (*Widening the Circle*, 23).

He adds, "This clear light nature, basic and luminous, is the final root of all minds – forever indestructible, immutable like a diamond" (*Widening the Circle*, 25). Here we strike the fundamental contradiction in Buddhism. The doctrine of dependent

origination is of foundational importance to Buddhist thought and this teaches that all phenomena arises from causes and conditions. On the basis Buddhism utterly rejects the notion of an independent Creator. Yet, ironically, Buddhism does teach the eternal pre-existence of uncaused pure mind. So the Dalai Lama states:

> In Buddhism [the diamond (pure) mind] is considered permanent in the sense that its continuum is uninterrupted – it has always existed and will go on forever and is therefore not something newly started by causes and conditions (*Widening the Circle*, 25-26).

It should be noted, however, that the Dalai Lama claims that this ultimate nature of mind is "clear light", that is, "its emptiness of inherent existence" (*How to Practice*, 172). But this is just semantics for as the quote above demonstrates we are dealing here with an eternally permanent, pre-existent reality. The Dalai Lama has actually contradicted himself at this point. For if the ultimate nature of the mind is "emptiness" then this would mean that it is an expression of dependent origination and, therefore, "newly started by causes and conditions", something it is plainly not conceived to be. From this it is plain that in Buddhism the place of the eternal pre-existent uncaused Creator is taken over by eternal pre-existent uncaused Buddha nature. However, this also replaces the Creator's value system in which love and wrath are compatible with the Buddhist value system in which love (compassion) and anger are utterly incompatible.

The Dalai Lama also likens the mind or consciousness with a president or monarch who is very honest, very pure. The thoughts and emotions are compared with cabinet ministers, some of whom give good and some bad advice. Some are primarily concerned with the well-being of others and some with their own narrow interests. It is the responsibility of the main consciousness – the leader – to determine and act upon the good advice and spurn the bad.

The reason why Buddhists believe that the mind is essentially pure and that faults or defilements of the mind are but adventitious is because of the assumption that all sentient beings, including termites and hungry ghosts, have the Buddha nature and are capable of moving towards the realization of the qualities of this Buddha nature.

Also Buddhist compassion assumes not merely that gender is not essential to the nature of my friends and relatives (since *male* sentient beings might have been my mother in a previous existence) but also humanness is not essential to their nature since in previous existences they would also have been animals, hungry ghosts, titans, devas and hell beings.

Emotions

The Dalai Lama claims that Buddhist Scriptures there are 84,000 types of afflictive emotions explained. He also says that in the Abhidharma are identified six root afflictive emotions, plus 20 secondary afflictive emotions (*Many Ways*, 68).

In describing what he means by "negative impulses" he explains that not "all feelings or emotions which cause us discomfort are necessarily negative" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 89). Here he distinguishes between "ordinary emotions" and those which undermine peace. It is the negative cognitive component that characterizes the emotions he dubs negative impulses. As he explains: "A moment of sorrow does not become disabling

grief unless we hold onto it and add negative thoughts and imaginings" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 89).

The Dalai Lama reflects upon the time when he fled Tibet disguised as a soldier. At that time he experienced a rational kind of fear which he classes with justified and useful ordinary emotions. He explains: "But because I had neither the time nor the inclination to think about it, it did not much unsettle me. Its main effect was to make me very alert" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 89-90).

Buddhism teaches that every emotion has a cognitive dimension and every thought an affective dimension. Afflictive emotions (*nyong mong*) are those thoughts, feelings and mental events which undermine internal peace of mind. Such emotions are deemed to be wholly destructive and, indeed, "the very source of unethical conduct" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 91). These emotions involve a primary concern for our own interests and not those of others: "Our failure to check our response to afflictive emotions opens the door to suffering for both ourselves and others" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 91).

The Dalai Lama identifies anger as the most dangerous afflictive emotion. He does concede that there is a kind of 'raw' anger "that we experience more as a rush of energy than as a cognitively enhanced emotion" and he conceives that this may have positive consequences. However, it is easy for such anger to go beyond the meeting of injustice and to become personal, turning into vengefulness or maliciousness. Indeed, he regards even justifiable anger as unreliable and, indeed, unnecessary since he maintains the same ends can be achieved by developing courage and confidence.

While there is a need to curb anger and afflictive emotions this does not amount to a denial of our feelings. The Dalai Lama is not calling for the suppression of emotion and the harmful storing up of anger and resentment that results.

The Dalai Lama argues that it is not fully rational to single out individual persons as the objects of our anger. So, if someone says hurtful words we should focus on the words not the person since it is the words that cause us pain. We should focus not on the person who abuses us but on the reasons that have caused this person to be gripped by afflictive emotions. He also argues that if it is the evil nature of the abuser that is the cause of our pain (though he does not believe anyone has an evil nature) then this would still not constitute grounds for being angry with that individual since they cannot be held responsible for something their nature drives them to do: "If we are burned, there is no sense being angry with the fire. It is in the nature of fire to burn" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 116).

The Dalai Lama assumes that when "disturbing emotions' take away our peace "the crucial question is, how can we remove them?" (*Joy of Living*, xviii). Again it is assumed that the mind is intrinsically pure, so it never occurs to the Dalai Lama that "the crucial question" might actually be of a different order, for example, Why are we disturbed by these emotions? Instead of seeking an explanation of disturbing emotions such as hot-temperedness (his example) in sin he locates them in ignorance, thus perpetuating the failure to deal with the root problem. In a traditional Buddhist manner he assures his readers they are capable of 'saving' themselves, of achieving the state of nirvana in which the mind is restored to its essential character, free from disturbing emotions.

With regard to "disturbing emotions" what about Jesus' anger when he drove the moneychangers and traders out of the temple area? Indeed, in John 11:33 we read that as Jesus approached the tomb of his friend Lazarus and saw his sister Mary and other Jews weeping "he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled". The Greek is stronger indicating that Jesus was gripped by profoundly "disturbing emotions". Are we to conclude that such emotions represented an inadequacy in Jesus? Jesus is the Word made flesh. These "disturbing emotions" are manifestations of what God is like in his essential nature. Clearly, the Bible diverges significantly from Buddhism in its understanding of purity of mind, the nature of the emotional life and what constitutes negative and positive conduct.

To put a stop to the disturbing emotions that are the chief obstacle to attaining Buddhahood and thus liberation the Dalai Lama claims we need "the wisdom understanding selflessness", that is, emptiness (*Joy of Living*, 10). The cultivation of this insight is supported by "the practice of meditative stabilization" which fundamentally involves restraint from negative conduct.

The Dalai Lama contends that our negative conduct or misdeeds are due to being under the sway of disturbing emotions and can be summarized as ten unwholesome actions (these numbered lists pile up suggesting that becoming a master of Buddhist thought is not dissimilar to negotiating a complex labyrinth):

Physical	*Verbal*	*Mental*
1. Killing	4. Lying	8. Covetousness
2. Stealing	5. Divisive talk	9. Harmful intention
3. Sexual misconduct	6. Harsh speech	10. Wrong view
	7. Idle gossip	

This attempt to summarise negative conduct overlaps with biblical depictions of sin but there is also significant discrepancy. Firstly, "negative" does not connote sinful and fails to capture the evil of these actions. Secondly, it will soon become apparent that the Bible will not accept the Buddhist concept of "wrong view". Thirdly, conspicuous for its absence from the Buddhist list is any God-oriented action and, as the Decalogue shows, idolatry (in its multi-faceted expressions) is the foundational expression of misconduct.

The Dalai Lama explains,

> Wrong views are long-standing notions that virtues and ill deeds are not the causes of happiness and suffering respectively, and the denial that spiritual practice is effective. Wrong views come to fullness when you decide to look no further for the truth (*Widening the Circle*, 81).

One of the four seals states that all phenomena are contaminated and this contamination primarily has in mind "the afflictive emotions or negative emotions and the imprints or predispositions of these afflictive emotions" (*Many Ways,* 12).

Anger

The Dalai Lama contends, "No other negative deed compares with anger as an obstacle and hindrance to cultivating the spiritual path. Similarly, there is no penance

equal to patience" (*Joy of Living*, 93). The Dalai Lama treats anger as an absolute no-no, whereas David exhorts, "In your anger do not sin" (Psalm 4:4). However, the Dalai Lama appeals to Buddhist scriptures as he teaches that "the result of generating anger in this life is to be born as an ugly person in the future" (*Joy of Living*, 94).

There is an incompatibility between the Dalai Lama's assumption that nothing should be allowed to disturb the mind and the biblical perspective that the mind should indeed be disturbed by that which is wrong. So, as the children of God, we believers "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies", since we live our lives in a created order subject to the dire effects of the Fall (Romans 8:23). Further, love-motivated anxiety and distress is held up as a model for Christians to emulate, a species of attachment the Dalai Lama will have no truck with (e.g. 2 Corinthians 2:4; 11:28; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5). For example, we read: "Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there" (2 Corinthians 2:13).

He teaches that there is no point being angry with a person who hurts you since he or she has no independent existence and because no matter how innocent you may be you are actually deserving of what happens because of the way you have hurt sentient beings in the past. In a telling metaphor he argues that even if we say people are harmful by nature there is no point in being angry with them since it is the nature of fire to burn: "If you get burned, there is no point in being angry with the fire. The best thing is to avoid getting burned" (*Joy of Living*, 99). Firstly, this metaphor is true to his de-personalisation of people. Secondly, it coheres with his deluded belief in the essential goodness of all sentient beings (remember, not just humans): "Since sentient beings are basically good by nature, and their bouts of anger and hatred are temporary, there is no point in getting angry with them" (*Joy of Living*, 99).

Consequently, the Dalai Lama's call to meditate on love, compassion and patience is really an invitation not to leave a world of delusion but rather to turn our backs on reality and enter the world of delusion and make-believe he himself inhabits.

Attachment

The Dalai Lama states that it is because of an initial attachment to oneself that hatred arises when something undesirable happens (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 26).

The Dalai Lama teaches,

> In turning away from attachment, you need not ignore most essential needs, such as food, shelter, and sleep. Rather, you should separate yourself from superficial distractions that elicit such exclamations as, "This is wonderful!" "I must have this!" "Oh, if I only could have this!" (*Widening the Circle*, 98).

The Dalai Lama explains how monks adhere to a limited diet – a small breakfast, some lunch, then nothing (though he confesses to sometimes having some crackers or biscuits in the evening). Monks must accept whatever food they are offered on their daily rounds of begging. Consequently, they are not necessarily vegetarian. The training of *contentment regarding food* requires eating whatever one gets (*How to Practice*, 66).

Also monks and nuns are limited to only one set of robes, although they can share an extra robe with a fellow renunciant. Expensive clothing is prohibited. This is the training of *contentment regarding clothing* (*How to Practice*, 66).

Monastics must also be satisfied with adequate shelter and are forbidden to live in an elaborate home. This is the training of *contentment regarding shelter* (*How to Practice*, 67).

The Dalai Lama teaches that there is a reasonable kind of desire which is not founded on ignorance:

> To live, you need resources; therefore, desire for sufficient material things is appropriate. Such feelings as, "This is good; I want this. This is useful," are not afflictions. It is also desirable to achieve altruism, wisdom, and liberation. This kind of desire is suitable; indeed, all human development comes out of desire, and these aspirations do not have to be an affliction" (*Widening the Circle*, 101).

Consequently, the aspiration to effect the liberation of all sentient beings is not attachment because it is not mixed with afflictive emotions (*Widening the Circle*, 108).

The Dalai Lama goes on to caution against talking about a friend or relative as "*my* friend, *my* relative" because this expresses attachment, partiality and prevents us from seeing the sameness of all other sentient beings, stating that "[once] we are able to cultivate a feeling of the equality of all sentient beings, we will be able to appreciate their kindness". Once again he appeals to the fabrication of reincarnation in avoiding attachment to one's friend now on the reverse grounds that he "might have been our enemy in a past life" (*Joy of Living*, 13).

From a biblical perspective this is sheer nonsense. All sentient beings do **not** have an essential kindness. Nor is there a sameness between cockroaches and humans and there is no sameness between human beings, who are real, and other alleged sentient beings such as devas, hungry ghosts and titans, which are a complete fiction. Nor is it improper to have attachments to particular personal relationships. Indeed, this is strongly encouraged in biblical ethics. So Paul commands the husband to love "your wife" and children to obey "your parents" and fathers not to embitter "your children" (Colossians 3:19-21).

The Dalai Lama even goes to the extent of saying: "To identify a particular group of sentient beings as friends or relatives and maintain a special feeling of closeness toward them is actually attachment, not genuine compassion."

Once again the biblical perspective is that this is poppycock. It is precisely the nature of love to cultivate a special feeling of intimacy with one's friends and relatives, while also loving others, including one's enemies. However, the nature of this love varies from relationship to relationship. Relationships carry with them responsibilities and my relationship with my wife requires of me that I love her and develop intimacy and this "attachment" is good not bad.

The Dalai Lama holds up as a model of determination to practise the Dharma the Kadampa masters of the past who chose to live their entire lives in a bare and empty

cave. He also commends the example of Milarepa, who gave up his friends, relatives and possessions (*Joy of Living*, 115-116).

The Dalai Lama argues that being attached to friends and relatives makes as much sense as two people becoming attached to each other who are about to be executed or are both suffering a fatal illness. He also in passing indicates that he regards normal people as "childish beings" so that to be attached to them inevitably results in our being engaged in the same childish, unwholesome activities. Indeed, he urges such a commitment to staying in an isolated, quiet place that he calls upon his readers to abandon any thoughts of helping their friends, thinking only of "achieving Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings" (*Joy of Living*, 142).

The Dalai Lama illustrates the ethical implications of non-attachment. Imagine you are angry with a certain Mr. Gupta. This implies treating him as an object, as existing on his own, as being independent and concrete. However, once one realizes it is impossible to locate Mr. Gupta, either in his mind or body, then one's tight grasping is relaxed (*Many Ways*, 122).

The Dalai Lama reasons that we develop attachment to things because we see them as attractive and therefore recommends meditation on ugliness as a way to overcome attachments, especially what he regards as the repulsiveness of the human body (*Many Ways*, 154-155).

The Dalai Lama comments:

> Romantic love is complex, for it includes not only sexual desire but a human element as well. For instance, people don't feel romantic love for an inanimate object, though they do feel attachment. So romantic love usually includes both sexual attraction and such human elements as lovingkindness and compassion. That being the case, it is not true that romantic love is simply a mental affliction, because it's multi-faceted, with some elements being afflictive and others wholesome.
>
> Even so, from the Buddhist point of view, although it may not be one of the afflictive emotions, it is an afflicted state because the basis of that love is strong attachment. And this attachment colors the love that you feel, the sense of intimacy and closeness toward the object of attachment. The question is whether there could be appropriate forms of that attachment, and even from the Buddhist point of view, you can say yes. Even attachment can be very useful because the associated lovingkindness and compassion are beneficial (*Destructive Emotions*, 247).

Virtue

The Dalai Lama describes the awakening mind as "a jewel-like mind", the most precious of minds and claims there "is no virtue comparable to the awakening mind" (*Joy of Living*, 23).

Transformation involves two inseparable dimensions: (1) refraining from negative thoughts and emotions; (2) cultivating and reinforcing positive qualities. Positive qualities are those which are conducive to compassion. The main quality contributing to compassion is that of a kind of patience which involves "a deliberate response (as opposed to an unreasoned reaction) to the strong negative thoughts and emotions that tend to arise when we encounter harm" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 108; what the Tibetans call *sö-pa*).

The Dalai Lama finds a model of this in a monk, a senior chant-master from Namgyal, Lopon-la, who after 20 years of imprisonment and "re-education" and torture by the Chinese, confided that the one thing that had scared him was "the possibility that he might lose the compassion and concern he felt for his jailers" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 109; *Art of Happiness*, 302; *Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 47-48).

The Dalai Lama teaches that the patience of which he speaks is not passivity. Even vigorous countermeasures may be compatible and we should still do everything in our power to solve our problems whenever they can be solved. In particular he sees this patience as a powerful antidote to the affliction of anger.

The Dalai Lama teaches that the ethics of virtue avoids extremes. For "noble causes, when carried to extremes, can become a source of harm" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 119-120), e.g. courage which becomes foolhardiness.

He identifies generosity as another key virtue to cultivate and teaches that initially the most effective way of developing generosity is by giving. Indeed, giving of our time and energy is an even higher order of giving than making gifts. In all giving, "the key factor for maximum benefit for both giver and receiver is to give without any thought or expectation of reward, and to ensure that it is grounded in genuine concern for others" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 121).

He also promotes humility as a virtue distinguishing it from modern misconceptions of this as a sign of weakness. Humility is not to be confused with a lack of confidence or a lack of proper recognition for one's own value.

He advises adopting a daily routine to sustain a person who is committed to the life-long task of transformation. So, for example, he recommends that after waking up in the morning a few minutes should be spent "reflecting on the value of conducting our lives in an ethically disciplined manner" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 128).

The Dalai Lama teaches that higher rebirth is attained by practising the ten virtues and abandoning the ten nonvirtues (*Joy of Living*, 3; *How to Practice*, 29; see too *Buddhism of Tibet*, 35-36):

1. Sustaining life	Killing	Physical
2. Giving gifts	Stealing	
3. Maintaining sexual ethics	Sexual misconduct	
4. Speaking truthfully	Lying	Verbal
5. Speaking harmoniously	Divisive talk	
6. Speaking kindly	Harsh speech	
7. Speaking sensibly	Senseless chatter	
8. Generosity	Covetousness	Mental
9. Helpful intent	Harmful intent	
10. Right view	Wrong views	

Jesus came into the world to save sinners, not the righteous (Matthew 9:13 = Mark 2:17 = Luke 5:32). Virtue is not a condition for higher rebirth. Rather, rebirth (John 3:3) is an act of God's grace which, bringing people under his rule, results in the transformation of their characters. Consequently, for Christians virtue is the fruit of

rebirth, produced within us by the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22-23), though we are urged, as we live under God's grace, to make every effort to cultivate virtue, in order that we might know the Lord better and an as expression of our gratitude for having been cleansed from our sins (2 Peter 1:5-9).

Another major point of divergence is that for Christians every virtue is God-oriented so that while Buddhist virtues might appear to be 'nice', their very Godlessness is the very thing that infects them with an inherently evil nature.

The Dalai Lama identifies laziness as the primary impediment to developing virtuous qualities and locates the causes of this in "whiling away your time, becoming attached to too much relaxation or too much sleep, and not being dismayed by the suffering of the cycle of existence" (*Joy of Living*, 112). To overcome this he encourages thinking about impermanence and death.

Compassion (Tibetan: *nying-je*)
In his book *Widening the Circle of Love* the Dalai Lama maintains it is necessary to overcome "our natural tendency to put others into categories (such as friend or enemy)" because this is an expression of attachment (9). He observes that "our addiction to attractiveness enhances our sympathy for some but undercuts it for others" (9). He suggests some preparatory meditation techniques to develop a sense of equality, recognizing that all sentient beings share a common aspiration for happiness. He then proposes seven stages for dealing with this perceived problem:

1. Choosing one's best friend as a model for how to value other not-so-close friends, gradually moving out to include neutral people and finally enemies. Effort is made to clear away the emotional boulders that block progress.
2. Reflecting on kindness expressed to one by family and friends, gradually extending this beyond this circle, "remembering kindnesses received over a number of lifetimes" (10). A booster technique is employed with seeks to value enemies for providing "us with unique opportunities to practice patience, tolerance and forbearance" (11).
3. Reciprocating the kindness of others by developing the intention to further their enlightenment.
4. Learning to love all beings by acknowledging how they suffer.
5. Cultivating compassion, deeply desiring to see others relieved from suffering and attain ultimate happiness. A booster technique involves "imaginatively switching places with somebody obviously suffering from poverty or illness" (12).
6. Becoming fully committed to altruism.
7. Becoming more effective in helping and serving all sentient beings.

This is "understood mainly in terms of empathy – our ability to enter into and, to some extent, share others' suffering" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 131). When such compassion has been developed to its full extent it not only arises without any effort, but is also unconditional, undifferentiated and universal in its scope. Even this is seen as but the spring-board to a still greater love, reaching the point "where the individual feels so moved by even the subtlest suffering of others that they come to have an overwhelming sense of responsibility toward those others", a level called *nying-je chenmo* in Tibetan, that is, "great compassion" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 132).

The Dalai Lama distinguishes his concept of compassion and love from the kind that "is tinged with attachment – the feeling of controlling someone, or loving someone so that person will love you back" (*Art of Happiness*, 114).

In his writings the Dalai Lama often comments on how inspired he has been by the eighth-century Indian scholar-yogi Shantideva who wrote *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*. Following Shantideva the Dalai Lama claims "there is immeasurable benefit even in wishing that all sentient beings be freed from a single suffering, such as a headache" (*Widening the Circle*, 83).

Compassion involves learning "to transcend the limitations of our habitual feelings of bias towards those we are close to" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 135). This does not mean that one develops a state of detached indifference towards our close ones, but that the same compassion is applied to all. In a context of dialogue with Catholic mystics the Dalai Lama distorts the thrust of Matthew 5:38-38 and assimilates Jesus' thought to his own Buddhist understanding, construing the passage as justifying the adoption of "effective techniques to help us make the transition from these inherently biased feelings toward a state of greater equanimity" (*Good Heart*, 49). By contrast, Jesus is emphasizing what it means to be children of God and to be members of the community of God's people. For the Dalai Lama equanimity means the dissolution of the category "your enemy", whereas for Jesus the enemy is to be loved **as** the enemy.

The Dalai Lama draws a similar conclusion from Mark 3:31-35, believing "this passage shows on the part of Jesus a certain attitude of unimportance accorded to his own mother and brothers and sisters. To my mind, this tells us that true and genuine compassion is a compassion that is free from attachment, free from limitations of personal bias" (*Good Heart*, 67). Jesus is not endorsing the Dalai Lama's equanimity for Jesus plainly limits the extension of family relations only to those who do God's will (Mark 3:35). The Dalai Lama notes this and then seeks to twist the meaning of this to "imply all those who share the divine nature, who have the capacity or potential to follow the will of God", so as to "include or embrace the whole of humanity and underline the unity and equality of all human beings" – a plain corruption of Jesus' intent (*Good Heart*, 69).

The Dalai Lama encourages us "to see all sentient beings as pleasing and close to us", a discipline of the mind helped by meditating on "mental equanimity" (*Joy of Living*, 12). He uses the example of how Tibetans, given their tragic history, might rejoice upon hearing that a flood has claimed Chinese victims. Again in seeking to correct this unbalanced attitude the Dalai Lama raises epistemological problems when he appeals to the theory of reincarnation arguing:

> People who are currently our friends have not necessarily been our constant friends in all our past lives. They have at times been our enemies. People whom we currently regard as enemies have not always been so throughout our many past lives. They have been our friends as well (*Joy of Living*, 13).

The Dalai Lama says, "Among practitioners, the best are those whose compassion extends even to a bug" (*Widening the Circle*, 85). We need to recognize that seeing "all sentient beings as pleasing and close to us" includes cockroaches and leeches and monsters like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Idi Amin and Saddam Hussein. By contrast, as we have seen above, God has shown his love for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8), that is, far from pleasing (Romans 3:10-18) and, indeed, separated from him

(Isaiah 59:2). Love does not pretend that people are something they are not. The Dalai Lama is promoting an ethic of let's pretend.

The Dalai Lama claims that compassion is required to activate the seed of perfection which is inherent in the hearts and minds of all sentient beings (*Art of Happiness*, 71-72).

The Dalai Lama speaks of having compassion even towards the Chinese torturer of Tibetans "because I understand that the torturer was in fact compelled by other negative forces" and he adds, "Because of these things and my Bodhisattva vows and commitments, even if a person committed atrocities, I simply cannot feel or think that because of their atrocities they should experience negative things or not experience a moment of happiness" (*Art of Happiness*, 301). Here, when the Dalai Lama refers to his "Bodhisattva vows" he means his vow to be a bodhisattva or "awakening warrior", that is, one who through love and compassion attains realization of a mental state called *bodhicitta*. This mental state is "characterized by the spontaneous and genuine aspiration to attain full Enlightenment in order to be of benefit to all beings" (*Art of Happiness*, 301 note).

The Dalai Lama claims that Shakyamuni Buddha had a former existence as a hell being, due to his negative karma. In this state a device appeared on the top of his head and proceeded to churn up his brain. Immediately, he realized that other sentient beings were also suffering like himself because of the effects of negative karma. He made the wish that through his pain all other beings might be relieved of their sufferings and instantly the device was lifted from his head and he was freed from that hell and reborn as a human (*Widening the Circle*, 84).

The Dalai Lama speaks of "the eight worldly concerns" which characterize narrow-minded worldly life (*Widening the Circle*, 104):

Like/dislike	Praise/blame
Gain/loss	Fame/disgrace

This negative way of life involves becoming unhappy when unfavourable concerns are experienced by one or one's friends (dislike, loss, blame and disgrace) and derive pleasure when these same things are experienced by one's enemies. The Dalai Lama claims that these responses are based on how people act and maintains that true love and compassion must be based on the fact that all sentient beings are equal with oneself since they too want happiness and do not want suffering (*Widening the Circle*, 104).

The Dalai Lama teaches that the essential equality between all sentient beings consists in the fact that they all want happiness and liberation from suffering (*Widening the Circle*, 105). Having been told by a Catholic mystic that as those created in God's image all share a common divine nature, the Dalai Lama concludes that this parallels the notion that all share the Buddha nature (*Good Heart*, 49-50). He further distorts the doctrine of the image by finding in this justification for his view that "basic human nature is more disposed toward compassion and affection" (*Good Heart*, 51).

The Dalai Lama recommends eating vegetarian food as most suited for fostering clarity of mind in meditation. However, he recognizes that eating meat may be necessary for some health conditions. He notes that the morality of individual liberation does not involve any prohibition against the occasional eating of meat. He comments,

> But you should not eat meat that is purposely killed for you, and you should not ask for it if it is not offered. Indeed, it would be most welcome if the majority of people did become vegetarian. Some Great Vehicle scriptures prohibit the eating of meat, since concern for others is the heart of Great Vehicle morality (*How to Practice*, 121).

The Dalai Lama uses a story from the *Jakata Tales* to illustrate that in exceptional circumstances compassion may even justify killing. In another context he actually notes that one of the 46 secondary vows of a bodhisattva requires this (*Many Ways*, 158). He states that in one of Shakyamuni's previous lives he was born as a merchant and was crossing a river on a boat. He discovered that the ferryman was a murderer and planned to kill all 499 passengers on board. Since there was no other way of dealing with the situation Shakyamuni, as this merchant, acted in compassion when he killed the potential murderer, thereby saving him "from the necessity of facing the negative consequences of killing so many people" and, of course, the 499 people as well (*Good Heart*, 108).

The Dalai Lama refers to the virtue of taking upon ourselves the harm that afflicts others and explains what this means. It involves developing the mental state of being willing and happy to spend countless aeons in the lowest hell if it would benefit even one sentient being (not just humans, of course), thought developing such "courage" doesn't mean one will actually have to go there (*Many Ways*, 162-163).

The Dalai Lama's approach to developing empathy is to start with small sentient beings, like ants and insects. He advises recognizing that "they too wish to find happiness, experience pleasure, and be free of pain." Once we have learnt to empathise with such beings he advises go on to reptiles and eventually to other human beings and oneself. He says,

> If you have greater sensitivity to the pain and suffering of animals, then all the more you will have a greater sensitivity and empathy toward other human beings. It is a uniquely Buddhist phrase to refer to other sentient beings as 'mother sentient beings.' The point is, how you perceive sentient beings makes a difference (*Destructive Emotions*, 291-292).

Generosity

The Dalai Lama recounts the story of one of Shakyamuni's previous existences as the prince Vishvantara, "Liberator of the Universe", when he lived as a reincarnation of a bodhisattva. He was fearless, compassionate, with great faith in and devotion to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, making regular offerings to them. The Dalai Lama goes on to speak of this completely fictitious person as though he definitely existed, which clearly the Dalai Lama believes. He expects his readers to be moved by the example of virtue attributed to this figure of fancy. He states that at one time Vishvantara was so motivated to develop generosity that he was prepared to give away his limbs or even his entire body if necessary. Then as if this was historical fact, rather than what it really is, myth, he states that Vishvantara's motivation was so strong that "it caused an earthquake whose impact was felt even in the palace of Indra, the king of gods" (*Joy of Living*, 122). To test the depths of Vishvantara's commitment Indra, disguised as a blind beggar, implores Vishvantara to give him one of his eyes and Vishvantara

gave him both of his eyes. Indra then revealed himself and applauding Vishvantara caused his eyes to be restored, enabling Vishvantara to see more clearly than ever before.

The Dalai Lama continues to seek to use the fictional Vishvantara to motive his readers telling how he was later banished from the kingdom, how his commitment to generosity caused him to give away his small children to an old couple who had had no children in a completely irresponsible manner. For he did this when his wife was not present, though the Dalai Lama finds no ethical problem with this story. He even goes on to tell how Indra again tested Vishvantara's generosity by disguising himself as a lonely prince who ask that Vishvantara give him his wife to comfort him and give meaning to his existence, which he does. Again, it is extremely telling, that the Dalai Lama finds no ethical problem with this action and, on the contrary, finds it very motivating for himself.

Karma

The Dalai Lama defines *karma* as "former actions that have created predispositions in the mind" experienced either in the same life, the next life or an existence after that (*How to Practice*, 46-47).

Karma is virtuous if it generates a good transmigration but nonvirtuous if it generates a bad migration. With reference to rebirth karmas are of two types (*How to Practice*, 46-47):

1. Those that predetermine the type of birth and the length of life ("path of action"). Such a karma has four characteristics (e.g. giving to a beggar):
    a. Motivating intention.
    b. Correct identification of the person or object.
    c. Proper preparation.
    d. Successful completion.
2. Those that fill in the details of a lifetime, e.g. prosperity, good health, etc. These may be karmas that do not have all of the four characteristics.

This is a Sanskrit word meaning "action" and "denotes an active force, the inference being that the outcome of future events can be influenced by our actions" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 145). It is incorrect to think of *karma* as "some sort of independent energy which predestines the course of our whole life" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 145). Here the Buddhist emphasis on cause and effect must be recalled.

The karma of killing is the act of killing, not merely the repercussions of killing. Included in the karma of killing are the suffering caused to the victim and those who love and are dependent on the victim. But it also includes certain effects on the killer. The Dalai Lama claims that the "murderer's lack of remorse in taking human life began in a past life of simple disregard for the lives of others as seemingly inconsequential as animals or insects" and make it extremely unlikely that he would be reborn as a human. Indeed, a brutal sadistic murder is likely to be reborn in hell and one who kills in self-defence in a hell of lesser suffering. Further, killing and stealing and sexual misconduct all establish tendencies to repeat the same evils in the future (*Open Heart*, 66-67).

When asked how one should deal with the feeling of unfairness the Dalai Lama gave the example of families in India in which children have both eyes blind or are sometimes retarded. Their mothers still manage to care for them, simply saying, "This is due to their Karma; it is their fate." (*Art of Happiness*, 154-155). He immediately adds that it is a misunderstanding of karma to become helplessly fatalistic:

> …although one's experiences are a consequence of one's past deeds, that does not mean that the individual has no choice or that there is no room for initiative to change, to bring about a positive change… there is an important role for the individual agent to play in determining the course of the Karmic process (*Act of Happiness*, 155).

The Dalai Lama argues that the doctrine of karma promotes equanimity precisely because when we encounter unpleasant people we don't blame the individual person but the negative karma instead (*Many Ways*, 119).

The Dalai Lama tells of a monk whose five brothers and parents died because of Chinese cruelty and yet "[even] when he underwent torture and severe beatings, he was able to survive it and still feel happy by viewing it as a cleansing of his past negative Karma" (*Art of Happiness*, 302).

Having been given Matthew 5:1-10 to comment on by Christian mystics the Dalai Lama makes the fundamental error of concluding that Jesus is presenting a general principle of causality, akin to *karma*, that is, "if you act in a certain way, then you experience a certain effect, and if you do not act in a certain way, then you will not experience a certain effect" (*Good Heart*, 54). His misunderstanding is perhaps excusable given that so many Christians similarly misread the passage[6] failing to understand that Jesus is describing his disciples **as** the blessed ones who are already "poor in spirit", who "mourn", etc. and hence he can say, in summary, "You **are** the salt of the earth… You **are** the light of the world" (5:13, 14). What they will experience is not because of how they act but because God in grace has chosen them and made them his blessed ones. Consequently, Jesus is presenting the very opposite of the works-morality promoted by the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama comments:

> Unless you are able to put an end to the ignorance which is the first of the twelve links of dependent origination, it is not possible for us to put an end to karma. Even for a realized being such as an Arhat (who has totally destroyed all afflictive emotions), a residue of karma remains (*Many Ways*, 29).

The Dalai Lama discriminates between karmas of differing degrees of gravity:

> … it is possible for a person just walking along to kill ants without even seeing them. In that case, you engage in the action of killing, and you do accumulate karma - but it is pretty lightweight. You didn't even know that it happened.
>
> Now take little kids who have fun squashing flies, or giving them to spiders, not even knowing that flies have feelings. That type of killing is motivated by ignorance and delusion. Similarly, people who sacrifice animals thinking this is going to satisfy some god also act out of delusion because they don't know that this is really harmful. It would rarely be the case, I suspect, that they are doing this out of malice or any real wish to injure the creature in question. Rather, they have a notion that this is good, that it is going to please the god.
>
> That kind of killing arises out of the motivation of delusion. A second level or moral responsibility occurs when killing out of attachment. You want to eat that yak over there. You don't want to hurt it; you just want to eat its flesh. A further level is where

> you want to inflict injury. You really want to harm, and you go out and kill with that intent of malice.
> In terms of responsibility, the lightest karma is probably that which stems from delusion; somewhat heavier is that which stems from attachment; and the heaviest, and where you bear the greatest responsibility, would be that arising out of malice. People who are psychotic, schizophrenic, and so forth are suffering from an intense form of delusion. So killing out of schizophrenia would be out of a very deep delusion. The responsibility and karmic repercussions would be even less because of the intensity of the delusion (*Destructive Emotions*, 113-114).

Merit and Imprints

In Buddhism merit "is described as positive imprints on one's mind, or 'mental continuum,' that occur as a result of positive actions" (*Art of Happiness*, 72). The source or foundation from which a person can accumulate merit is called a Field of Merit. Further, the stores of merit which a person builds up provide the favourable conditions one needs to experience a higher level future rebirth. The Dalai Lama teaches that there are two Fields of Merit, that is, "two objects in relation to whom we can collect merit. One is sentient beings, and the other is the Buddha" (*Joy of Living*, 106). It is necessary to generate respect, faith and confidence in the Buddhas (*Art of Happiness*, 72). But the two fields are linked since the way to please the Buddhas is by pleasing sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama recognizes not only that an event which occurred in an earlier part of one's life may leave a strong imprint on the mind, but also believes in conditioning and imprints from previous lives.

The Dalai Lama teaches that one's migration in cyclic existence is determined by what types of actions have been effected and that there are three types of actions (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 27):

1. Virtuous actions that effect happy migrations, that is, rebirth as humans, demigods or gods (desire realm and lower form realm). These are called *meritorious actions*.
2. Non-virtuous actions that impel bad migrations, that is, rebirth as animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings. These are called *non-meritorious actions*.
3. Virtuous actions that cause beings to be reborn in the higher form and formless realms. These are called *invariable* (unfluctuating) *actions*.

The Dalai Lama teaches,

> We cannot say that just by reciting mantras, we shall quickly attain enlightenment, but we can say that such practices act as contributory causes for enlightenment. Likewise, while our practising dharma will not by itself protect our relatives from lower rebirths, it may act as a contributory cause for this (*Many Ways*, 165).

He also states that the Buddha

> said that all he can do is to teach us the dharma, the path to liberation from suffering; it is up to us to put it into practice – he washed his hands of that responsibility! Buddhism teaches us that there is no Creator and that we create everything for ourselves, we therefore are our own masters – within the limits of the law of cause and effect. And this law of karma teaches us that if we do good, we shall experience good results; if we do bad things, we shall experience unhappiness (*Many Ways*, 165-166).

Transforming the Mind

The Dalai Lama explains that the teachings of Buddhism fall into three collections of scriptures (*How to Practise*, 21-22):

1. The discipline of morality
2. The discourses on concentrated meditation
3. The manifest knowledge that explains the training in wisdom.

The main Buddhist practice involves achieving an extraordinary state of mind by uniting "calm abiding" (concentrated meditation) and "special insight" (wisdom) [the thrust of (2) and (3) respectively]. The foundation of this union is morality [the thrust of (1)] (*How to Practise*, 22).

The Dalai Lama states, "External circumstances are not what draw us into suffering. Suffering is caused and permitted by an untamed mind" (*Widening the Circle*, 22).

The Dalai Lama teaches that by disciplining our unruly minds through meditation we can awaken the Buddha nature. When he speaks about training the "mind" he has a broad conception in mind which goes beyond cognitive ability and intellect, being closer to psyche or spirit, including intellect and feeling, heart and mind. His concern is with effecting "a transformation of our attitude, our entire outlook and approach to living" (*Art of Happiness*, 15).

The Dalai Lama compares the undisciplined mind with an unattended elephant which blunders around out of control, wreaking havoc, though he observes that the failure "to restrain the negative impulses of mind far exceed the damage a rampaging elephant can cause" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 86).

The Dalai Lama urges his readers to follow the Buddha's advice on the grounds that "none of us wants suffering; we all want happiness". The advice is: "Do not commit any evil deeds; collect all virtuous qualities; completely transform your mind – that is the teaching of the Buddha" (*Joy of Living*, ix). The Dalai Lama discriminates between negative deeds (= evil deeds) and positive deeds (= good deeds), the former leading to suffering and the latter to happiness. But cultivating positive deeds cannot be achieved merely by changing physical and verbal behaviour but presupposes a transformation of the mind.

"The most distinguishing feature of the Dalai Lama's method of training the mind involves the idea that *positive states of mind can act as direct antidotes to negative states of mind*" (*Art of Happiness*, 243). So the Dalai Lama states, "We cannot overcome anger and hatred simply by suppressing them. *We need to actively cultivate the antidotes to hatred: patience and tolerance*" (Art of Happiness, 249).

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul exhorts,

> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul similarly urges transformation rooted in a renewing of the mind. The goal of this transformation is not happiness *per se* but obedience to God's will, though the transformed person certainly finds fulfillment in such obedience.

How comparable are these two approaches? Is what the Dalai Lama means by "transforming the mind" comparable to what Paul means by "renewing the mind"? Is what the Dalai Lama means by "positive actions" comparable with what Paul has in mind when he speaks of offering up our bodies as living sacrifices and not being conformed to the pattern of this world?

The goal of Buddhists is to attain nirvana and the state of Buddhahood. The Dalai Lama insists that human beings have the ability to achieve these goals. He describes the state of enlightenment as one in which we experience freedom from "the burden of disturbing emotions". He maintains that the mind is intrinsically pure by nature and that such disturbing emotions "are only temporary flaws", which can only be removed by a transformation of the mind (*Joy of Living*, x).

There are a number of problems raised by these statements:
1. *The epistemological problem*. How does the Dalai Lama know that the states of nirvana and Buddhahood actually exist?
2. *The empirical problem*. The Dalai Lama's confidence that people have the ability to achieve these states is grounded in his belief that the human mind is intrinsically pure. But does this belief fit the facts?
3. *The moral problem*. What does the Dalai Lama mean by the 'purity' of the mind? Does the removal of disturbing emotions actually purify the mind?

Biblical revelation is at complete loggerheads with the Dalai Lama's claims:
1. The ultimate state of nirvana or Buddhahood envisaged by Buddhists is a delusion. The fatal error and, indeed, "evil" of Buddhism, is to deny the existence of God or treat "God" as an irrelevancy. The Bible insists that a person dies once and then faces God's judgment (Hebrews 9:27). So, whether a person attains an ultimate state which involves no suffering or not depends not on what that person does or decides but on what God as judge decides. If, in the course of this life, Buddhist practitioners do succeed in attaining an unusual degree of mental and emotional calmness then this will in fact be stripped away from them after death.
2. The human mind, since the Fall, is inherently evil not pure:
    a. Why did the Great Flood occur? Answer: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5; see too 8:21).
    b. The Great Physician himself, through Jeremiah, gives this diagnosis: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).
    c. What did Jesus teach on this subject? Answer: "But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:18-19).
3. The most fundamental expression of evil in the human heart is the failure to acknowledge God and it is this which places all people under God's judgment, including Buddhist monks and the Dalai Lama himself: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who

suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them" (Romans 1:18-19). The Bible here is uncompromising. Ignorance of God is not grounded in intellectual difficulties with the concept of God or in accidents of birth and enculturation. Ignorance of God is a moral problem. No human being has any excuse for failing to know God: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). People, including the Dalai Lama, fail to know God precisely because "godlessness and wickedness" is intrinsic to their minds.

4. While the Bible consistently teaches that people are radically evil it simultaneously recognizes that as those created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) they are also capable of attaining great heights and doing many noble and fine things. But what we can say is that while the removal of "disturbing emotions" and of "evil deeds", as understood by the Dalai Lama, may indeed transform or change a person into a more noble and moral person this still does not deal with the intrinsic impurity and evil of the human mind. For this can only be addressed when, as per Romans 12:1-1 (see above), transformation through the renewing of the mind is set in the context of worshiping God and seeking to obey his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Dalai Lama maintains that it is in Tibet that "the complete range of the practice of the teachings of the Buddha" (*Joy of Living*, 47) have been maintained. Emphasising that mental transformation is the most important Buddhist practice, he goes on to compare training the unruly mind with training a wild horse.

He teaches that there are countless varieties of mind within our consciousness, with all of them falling into three basic categories:

1. Neutral
2. Beneficial and positive
3. Negative and harmful

He claims, "Of all the negative aspects of the mind, it is basically anger, attachment, and competitiveness that are responsible for other negative states of the mind" (*Joy of Living*, 50-51). He encourages his readers to familiarize themselves with why such states "are negative, how they arise in us, and how they leave us disturbed and unhappy", calling this mental transformation practice using familiarization *analytical meditation*.

He encourages that as this process is pursued and insight into the object of meditation is gained that effort should be made to let the mind dwell on this for a while with single-pointed concentration. He also encourages his readers to get up early in the morning and devote one or two hours for meditation practice and to stop procrastinating, warning that otherwise we might die before we ever do it. He also urges readers to begin when they are young since this is the time "when the psychic channels and energies within them are fresh" (*Joy of Living*, 52). He promises,

> As a great practitioner you will welcome death, as a moderate practitioner you will not fear death, and even as an inferior practitioner, you will have nothing to regret at the time of death (*Joy of Living*, 53).

He also advocates the confession of the negative deeds we have committed and instigated others to do since beginningless time, due to our ignorance. This, he says,

purifies our minds. We are encouraged to do this, being aware that death may come at any time, while asking the objects of refuge to give us protection and to help us to liberate ourselves. But he contends that at the end the only source of refuge for a person is whatever merit that person has accumulated, the virtuous quality that one has developed within one's mind. He also insists, "There is no medicine to cure the disturbing emotions; the only remedy is the instruction and teaching of the Buddha" (*Joy of Living*, 55-56).

Noting that the Tibetan word of "meditation" is gom, meaning "to familiarize", the Dalai Lama explains that using meditation involves familiarizing ourselves with a chosen object (*Open Heart*, 48). The Dalai Lama teaches that there are many ways to meditate and notes the following types (*How to Practice*, 118-119; *Good Heart*, 46; *Open Heart*, 51-54):

1. Analysing (Analytical / Contemplative) and Stabilising (Single-Pointed / Placement) Meditation:
    a. Analysing: use reason to analyse a topic such as the impermanence of phenomena.
    b. Stabilising (Settled): fixing the mind on a single object or topic so cultivating "calm abiding". Topics recommended for this purpose are:
        i. The breath.
        ii. Establishments through mindfulness, e.g. body, feelings, mind or phenomena such as impermanence.
        iii. The first letter of one's name on a disc of light outside or inside one's body.
        iv. Applying mindfulness to whatever one does, e.g. mindful of putting the right foot forward, then the left, then the right, etc. when walking (a Thai Buddhist emphasis).
        v. An image of the body of Shakyamuni Buddha (he suggests that a Christian might use an image of Jesus in the same way).
2. Subjective and Objective Meditation:
    a. Subjective: meditation which aims at cultivating a new or strengthened perspective or attitude, e.g. cultivating faith or compassion.
    b. Objective: meditation on a topic (e.g. impermanence) or an object (e.g. the golden body of a Buddha).
3. Wish Meditation: wishing to be filled with the compassion and wisdom of a Buddha.
4. Imaginative Meditation: envisioning oneself to have qualities one does not yet possess, e.g. the practice of deity yoga in which one sees oneself "as an ideal being whose body is made from the light of wisdom" (119).

The Dalai Lama explains what deity yoga involves (*How to Practice*, 185-187):

1. Replacing one's mind "as it ordinarily appears, full of troubling emotions, with a mind of pure wisdom motivated by compassion.
2. Substituting one's body "as it ordinarily appears (composed of flesh, blood, and bone) with a body fashioned from compassionately motivated wisdom, that is, meditating on one's own body as if it were that of a deity.
3. Developing a sense of pure self, involving "visualizing yourself with a Buddha's body, activities, resources, and surroundings", that is, "taking imagination as the spiritual path."

The Dalai Lama testifies:

> One time in the main temple of Dharamsala I was performing the ritual of imagining myself as a deity of Highest Yoga Tantra, called Guhyasamaja. My mind continuously remained on the recitation of the ritual text, and when the words "I myself" came, I completely forgot about my usual self in relation to my combination of mind and body. Instead, I had a very clear sense of "I" in relation to the new, pure combination of mind and body of Guhyasamaja that I was imagining. Since this is the type of self-identification that is at the heart of Tantric yoga, the experience confirmed for me that with enough time I could definitely achieve the extraordinary deep states mentioned in the scriptures (*How to Practice*, 188-189).

He teaches that people need to know how to prepare to meditate if meditation is to be successful (see *Joy of Living*, 58-66; *How to Practice*, 120-122):

1. Adopt a suitable diet which fosters clarity of mind. The Dalai Lama recommends vegetarian food, though he recognizes for some health conditions it may be necessary to eat meat.
2. Ensuring one has the right amount of sleep, i.e. too much makes the mind dull and too little is disruptive.
3. Make the place where one practices clean and comfortable, avoiding the eight worldly concerns:
    a. Gain and loss.
    b. Pleasure and pain.
    c. Praise and blame.
    d. Fame and disrepute.
4. The Dalai Lama says that physical posture is critical to focused meditation and recommends, if possible, adopting either the full- or half-lotus position. He advises using two cushions, one placed under the rear so that it is higher than one's knees, with the backbone straightened like an arrow and the head bent down a little, eyes over the nose to the front, tongue against the roof of the mouth, arms a little loose.
5. Options for positioning of the hands:
    a. Japanese Zen: left hand, palm up, is placed on top of the right which is also palm up.
    b. Tibetan: right hand, palm up, is placed on top of the left which is also palm up.
    c. Tantric: put the right hand on top of the left with both palms up and with the thumbs pressed together in the form of a triangle, the base of which is about four finger-widths below the navel.
6. Arrange an altar and set up images:
    a. Pay "equal respect to the images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, regardless of their aesthetic quality or the material from which they are made" (*Joy of Living*, 58).
    b. Arrange the images properly in their respective order.
    c. Offerings:
        i. Place offerings before the images which are:
            - Pure.
            - Obtained by honest means.
        ii. Bowls of water offered to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas:
            - One must not first set up a line of empty bowls.
            - Pick them up in a stack and fill the top bowl with water.
            - Take the first one off the stack pouring some water into the next bowl and so on till there is a little water in each bowl placed on the altar.

- Now fill the bowls with water, not letting them splash since this is disrespectful, remembering one is making these offerings "to higher, realized beings".
- Water should be poured "like the shape of a barley grain": "thin and gentle at the beginning, thick and steady in the middle, and tapering off again at the end" (*Joy of Living*, 61).

iii. Prepare a clean lamp, taking care that when one burns a butter lamp that it looks clean and tidy.

7. Pay physical homage, bowing down to the objects of refuge:
    a. Either:
        i. A half prostration: touch the five limbs of our body to the ground: both knees, the palms of both hands and our forehead. The Dalai Lama teaches it is important that outstretched palms touch the ground, not simply our fists; or
        ii. A full prostration: "let our entire body down onto the ground like a felled tree", letting both hands entirely touch the ground, but not splaying out our arms like the limbs of a frog, but rising quickly, not allowing the body to rest. The Dalai Lama teaches that we gain extra merit by stretching ourselves out to the fullest extent.
    b. Fold the hands together:
        i. Leave a space between them as if we were holding a jewel", representing "emptiness and the possibility of attaining the Buddha's Truth Body[7]" (*Joy of Living*, 60). The shape formed by the hands symbolize the Form Body of the Buddha.
        ii. With the hands so shaped touch:
            - The forehead, representing our physical actions.
            - The throat, representing our speech.
            - The heart, representing the indestructible energy where the primordial (subtle) mind resides.
    c. Bow down and touch the ground.
8. Repent of any unwholesome deeds one has committed.
9. Rejoice, without feeling jealous, in:
    a. The virtuous deeds done by other Dharma practitioners so as to gain great virtue ourselves.
    b. The accumulation of merit.
    c. The liberation of sentient beings from the sufferings of samsara, the cycle of existence.
    d. The causes of the attainment of Buddhahood.
    e. The ten levels or "grounds" of the bodhisattvas. The tenth ground is the penultimate enlightenment state and the bodhisattva who attains this level is called a Bodhisattva bhumi (*Many Ways*, 131).
    f. The resulting state of Buddhahood.
    g. The generation of the awakening mind (filled with compassion for other sentient beings).
10. Make supplications to the Buddhas to turn the wheel of the doctrine and receive blessings:
    a. With folded hands (a physical expression of supplication), one makes requests to all Buddhas of the ten directions, namely:

        i. Light the lamp of Dharma.
        ii. Don't pass away into final nirvana (where they would not be able to hear these prayers).
        iii. Don't forsake sentient beings but "stay continuously in this world for countless eons to teach the Dharma to suffering sentient beings" (*Joy of Living*, 62).
11. The dedication: dedicate all the virtuous activities one has just performed in these rituals, "wishing that they all become a cause for dispelling the sufferings of countless sentient beings" (*Joy of Living*, 62-63).
12. Sit, observing the proper posture:
    a. Slightly raise the back of the meditation seat, to help straighten the back, "which assists the proper flow of energies within the energy channels" (*Joy of Living*, 63).
    b. Examine one's motivation:
        i. Transform neutral motivation into a virtuous state of mind.
        ii. If the mind is under some negative influence meditate on the flow of one's breath, seeking to transform it into a neutral state, thence into a positive state.
    c. Recall the subject on one's meditation. In this context he encourages the development of complete pacifism, a willingness out of compassion for all sentient beings for other sentient beings to do what they will with one's body. He also encourages adopting the mindset of a bodhisattva which involves asking that one "become the basis for the survival of all sentient beings" (*Joy of Living*, 66).
13. Reflect on the four immeasurable wishes:
    a. Love: wishing that sentient beings have happiness.
    b. Compassion, wishing that they be free from suffering.
    c. Joy in their abiding forever in bliss.
    d. Equanimity free of attachment and aversion.
14. Visualise the merit field.
15. Offer a mandala representing the entire universe.

This ritual can also be summarized as the Seven Limbs of Practice (*Open Heart*, 172-180):

1. Homage
2. Offering
3. Confession
4. Rejoicing
5. Request
6. Beseech
7. Dedication

The Dalai Lama relates how he personally praises "the amazing qualities of the Buddha", recalling how he used no sharp weapons or missiles but only the implements of compassion and love. He uses a traditional illustration of the Buddha's compassion. Two people sit on either side of him, one respecting him and anointing him with sandalwood oil and the other cutting away his flesh with a sharp knife. Yet the Buddha does not differentiate between them since he "has no special friends to care for and no special enemies to be eliminated" (*Joy of Living*, 58).

Much of what has been said above has already been covered in prior remarks. But, from a biblical standpoint, the Dalai Lama's advice on how to meditate is an incitement to idolatry. This is not merely because of the explicit use of altars and images and offerings and the prescribed rituals of what amounts to worship, though this is reason enough. The Dalai Lama explicitly advises,

> You should visualize… that while in the presence of a thangka or an image of the Buddha, you are in the actual presence of the Buddha Shakyamuni. Then, in the display of the other thangkas representing the six ornaments and the two Supremes, you imagine that you are seeing the eight great spiritual masters of Nalanda[8]. Imagine that these are not just images of thangkas, but mean the actual presence of these masters. And imagine that in front of the presence of Buddha and these great, highly accomplished masters, you are taking refuge, generating Bodhicitta for the benefit of all suffering, sentient beings (*Many Ways*, 133).

In addition, by seeking to attain Buddhahood and adopt the mindset of a bodhisattva, one attempts to occupy a role reserved for God alone in Christ. Further still, biblical idolatry is pre-eminently concerned with exchanging God's self-revelation for something else ("they exchanged the truth of God for a lie", Romans 1:25) and the Dalai Lama makes it plain that his whole conception of what is praiseworthy is based on what consideration of the Buddha 'reveals' to him, namely "compassion and love". We have already seen that the Dalai Lama's concepts of compassion and love are objectionable and his illustration of the two contrasting persons on either side of the Buddha underscores this, with its implication that all sentient beings are the same and that to have special relationships is wrong. Further, this illustration is all the more objectionable given that it is based again on a 'let's pretend' that the Buddha was like this. For though there seems little doubt that there was an historical figure identifiable with Shakyamuni, this personage is so encased in myth, legend and fancy that it is almost impossible to establish precisely what kind of man he was.

The Dalai Lama explains that the offerings made to the Buddha, the Dharma and the community of bodhisattvas are made physically, verbally and mentally:

1. Given our limited possessions we are encouraged to mentally visualize all the offerings we could otherwise give (flowers, fruit, medicinal substances, and precious jewels).
2. We are also encouraged to ask that the Buddha, Dharma and Spiritual Community accept our offerings of all in the world which has no owner – "pure, clean water, mountains, forests, peaceful isolated places, clouds of incense, plants covered with beautiful flowers, trees laden with fruit, uncultivated crops, oceans, pools covered with lotus flowers, sweetly singing birds" (*Joy of Living*, 59).

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). It is only because the Dalai Lama refuses to acknowledge God as Creator that he can speak of offering that which belongs to God to the Buddha, Dharma and Spiritual Community. What he is advocating is therefore reprehensible.

The Dalai Lama speaks of repenting of unwholesome deeds we commit, but, of course, there is no thought here of seeking God's forgiveness, only of doing this by way of cultivating a strong sense of restraint. Once again the Dalai Lama encourages various rituals as "powerful antidotes to purify negative deeds", namely, "[reciting] certain mantras, particularly the hundred-syllable mantra and confessional prayers,

circumambulating the temple, and doing prostrations", with "a determination to refrain from repeating our mistakes in the future" (*Joy of Living*, 61).

The Dalai Lama tells his readers that to cultivate mindfulness they should also remember the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are omniscient. From a biblical perspective this is blasphemous since only God is omniscient and this effectively treats Buddhas and bodhisattvas as if they were as great as the Creator God. This is all the more so since the Dalai Lama also teaches that the Buddhas are effectively omnipresent as well:

> Understanding that you are always in the presence of the omniscient Buddhas is the way to recollect the Buddha and his qualities. This is very important for your daily practice (*Joy of Living*, 82).

To generate confidence and determination the Dalai Lama advises thinking about the Buddha nature. This involves realizing that all sentient beings are on a par since they all possess the Buddha nature and it also involves thinking about the Buddhas of the past, none of whom, apart from Siddhartha, have an evidenced place in history and are in fact merely fictional creations of vivid human imaginations.

The Dalai Lama urges the development of what he calls "single-pointed concentration" as a prerequisite for cultivating special insight into emptiness. In order to develop such concentration he advises staying in an isolated and quiet place (*Joy of Living*, 141).

He identifies two causes of an inability to focus the mind on an object – excitement which distracts the mind and laxity which prevents clarity of the mind. The former is countered by reflecting on sobering objects: "the faults of the disturbing emotions, the nature of impermanence, or the suffering nature of the cycles of existence." The latter is addressed by reflecting on enervating objects such as "the qualities of the awakening mind, the Buddha nature that is present within you, and the fact that you have obtained a life as a free and fortunate human being" (*Joy of Living*, 147). If the would-be meditator finds he or she can't stop worrying over something he recommends either (1) shifting focus to the inhalation and exhalation of breath, or (2) reciting the mantra *om mani padme hum* (*How to Practice*, 133).

As for choice of the object of meditation, any object will do, whether a stone or a flower. For example, when choosing a flower he advises:

1. Looking at it clearly, observing its colour and shape.
2. Meditating on the mental image that this observation projects in the mind.

He particularly advises meditating on an image of the Buddha, especially a mental image, because this enables one to accumulate great merit:

1. Visualise the image at a distance equivalent to a full-length prostration in front of you at the level of your brows.
2. Imagine the image is three to four inches high or smaller (*Open Heart*, 131).
3. Imagine "the image is luminous, but slightly heavy, to counter excitement" (*Joy of Living*, 148). "Visualising a radiant image helps undermine the natural tendency toward mental torpor or sleepiness." But seeing it as fairly heavy averts the inclination toward mental restlessness (*Open Heart*, 131).

He also has advice for those who "have received a tantric empowerment" and who "meditate as explained in the tantras":

1. Visualise your body as the body of a deity and meditate on that.
2. Upon entering into the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra focus on specific points within the body:
    a. Visualise channels within the body.
    b. Focus on the energies flowing through these channels; OR
    c. Focus on a particular drop within the channels.

Another alternative object of meditation is the nature of the mind itself, its clarity and luminosity:

1. Stop thinking about all past experiences.
2. Stop thinking about future plans and projects.
3. Stop the arising of conceptual thoughts.
4. Identify the luminosity of the mind and then let the mind abide on this, the mind focusing on the mind, "a mind experiencing and a mind being experienced" (*Joy of Living*, 148).

He further recommends the Mahayana visualization practice of *Tong-Len* ("Giving and Receiving"), "in which one mentally visualizes taking on another's pain and suffering, and in turn giving them all of your resources, good health, fortune, and so on" (*Art of Happiness*, 203), that is, exchanging one's own welfare for the sufferings of other sentient beings, which he contends helps cultivate the awakening mind:

1. Meditate on your equality with all other sentient beings.
2. Cultivate a mind willing to benefit all other sentient beings. He comments:

> Even the tiniest insects are like you in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering. If a tiny insect is moving toward you and you put out your finger to touch it, it will back off and stay quiet, trying to protect itself. Even though such an insect is so fragile and weak, it tries its best to remove its sufferings and to cultivate happiness. Watching such helpless insects I cannot help but feel sad (*Joy of Living*, 149).

   He even treats evil spirits as sentient beings that want happiness and do not want suffering, as beings of the same nature as ourselves. The Dalai Lama is at complete odds with biblical thought as to the utterly irredeemable evil of Satan and demons. The Dalai Lama presents the absurd claim that meditating on compassion helps such beings and even considers that on one occasion his actions in so doing may have resulted in expelling an evil spirit near where he lived in Dharamsala.
   He seeks to explain how the Buddhist conception of non-self links in with the doctrine of rebirth, arguing that while there is continuity between the person one is now and the person one will be in the future they are in fact two separate persons. Further, these "persons" have no intrinsic existence just as a rosary or army, so he claims, has no intrinsic existence. All of these are but aggregations, so he dubiously contends.
3. Think about how sentient beings suffer, think about how they are kind to you and think about the reasons for removing their sufferings.
4. Give up self-centeredness, that is, realize there "is no self existing intrinsically from beginningless time" (*Joy of Living*, 155).
5. The supreme secret practice is to exchange yourself with others with a view to attaining Buddhahood.

In the *Art of Happiness* (212-214) he gives more particular direction about how to practice *Tong-Len*:

1. Initial visualisation:
    a. One side: a group of suffering people in desperate need.
    b. Other side: yourself as the self-centered person.
    c. In the middle: yourself as a neutral observer.
2. Assess which side you are naturally inclined towards.
3. Focus on the needy and desperate people, directing all your positive energy towards them, mentally giving them "your successes, your resources, your collection of virtues."
4. Visualise "taking upon yourself their suffering, their problems, and all their negativities", visualizing them "in the form of poisonous substances, dangerous weapons, or terrifying animals – things the very sight of which normally makes you shudder" (the Dalai Lama acknowledges for some emotionally vulnerable people this may not be advisable). Possibly begin this phase "by first imagining your own future suffering and, with an attitude of compassion, take your own future suffering upon yourself right now, with the sincere wish of freeing yourself from all future suffering."
5. Combine the 'receiving' with inhaling and the 'giving' with exhaling. The Dalai Lama speaks of how he often breathed in the poisons of Chinese torturers of the Tibetan people (hatred, fear, cruelty), then breathed out for them compassion and forgiveness (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 74).

The Dalai Lama recommends a form of meditation designed to enable a person "to recognize the underlying nature of the mind, the qualities of 'clarity' and 'knowing'" (*Art of Happiness*, 312). This involves meditating on nonconceptuality. He explains, "This is not a mere state of dullness, or a blanked-out state of mind. Rather, what you should do is, first of all, generate the determination that 'I will maintain a state without conceptual thoughts'" (*Art of Happiness*, 312). He advises:

1. Preparing for meditation by doing three rounds of inhaling and exhaling, focusing attention simply on the breath.
2. Withdrawing the mind inward and not letting it pay attention to sensory objects, while maintaining alertness and mindfulness.
3. Try to see and experience the natural state of consciousness by also withdrawing the mind from thinking about the past and future, about memories and plans, fears and hopes.

The Dalai Lama teaches that there are nine states of concentration and six powers by which they are accomplished (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 39; *Open Heart*, 141-145):

Nine States of Concentration		*Six Powers*	
1	*Setting the mind/Placement*: aiming it at an internal object, e.g. the visualized form of Buddha.	1	Power of hearing
2	*Continually setting/Continual Placement*: prolonging concentration on the object.	2	Power of thinking
3	*Re-setting/Re-placement*: immediately recognizing distraction and returning to the object.	3	Power of mindfulness
4	*Increased setting/Close Placement*: the mind moves from concentrating on the gross (aspects of the visualized object) to the subtle (details of the object).		

5	*Disciplining*: knowing and delighting in the good qualities of meditative stabilization.	4	Power of awareness
6	*Pacifying*: ceasing dislike for meditative stabilization.		
7	*Thorough pacifying*: by effort relinquishing subtle lethargy and excitement immediately after they arise.	5	Power of effort
8	*Making one-pointed/Single-pointed*: generating continuous meditative stabilization without interruption.		
9	*Putting in equipoise/Balanced Placement*: spontaneously fixing on the object without needing to make any effort to rely on mindfulness and awareness	6	Power of familiarity

The Dalai Lama tells the story of a Tibetan Buddhist named Lobsang Tenzin who developed the practice of inner heat, *tumo*. He was engaged in tantric meditation in a cave when he saw an intense light which became more intense. He felt a searing heat in his navel area and found that by focusing his mind on it he could expand or contract it and control its movement. So he moved it to his heart, discovered he was now immune to the biting cold and able to generate *tumo*. After a year this psychic heat was more powerful and more easily generated. He could now guide it into a central psychic channel in his body and this resulted in a profound and long-lasting state of bliss. He then networked with other *tumo* practitioners in India. The Dalai Lama spoke of his ability to generate this heat being tested and confirmed at Harvard. Tenzin claimed that his progress in spiritual practice was due to the fact that he had learnt to forgive his Chinese torturers (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 71-73).

Wisdom

The Dalai Lama teaches that the cultivation of the awakening mind needs to be complemented by wisdom. By this he means coming "to understand the nature of the Buddha, that he or she possesses a mind with unique qualities, free from all obstructions" (*Joy of Living*, 4-5). The Dalai Lama speaks of the possibility of a bodhisattva, full of compassion for sentient beings, who does not understand emptiness. Indeed, he distinguishes between compassion and wisdom as follows:

> Compassion focusing on sentient beings
> And wisdom focusing on enlightenment (*Joy of Living*, 5).

He encourages augmenting a compassion-based aspiration for enlightenment with "the knowledge that enlightenment can be achieved" and with the wisdom that realizes "the emptiness of intrinsic existence" (*Joy of Living*, 5). Compassion for others naturally flows when we understand how to eliminate suffering and view other sentient beings as ignorant of the ways to free themselves.

Buddhist wisdom is the realization that emptiness, dependent arising and the Middle Way are synonymous (*Joy of Living*, 165).

The Dalai Lama states that all Buddhist schools accept what are called "the four seals" (*Joy of Living*, 174; *Key to the Middle Way*, 53; *Many Ways*, 126):

1. All composite things are impermanent. "Shantideva's Bodhicharyavatara asks how an impermanent thing can develop hatred towards another which is also impermanent and equally transitory" (*Many Ways*, 126).
2. All contaminated things are miserable.
3. All phenomena are empty and selfless.

4. Nirvana is peace.

Rebirth

The Dalai Lama is asked what is reborn. He responds,

> Generally speaking, what is reborn are our habits. That is the essence of it. Whatever the mind holds onto is reborn: what we love, hate, fear, adore, and have opinions about. Our identification with these aspects of the mind has a momentum behind it. Attachment is like a flywheel. Enlightenment is the ending of rebirth, which means a complete non-attachment or non-identification with all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, physical sensations, and ideas. So that when we talk about escaping from birth and death, or the ending of rebirth, enlightenment is really the natural condition of the mind when it's not confused, identified, or caught up with any internal or external object.
>
> What is being reborn from life to life is that in us which identifies with objects blindly. Or in the case of a bodhisattva within the Mahayana tradition – which is stepping slightly outside my tradition, so I stand to be corrected by the people from the northern tradition – he or she is one who chooses to be born out of a sense of compassion, caring for the welfare of other beings. Normally, for most human beings, the process of rebirth happens more by accident than by design. But the conditions of an uncontrolled rebirth are determined by what one clings to. So if a bodhisattva is deliberately born, this will result from the act of deliberately holding onto something. Now, I can pick this leaflet up and hold it, but that holding can be done peacefully. Or, I can cling to it, saying, "This is my leaflet!" The latter is identification and possessiveness; it is a blind holding. Rebirth can occur simply by picking up a body and holding it without attachment, and a bodhisattva would pick up a body or a human life in this way (*Good Heart*, 85-86).

The Dalai Lama teaches that cyclic existence involves three types of abodes (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 24-25):

1. The desire realm. Beings in this realm experience the pleasures of the "five desirous attributes": forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and tangible objects.
2. The form realm:
    a. The lower form realm. Here beings are not attracted to external pleasures but experience the pleasures of internal contemplation.
    b. The higher form realm. Here beings shun all pleasurable feelings and experience but neutral feelings.
3. The formless realm. Beings experience only neutral feelings, for in this realm there is only mind, existing one-pointedly and without distraction, because in this realm there are no forms, sounds, odours, tastes or tangible objects and none of the five senses by which such things are enjoyed. The beings who inhabit this realm are devas (gods), though there are also devas to be found in the form realm.

The Dalai Lama contends that the sufferings we observe in animals "are the result of negative deeds" (*Joy of Living*, 12). This, of course, assumes that these sentient beings engaged in unwholesome actions in a previous state of existence. The Bible is at complete odds with the Buddhist conception of reincarnation.

The Dalai Lama next states Buddhist teaching that "the mind is the main cause of our being reborn in the cycle of existence" and also "the main factor that allows us to gain freedom from this cycle of birth and death" (*Joy of Living*, x).

The Bible is again at complete odds with Buddhist belief in *samsara*, the cycle of life and death and rebirth. As the reference from Hebrews 9:27 indicated, people die once and then they face God's judgment. At that time God's decision is binding for eternity. Indeed, no-one spoke more about the terrible reality of hell than Jesus (Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 18:8-9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43-49; Luke 12:5; cf. Matthew 3:10; 7:19; 13:40; Luke 3:9, 17). Jesus makes it abundantly clear that hell is an eternal and irrevocable state (Matthew 10:28; 25:41; Mark 9:48; Luke 16:19-31). Buddhism miscalculates because it does not factor in God. After death there is no rebirth into another life, only the prospect of facing God and experiencing for evermore what he decrees. God's Mind and Will, not our mind, exercised in grace, is "the main cause" to "our being reborn" in the Kingdom of God (under the sphere of his rule) and "the main factor" allowing people to experience freedom from eternal death and torment.

Again appealing to the fiction of reincarnation the Dalai Lama encourages us to see all sentient beings – and remember this must include cockroaches – as our relatives on the basis that "[there] is hardly a sentient being who has not been one of our relatives, such as a mother, in the past".

The Dalai Lama says,

> Over the course of many lifetimes everyone has likely been in many types of relationships with everyone else… Looking toward the future [he means future rebirths], there is no reason why an enemy must remain an enemy and a friend remain a friend. Friends, enemies, and neutral people are equal because they may shift interchangeably from one role to the next (*Widening the Circle*, 33).

He advises,

> Consider that when you were born from a womb as an animal or a human, or from an egg as a bird, a fish, or a spider, you required a mother. And because your births are innumerable, you must have had innumerable mothers over your many lifetimes. The implication is that every living being has been your mother at some time. If you have trouble coming to that conclusion, see if you can follow the continuum of lifetimes and discover any sentient being who has not been your mother; such a conclusion is impossible (*Widening the Circle*, 44).

It is with this line of absurd thinking that the Dalai Lama advises developing feelings of compassion towards our enemies. Effectively, an Iraqi being tortured by Saddam Hussein is encouraged to have compassion towards him on the basis that in a previous life he was once his mother. A Jewish mother in a concentration camp whose child has been hideously maimed and tortured is encouraged to have compassion for the torturer on the basis that he was once her mother.

If most ants have once been my relatives then this assumes an immense number of past existences, given the trillions of ants, let alone the trillions and billions of other creatures inhabiting our earth, let alone the billions/trillions (?) inhabiting other realms of existence. This is highly depressing. If I have had millions / billions / trillions (whatever) of past existences what confidence can I possibly have that in this **one** life I will make any substantial progress towards attaining nirvana and Buddhahood? Realistically, must I not expect that I will have to be reborn many more times (is it hundreds, thousands, millions or ?) to even get close?

The Dalai Lama says that by way of offering comfort to those who have suffered a great loss the grieving person "can take consolation in the fact that their loved one will be reborn" (*Art of Happiness*, 145).

The Dalai Lama teaches that there are different levels of consciousness and that when at death the most subtle consciousness ceases the intermediate state between lives begins. As an intermediate being one takes on the form of the next lifetime and seeks a place of rebirth:

> If you are to be reborn as a human, you arrive at the place where the man and woman having the karma of being your parents are lying together. **You approach with lust, desiring the mother if you are to be reborn as a boy and desiring the father if you are to be reborn as a girl. You rush to them to engage in sex. When you cannot slake your desire, you become angry, and your life as an intermediate being ends**. You are reborn to your next lifetime.
> Once again, you are born, age, become sick, and die. The same process repeats over and over. Even between lives you accumulate karma every minute (*Widening the Circle*, 91; my emphasis).

The Dalai Lama comments:

> From the Buddhist viewpoint, our life on this planet lasts for a maximum of a hundred years. It is like a tourist vacation. From the depths of mysterious space, we arrive here to stay for just a hundred years. When you compare that to the billions and billions of light years we have existed, a hundred years is insignificant! (*Many Ways*, 26).

Again:

> In the Buddhadharma, and in some ancient Hindu traditions, we believe in rebirth, life after life. So in this lifetime, if we develop in the spiritual field, even a limited progress will make an impact on our next life. Then another attempt can be made. The little progress will certainly carry a positive effect on our coming lives.
> So that is why Buddha Shakyamuni tells us that a practitioner should think in terms of aeons, not just days and hours. Our life, from a Buddhist viewpoint, has no beginning. The desire to overcome suffering, right from the beginning, is there. But that desire alone does not achieve the goal. Along with that desire, we have to follow the right method, the proper method. We have to make the effort tirelessly, irrespective of the years or aeons. Then, there will be an end to our suffering. Buddha demonstrated this very clearly (*Many Ways*, 42).

Suffering

The Dalai Lama teaches that whatever form suffering assumes this means

> one initially must have done a bad deed through an undisciplined mind and thereby 'accumulated' such a deed. The deed's potency is established in the mind, and later, when one meets with certain causes, suffering is undergone. Thus, all pleasures and pains basically derive from the mind. For this reason, the mind cannot be disciplined without religious practice, and by not disciplining the mind bad actions are 'accumulated'. They in turn establish potencies in one's mental continuum, in dependence on which the fruits of suffering are produced (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 16).

The Dalai Lama distinguishes between two broad types of suffering':

1. 'Avoidable': arising from war, poverty, violence, crime, illiteracy and certain diseases.
2. 'Unavoidable':
    a. Sickness,
    b. Old age,

c. Death.
d. Meeting with the unwanted (mishaps and accidents).
e. Having what we want taken away from us (refugees losing their countries, being forcibly parted from loved ones).
f. Not obtaining what we desire, e.g. the harvest fails, an unsuccessful business venture.
g. Uncertainty, not knowing when and where we will meet with hardship.
h. Lack of contentment when we achieve all we have striven for.
i. Experiences expected to be pleasurable turn out to be a source of suffering.

The Dalai Lama acknowledges that when he hears bad news from Tibet, as he often does, his initial reaction is to be very sad. But, he says, "by placing it in context and by reminding myself that – given the basic human disposition towards affection – freedom, truth and justice must eventually prevail, I find I can cope reasonably well. Feelings of helpless anger, which do nothing but poison the mind, embitter the heart and enfeeble the will seldom arise, even following the worst news" (*Ancient Wisdom*, 148).

The root causes of suffering are ignorance, craving and hatred, the so-called "three poisons".

The Dalai Lama teaches that "so long as we are overwhelmed by ignorance, it will be impossible to find genuine happiness" (*Joy of Living*, 10). Ignorance is the cause of suffering in ignorance, especially the misconception of self. The Bible sharply diverges. Suffering is the result of God's judgment. There was no human suffering before the Fall. So we read: "just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

We need to qualify the above, since the reality of suffering is complex and much suffering is an indirect rather than a direct consequence of sin and the application of God's judgment on the world in which we live, as Jesus made clear (see Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3). Nevertheless, the *root* cause of suffering is sin and to the extent that this involves a misconception of self, it is not in the philosophical sense intended by the Dalai Lama, but consists in our foolish attempt to persuade ourselves that we are basically good people rather than to see ourselves as God sees us, that is, fundamentally evil.

It is the Dalai Lama's contention that "the whole cycle of existence" has the essential character of suffering and that for this reason engagement in "the practice of the three trainings" is requisite, namely, "ethics, meditation, and wisdom" (*Joy of Living*, xix), by which, though not stated, the Buddha is summarizing the three strands of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Christians agree that suffering is a basic problem but we deny that it is the basic problem, nor that it is the essential character of all that exists. Rather, since the universe is created by a good Creator there is much in it which is beautiful and good and to be enjoyed:

> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4).

The Dalai Lama teaches that the foundation for reflecting upon our own sufferings and gaining the determination to be free from them is the Four Noble Truths. He also teaches that there are three principal ways to think about suffering:

1. The suffering of pain, that is, "the common distress and trouble that we ordinarily identify as suffering".
2. The suffering of change, that is, "the flawed happiness that we usually aspire to", being a happiness that does not last, eventually changing into suffering.
3. Pervasive suffering that is a condition of existence, because while our physical body remains subject to karma and disturbing emotions it is locked into an "involuntary and unceasing continuity of physical rebirth" (*Joy of Living*, 8).

He also teaches that each of the Four Noble Truths can be explained according to four attributes (*Joy of Living*, 8):

Impermanence	Emptiness
Suffering	Selflessness

The Dalai Lama confesses,

> For me personally, the strongest and most effective practice to help tolerate suffering is to see and understand that suffering is the underlying nature of *Samsara*, of unenlightened existence. Now when you experience some physical pain or other problem, of course at that moment there is a feeling of 'Oh! This suffering is so bad!' There's a feeling of rejection associated with the suffering, a kind of feeling of 'Oh, I shouldn't be experiencing this.' But at that moment if you can look at the situation from another angle and realize that this very body…,' he slapped an arm in demonstration, 'is the very basis of suffering, then this reduces that feeling of rejection – that feeling that somehow you don't deserve to suffer, that you are a victim. So, once you understand and accept this reality, then you experience suffering as something that is quite natural (*Art of Happiness*, 140-141).

Preparing for Death

The story of Buddha Shakyamuni is retold and his analysis of suffering and confirming emphasis on mind-deliverance. The reader is challenged to "gain a secure realization of the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha" (*Joy of Living*, xii) before death and is assured that if this is achieved death need not be feared.

Jesus, in contrast to this advice, tells us that people have every reason to fear death: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Unless, before death, people are "reborn" (John 3:3), not as reincarnated beings, then they will not see, that is, experience, nor enter the Kingdom of God, the realm over which God rules in which alone is to be found life. This is so because the only source of life is God himself who effects new birth through his Spirit.

The Dalai Lama next speaks of sentient beings in the various realms of the cycle of existence who all experience impermanence. Indeed, the Dalai Lama concedes that the very fact of death means that "there is no lasting happiness and no security" (*Joy of Living*, xvii). It therefore follows that the Dalai Lama is promising his readers that they can attain a state of happiness they may begin to experience in this life but can

only properly experience *after death*. Thus the Dalai Lama is presuming to know what happens after death, just as he presumes to know that there are other realms of existence. But there is a fundamental epistemological question here. How does he know what happens after death? How does he know that there is no God to face? How does he know that there is a realm in which hungry ghosts live, a realm in which titans live, a realm in which devas, a temporary realm in which hell-beings live, in addition to the realms of humans and animals?

It can be readily seen that in what the Dalai Lama has said there is a great deal of dogmatic assertion based on assumptions which involve at best a dubious epistemology.

The Dalai Lama promises his readers that if they have an "aspiring faith" which causes them to make an effort "to attain Buddhahood and to attain the qualities of the Dharma and become members of the Spiritual Community" then they are assured "of attaining a well-placed rebirth in your future life" (*Joy of Living*, xxi).

The Dalai Lama says even the tiniest insects possess Buddha nature, though humans have the unique ability and opportunity to understand the teaching of the Buddha. He says readers will not be able to improve themselves unless they begin by discovering their faults, that is, the defective states of the mind. This is an example of the blind leading the blind for there is no acknowledgment that all people must begin by repenting of their fundamental sin of rebelling against and trivializing God. The Dalai Lama warns his readers that if they don't heed his advice and make the most of their opportunity to engage in the spiritual practices he is advocating then they will "be continually afflicted by different levels of suffering" as they "fall into an unfavourable state of existence", that is, in a future rebirth. For it would then become "very difficult to find an opportunity to engage in the practice of the Dharma" (*Joy of Living*, xxiii).

The Dalai Lama teaches that only some exceptional people "may find liberation quickly, because of their past karmic potential" while "the majority of us cannot hope to reach enlightenment or nirvana so miraculously" (*Joy of Living*, 25). It would be fascinating to know how close to attaining enlightenment the Dalai Lama considers himself.

With respect to the universal experience of death the Dalai Lama's goal is to help people to face it without fear and regret. To do this we must live a meaningful life and this involves living in harmony with reality, as the Dalai Lama understands "reality". He returns to the central ethic of having compassion for others as the basis for becoming happier ourselves. He explains that this is more than having a merely passive feeling of pity and even acknowledges that in a modern competitive society compassion may go hand in glove with the necessity of taking a tough stand.

However, in expounding further what he means by preparing for death by practising compassion he returns to his prior emphasis on reincarnation:

> Embarking on a spiritual practice that is measured in life-time and eons gives you a different perspective on death. In the context of our existence through many successive lives, death is something like changing your clothes. When your clothes become old and worn out, you change them for new ones. This affects your attitude toward death. It gives rise to a clearer realization that death is a part of life (28).

In the Bible for the trophies of God's grace, those brought to a knowledge of Christ, death has lost its sting and ahead lies the wonderful prospect of 'putting on' the glorious resurrection body. This is like putting on a suit of clothes that will never wear out. There is no series of countless rebirths and deaths (changing of clothes), just the reality that people live and die but once and after that comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Some will be condemned to eternal death. Others will enjoy eternal life. Unlike the Dalai Lama the Bible does not trivialize death and seek to blur the horrendous and tragic proportions of death. Death is a terrible thing, of catastrophic proportions and we long for the time when death will be no more.

The Dalai Lama distinguishes between "grosser levels of mind", which are dependent on our brains, and "the subtle mind", which, being "the substantial cause of the mind", has no beginning and is continuous after death. He argues that it is "the force of our previous predispositions" which alone can help us once, when, at death, the gross levels of consciousness dissolve and we enter the state of subtle consciousness. He even contends, "Once you have an experience of the deeper subtle mind in meditation, you can actually control your death", but only when one attains to an advanced level of practice. He testifies that seven or eight times each day he uses various tantric practices to meditate on the process of death, by way of preparing for death, while still maintaining that "the most important practice at the time of death is the awakening mind" (*Joy of Living*, 28). Yet he advocates constant meditation on death (*Joy of Living*, 1) "as a means for enhancing detachment from this life and its attractions" (*Joy of Living*, 29), and (*Joy of Living*, 2) as a way of familiarizing oneself with the different levels of mind that one will experience as one dies.

But from a biblical perspective each person enters the world as a newly created being and there is no level of mind which pre-exists the individual. The admitted depths of mental activity represent complexities within the created person. Brain damage affects normal mental functioning and deleteriously affects the nature of consciousness. Yet the Bible indicates that after death all individuals will face judgment and at that time proper mental functioning is presumed as people will be called upon to render an account of their lives to God the Judge. Consequently, the Bible rejects the concept of a pre-existent subtle mind, just as it rejects the notion that, after death, there is a mental state (a "subtle mind") that is discontinuous with the mind that functioned while we were alive (the "grosser levels of mind"). It is the Creator who ensures the intrinsic and substantial existence of each person and the continuance of the self, even after death.

Further, the Bible is at odds with the Dalai Lama's morbidity. Yes, the Wisdom Literature of the Bible consistently encourages us to remember that life is short and that we will die and, consequently, to live wisely and well. But the Bible does not encourage us to be fixated on death and prepare for it through a morbid rehearsal of the process of death, as the Dalai Lama advises. Jesus came to give us life that we might enjoy it to the full (John 10:10). Indeed, the Dalai Lama is a classic example of what Hebrews 2:15 speaks of – a man whose who life is "held in slavery" because of his fear of death. Ah, you might retort, but he clearly does not fear death! Precisely! It is his underlying fear of death that has caused him to become the slave of a futile philosophy which will help him to face death; futile because it does not at all prepare him for what will actually happen, facing God his Creator as his Judge.

Of course, the Dalai Lama is quite right to urge people not to be preoccupied with this life and to ensure they prepare themselves for death and what will follow. However, the future focus of Christians is not upon death as such but upon the content of their hope, entering into the inheritance "that can never perish, spoil or fade", which I kept in heaven for them (1 Peter 1:4).

The Dalai Lama distinguishes between the negative actions characterizing the lives of Hitler and Mao Tse-tung, on the one hand, and the inspirational activities of the Tibetan yogis Milarepa and Tsong-kha-pa, on the other. He emphasizes how Hitler and Mao Tse-tung were completely unprepared for death.

The Dalai Lama distinguishes between the scientific account of death and the Buddhist explanation. When brain function ceases within minutes of the heart having stopped beating, Buddhist believe there are four more stages of dying still left, all evidencing, he believes, the reality of the subtle consciousness which as yet has not left the body (See Steps 5-8 below).

The Dalai Lama teaches that death involves the following phases (*How to Practice*, 49-50; see too *Joy of Living*, 44):

	Internal elements	*External indication*	*Internal vision*
1	The earth element (hard bodily substances) dissolves into the water element (fluids)	The body becomes thinner	Like a **mirage** in a desert.
2	The water element dissolves into the fire element (heat)	The mouth dries, the nose puckers, etc.	Like puffs of chimney **smoke** or smoke floating through a room.
3	The fire element dissolves into the wind or air element (energy, movement)	Heat in the body diminishes. This may occur from the top down, but if virtuous karma, from the feet upward to the heart, probably lead to a favourable rebirth.	Seeing what look like **fireflies** at night or like scattering sparks.
4	The wind element dissolves into consciousness.	Outer breath ceases.	Like the light above a flickering **candle flame** when the fuel is almost gone. Consciousness remains even if some doctors would declare the person dead.
5	The mind turns into an omnipresent, huge, vivid white vastness. Conceptual thought has vanished, leaving only this vivid whiteness, that is, consciousness involving a subtle sense of subject and object. The mind is still somewhat dualistic.		Seeing whitish light. Like a clear sky filled with moonlight, space filled with **white light**.
6	The mind turns into a red or orange vastness. The mind is less dualistic.		Seeing **reddish or orange light**. Like a

		clear sky filled with sunlight.
7	The mind turns into a still more subtle, vividly black state with nothing else appearing. This state is called "near-attainment" because the mind of clear night is imminent. During this phase all awareness is lost.	Seeing darkness. Like a moonless, **black** sky just before dusk when no stars are seen.
8	The mind turns into "the fundamental innate mind of clear light", the most subtle, profound and powerful level of consciousness.	A feeling of infinite space. Like the sky's natural state at dawn (not sunrise) – without moonlight, sunlight or darkness (**clear light**).

The Dalai Lama claims that a person is still in the clear light as long as the body does not begin to smell or rot, with some practitioners able to remain in this state for days, even up to around 17 days. Consciousness if believed to finally leave the body when the energy supporting this deep level of mind begins to fluctuate and this will be indicated by a slight movement of the body or head (*How to Practice*, 53-54).

All beings then enter an intermediate state during which phase a shape is assumed that resembles one's body in the next life at age five or six. Consciousness then enters the womb when the male and female fertilizing elements mix together, though from Buddhist texts it is hard to be decisive as to exactly when this occurs (*How to Practice*, 55).

He claims that his own senior tutor, Ling Rinpoche remained in the clear light state for 13 days with the lustre and freshness of his body preserved. He contends that such an ability to stay with the clear light only belongs to highly evolved meditators.

There may well be many hidden processes and mental phenomena associated with the process of dying which have not been identified by science. However, whatever experiences of seeing lights may be involved the reality remains that after dying is concluded all people will find themselves confronted by their Creator as Judge.

The Dalai Lama concludes this chapter re-emphasising the importance of preparing for death by leaving positive imprints on our minds by observing the ten virtuous qualities and refraining from the ten unwholesome deeds. He claims that if we do this then we "can be confident of taking a favorable rebirth", reiterating, "The kind of rebirth we taken depends upon the kind of actions we have done", but adding, "And whichever action we latch onto at the time of death will project its effect first" (*Joy of Living*, 46).

Life is lived on a knife-edge, with the implications of wrong action being extremely dire:

> If even for a moment, you obstruct other sentient beings from accumulating merit, if you hinder, even for a moment, the development of the awakening mind, you are hindering the bodhisattva who is fulfilling the purposes of countless sentient beings. As a result, in the future you will have to spend infinite lives in unfavorable states of existence… If you remain careless and let your mind be invaded by disturbing emotions,

> you will fall again and again into unfavorable states of existence where even the Buddhas will be unable to help you (*Joy of Living*, 70-71).

The Dalai Lama recalls one of Shakyamuni's allegories. A ox-yoke with a hole through the middle is floating on a vast ocean. A blind tortoise swims in the depths of that ocean but only comes to the surface once every hundred years. The chances of being reborn as a human are as great as the chance of that turtle surfacing with its head going through the hole in that yoke.

Self-Liberation

The Dalai Lama plainly and explicitly states,

> Practice is not something you do for a couple of weeks or a couple of years. It takes place over many life-times, for eons and eons… some texts say enlightenment is achieved after accumulating the collections of merit and wisdom for three periods of countless great eons. If you consider this statement properly, it can encourage you to adopt a patient, persistent attitude through difficult circumstances. If learning this saddens you, this could be due to your desire to achieve Buddhahood swiftly out of your great concern for others. It could also be a sign of insufficient courage. Enlightenment cannot be attained without working hard at it. To believe otherwise means you are harboring some form of selfishness (*How to Practice*, 210-211).

In dialogue with Christian mystics the Dalai Lama remarked that spiritual development takes time. He was asked how long. He responded:

> Now to give a Buddhist reply to your question, we are speaking in terms of innumerable eons. And when you think in terms of eons, years and months are nothing. A short life is nothing! A hundred years – nothing! When you think in terms of many eons, that really helps to develop a strong determination. But that is not relevant here. The main point is how to be good during one's lifetime (*Good Heart*, 125).

With respect to the morality of individual liberation there are two levels (*How to Practice*, 64):

1. Those who live a householder's life, in a home rather than in a monastery.
2. Those who have left a householder's life to become nuns or monks.

The Dalai Lama encourages his readers to take refuge in the Buddha and to look to him as their role model. He says that it is not adequate to have faith in the Buddha but to come to grips with the various levels of teaching set out in the more than 108 volumes in Tibetan, plus other texts in other languages. The key to dealing with problems and sufferings is developing a disciplined mind and so, he maintains, "our own happiness is in fact in our own hands. The responsibility rests on our own shoulders; we cannot expect someone to simply bring us happiness" (*Joy of Living*, xv).

In the closing book of the Bible, Revelation, a book rich in symbolism, there is a great vision of a great multitude of people, "from every nation, tribe, people and language" standing before the throne of God and of the Lamb, that is, Jesus. They are the ones "who have come out of the great tribulation", that is, suffering is now behind them. They will never experience suffering ever again:

> Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:16-17).

In so far as "happiness" constitutes a state in which suffering is removed then clearly the Bible teaches, in contradistinction to the Buddha, that this depends very heavily on what another has done. Those who have emerged from "the great tribulation", we are told, are those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v14). The active verbs here make it clear that these "happy" people are not merely passive beneficiaries. Nevertheless, ultimately their happiness is NOT in their own hands but is something made possible for them by God, through the death of Christ, the shedding of "the blood of the Lamb".

The Dalai Lama confesses his sense of regret at the way an older monk once acted on his advice. This monk asked the Dalai Lama about performing a certain high-level esoteric practice. The Dalai Lama told him this was a practice that would be difficult for him to do since it was traditionally a practice begun in a monk's midteens. Later the Dalai Lama learnt that this monk committed suicide so that he might be reborn in a younger body and then be able to undertake this practice (*Art of Happiness*, 161).

The Dalai Lama outlines how devotees of the three schools of Buddhism can liberate themselves (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 28-30). He regards the Mahayana paths to liberation as superior to and more powerful than the Hinayana paths (*Many Ways*, 146). For the five paths pursued by lower level Hinayanists (Hearers, Shravaka) and the higher level Solitary Realisers (Pratyekabuddha) – accumulation (familiarization with emptiness), preparation (conceptual cognition of emptiness through the union of calm abiding and special insight), seeing (perceiving emptiness directly), meditation (a deeper familiarization with emptiness), and no more learning (a state of omniscient consciousness achieved by the Foe Destroyer, whose main enemy is the concept of inherent existence, with the deep nature of the mind becoming the Nature Body of the Buddha) – merely serve to achieve liberation for the devotee's own sake (*Key to the Middle Way*, 84-85; *How to Practice*, 202-206). Such practitioners by cultivating calm abiding (shamatha) and special insight (vipashyana), can attain liberation as they realize emptiness and so eradicate for ever the causes of suffering. However, the higher Mahayana paths aspire to the highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, utilizing the Hinayana paths, though with this different motivation, while adding such special methods as the six perfections and the four means of gathering students. Upon attaining liberation such devotees not only eradicate the causes of suffering but also the obstructions to omniscience, attaining to the rank of Buddhahood. The Dalai Lama claims that it is inevitable that Hinayanists, upon attaining liberation, will then seek ultimate attainment, thus treading the higher Mahayana paths.

He insists that it is absolutely wrong to treat Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana as different Yanas or Vehicles that are independent of each other. He teaches that Mahayana practice is only possible when built on the foundation of fundamental practices taught in the Hinayana or Theravada tradition, based on the teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. He likewise maintains that Mahayana tantric practices presuppose Mahayana sutrayana practices.

He also explains how more rapid progress towards liberation can be made by practising Highest Yoga (the superior set of tantras of the four sets, the others being Action [Kriya], Performance [Carya] and Yoga). He claims there are tens of millions of Highest Yoga tantras, but the basic method employed for taming the mind recognizes the

dependence of the mind on the body. Consequently, meditation involves concentrating "on the various channels in which mainly blood, mainly semen, or only currents of energy [winds] flow. Then, since currents of energy cause the mind to move to objects, a yogi reverses these currents, and thus there is nothing to stir the mind; the mind does not stir or move to other objects" (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 30). This type of meditation assumes an unusual ability to concentrate the mind on its object and to develop this ability tantric texts teach devotees "meditation on the body of a deity". There are many images of such deities in tantric texts and the Dalai Lama insists they are not arbitrary creations, but means of purification. He explains that the characteristics of these deities, whether peaceful or wrathful in aspect, how many faces and hands they have, how many principal and surrounding figures are involved, etc. is "due to differences in the trainees' dispositions, thoughts and faculties" (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 30).

The Dalai Lama teaches how in Tantra it is possible to gain entry "to the transmission of blessings from previous great beings" (*How to Practice*, 189) through the door of initiation, with each of the four sets of tantra having its own initiations and meditations. Initiation is received in a mandala. This is "comprised of ideal surroundings and divine residents which all are manifestations of compassion and wisdom". Some are painted, others made grain by grain from coloured sands and others form a special class of concentration mandalas. In Highest Yoga Tantra the lama must be fully qualified before he can conduct the ceremony of initiation. The lower Tantra sets – Action and Performance – involve making many pledges, while the higher Tantra sets – Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra – involve making 14 basic vows in addition to the pledges. Bodhisattva and Tantric vows last not merely for one's present lifetime but right through all future rebirths until one attains highest enlightenment, in contrast to other vows Buddhists may make (the vow of individual liberation lasts for just 24 hours, while all other vows are take for an entire lifetime – it still being possible to rescind one's vows and give back one's ordination) [*How to Practice*, 189-191].

The Dalai Lama teaches:

> To attain perfection… it is not enough that a spiritual practitioner merely possess such a nature [sc. Buddha-nature]; this nature must be developed to its fullest potential. And to accomplish this, you require assistance. In Buddhist practice, you require the assistance of an enlightened guide, a guru or teacher. Interestingly enough, the Buddhist texts often describe one's teacher as the gateway through which you receive the blessings from the Buddha; through this gateway you have communication or contact with the Buddha. It is through a combination of the teacher's experienced guidance and the presence of this buddha-nature within you that this buddha-nature is activated, and you are able to perfect it and answer to its full potential (*Good Heart*, 106).

Liberating Other Sentient Beings

The Dalai Lama identifies the ultimate state as not merely being that of attaining nirvana but of attaining Buddhahood and encourages his readers to "make a commitment to lead an infinite number of sentient beings to attain the unsurpassable supreme state of Buddhahood" (*Joy of Living*, xix) and free them from suffering (*Joy of Living*, 2). By this he means making a commitment to lead animals to Buddhahood, hungry ghosts to Buddhahood, titans to Buddhahood, devas to Buddhahood, hell beings to Buddhahood, not merely humans. From this such questions as these are naturally

raised, How can a human lead a sparrow or a cockroach to Buddhahood, creatures we can see? How can a human lead hungry ghosts to Buddhahood that he has never seen and only has it on the Dalai Lama's assurance that they actually exist?

The Dalai Lama comments,

> We do not find in Buddhism a tradition of active conversion – apart from the story of King Ashoka in India who seems to have actively sent out several missionary expeditions in the surrounding countries. Generally speaking, the Buddhist attitude about the issue of spreading its message is this: unless someone approaches a teacher and requests specific teaching, it is not right for a teacher to impose his or her views and doctrines onto another person (*Good Heart*, 98).

The Dalai Lama was asked "To what extent can one sacrifice in real-life situations?" He replied that such suicide is discouraged in the Buddha's teaching unless one has reached a certain required level of realization. However, if someone has reached such a state and is therefore confident and strongly convinced his sacrifice will benefit other sentient beings then in this case his "suicide", the sacrifice of his body, is positively encouraged and even recommended (*Many Ways*, 68).

Distinguishing between Good and Evil

The Dalai Lama uses the following criteria for discriminating between good and bad consciousness. A state of consciousness is bad that produces the following sequence: we become unhappy and our previously calm mind becomes excited or tense. This in turn results in such physical reactions as hyperventilation, nervous sweating or illness and these lead to bad deeds of body and speech which then lead, directly or indirectly, to the causing of hardship for others. A state of consciousness is good if it produces happiness or peace upon ourselves or others (*Key to the Middle Way*, 51-52). Further, it is a consciousness conceiving inherent existence which precedes any bad consciousness (*Key to the Middle Way*, 59).

The Buddha and now his disciple, the Dalai Lama, presume to teach what is good and what is evil. But this is precisely the point of difference between the Creator and the humans he created. That is why they were forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For only God, as the good and omniscient Creator, is in a position to know what is in accord with his good purposes and what is not. It is monstrous for people to presume that they are in a position to do this. This was what lay at the heart of the evil of Satan's temptation: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

In Bodhgaya, India, where Shakyamuni Buddha is said to have gained enlightenment the Dalai Lama performed a *sojong* ritual, concerned with purifying and restoring broken vows. He was asked afterwards if he had made confession. He replied, "Of course. Sojong means confession." "What did you confess?" he was asked. "Eating biscuits in the evening," he replied. "As a Buddhist monk, I'm not supposed to eat anything after my midday meal" (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 132).

Victor Chan recalls how Oprah Winfrey asked the Dalai Lama if he had ever had to forgive himself for anything. He replied, "Small incidents, like accidentally killing an insect." He also confessed to not having a very favourable, peaceful attitude toward mosquitoes or bed bugs. However, he maintained he had never had to forgive himself

for any major mistakes. He also said he had done as much as he could in rendering service to Tibet, service to Buddhism and service to humanity and added:
Regarding my own spiritual practice, when I share my experiences with more advanced meditators – even those who have spent years in the mountains, practising single-pointedness of mind – I don't lag too far behind (*Wisdom of Forgiveness*, 137).

Enlightenment
The Dalai Lama explains that there are two levels of enlightenment. The lesser level simply involves going beyond *samsara* to a state in which suffering ceases and afflictive emotions are destroyed. The higher level is the attainment of Buddhahood, an omniscient state, fused with emptiness, in which one spontaneously and effortlessly is able to fulfil the wishes of sentient beings (*Many Ways*, 85, 88).

Buddhahood
The Dalai Lama teaches that Shakyamuni Buddha is one among a thousand Buddhas of this aeon. These were all once sentient beings who have achieved the state of complete purification known as Buddhahood. These Buddhas all have supreme Emanation Bodies (*Nirmanakaya*)[9] and each has his own new teaching. According to the Dalai Lama, Shakyamuni Buddha's distinctive teaching unites sutra and tantra, since most other Buddhas do not have tantra (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 18-19). The Dalai Lama speaks of Shakyamuni turning three wheels of doctrine:

1. The first wheel of doctrine based on the four noble truths (at Varanasi).
2. The middle wheel of doctrine "based on the mode of non-inherent existence of all phenomena" (at Grdhrakuta).
3. The final wheel of doctrine based on discriminating between those phenomena that do and those that do not truly exist (at Vaishali).

He then adds that as the "teacher Buddha" he also appeared in the body of Vajradhara, the ultimate Primordial Buddha, and that it was in this non-historical form that he communicated tantric doctrines (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 20).

The Dalai Lama teaches,

> Buddhas are always striving for the welfare of beings migrating in cyclic existence. In every hour and minute they create limitless forms of welfare for beings through billions of emanations of their body, speech and mind (*Buddhism of Tibet*, 19).

The Dalai Lama argues that when we aspire to deliver all sentient beings to the state of nirvana then the only way to achieve this is by first achieving enlightenment ourselves. He repeats that "the intrinsic quality of the mind, its potential to attain the powers and qualities of the Buddha, is… present right from the start" and that when we attain Buddhahood then we become omniscient, with our minds "aware of all phenomena" (*Joy of Living*, 22).

He teaches that the essential difference between one who attains buddhahood and an external creator is that "even a buddha does not have the power to create new life" (*Many Ways*, 141).

From a biblical perspective this has moved beyond make-believe to blasphemy. To think that we can attain a state of omniscience and encourage people to hold such aspirations is to usurp the role of God himself. He is the only omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent person in the universe and we will remain creatures for the rest of

eternity. The Dalai Lama is saying that in a universe where he does not acknowledge the Creator God who alone can save people that we ourselves must become gods in order to save others.

He tells how Milarepa gave a last instruction to his disciple, Gampopa. He

> lifted his robe and showed Gampopa his calloused backside, a sign of his having undergone intense practice seated in meditation. He added, 'If you really persist, you too should achieve Buddhahood. We always boast about the potential of the Dharma and that we can achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime, but whether it is possible or not depends upon how hard you work (*Joy of Living*, 39).

What an utter contrast this is to the biblical concept of grace, as noted above! Revisit Ephesians 2:8-9.

The Dalai Lama states,

> Even those sentient beings living an inferior kind of life, like bees, flies, and other insects, whose physical existence is weak, have the Buddha nature. If they make the effort, even such weak sentient beings can evolve over many lifetimes and ultimately achieve the unsurpassable state of Buddhahood, so difficult to attain. This is what the Buddha taught (*Joy of Living*, 117-118).

The Dalai Lama urges his readers to perform Bodhisattva deeds, that is acting upon one's aspiration to become enlightened. These deeds especially involve "the six perfections." The word *perfection* here means "going beyond" where "beyond" refers to the place or path of enlightenment, which is "beyond" our normal state in ordinary life. This "going beyond" involves two levels of enlightenment (*Many Ways*, 85):

1. The lesser level of going beyond samsara and attaining the liberation that involves the cessation of suffering and the total extinction of afflictive emotions.
2. Attaining the state of Buddhahood.

The Dalai Lama explains that the Tibetan word for "enlightenment", *Jangchub*, "means to internalize the necessary positive qualities in their totality" (*Many Ways*, 85). Consequently, "enlightenment" may refer either to the path that leads to Buddhahood or the state of Buddhahood itself.

The six perfections are (*How to Practice*, 107-108):

1. Giving material things, love, Buddhist teaching and relief from suffering to all beings, e.g. "help even an ant out of a puddle" (107). "When we talk about giving, we do not refer to the elimination of poverty of others through giving, but to a mental state in which you are always ready to give your body, wealth and pleasures when others need them" (*Many Ways*, 93). There are three levels of giving (*Many Ways*, 93-96):
    a. Giving material facilities:
        i. Offering external material facilities.
        ii. Offering internal material facilities, e.g. offering one's eye or one's limbs.
    b. Giving fearlessness – protecting others from suffering and fear.
    c. Giving Dharma teaching.
2. Morality – altruistic attitude and behaviour. There are three inter-linked kinds of morality:
    a. Morality refraining from engaging in negative deeds.

   b. Morality collecting virtuous qualities.
   c. Morality of fulfilling the purposes of sentient beings.
3. Patience:
   a. Patience of being able to bear hardships and sufferings.
   b. Patience of voluntarily welcoming sufferings and hardships.
   c. Patience of developing ascertainment toward Dharma practices, that is, meditating on emptiness.
4. Effort – maintaining enthusiasm for virtue:
   a. Effort involved in accumulating merit.
   b. Effort involved in accumulating wisdom.
5. Concentration – stable and intense meditation:
   a. Concentration related to the practice of conventional truth.
   b. Concentration related to the view of emptiness.
6. Wisdom – understanding the nature of cyclic existence and impermanence, dependent-arising and emptiness. There are two main kinds of wisdom:
   a. Wisdom realizing the conventional phenomena.
   b. Wisdom realizing the ultimate reality, ultimate truth.

It is important to recognize that general expressions of these six virtues do not constitute "perfections". To qualify as such they must be governed by the right motivation, that is, an expression of a commitment to attain *bodhicitta*, the mental state of a bodhisattva – attaining enlightenment for the sake of liberating all sentient beings (*Many Ways*, 86-87).

These six perfections can be summarized under two practices (*Many Ways*, 96):
1. Method – for collecting merit. This incorporates the following perfections: giving, morality, patience.
2. Wisdom – for collecting wisdom. This incorporates the following perfections: concentration, wisdom.

These can also be summarized as involving "the three trainings" of the Bodhisattvas (*How to Practice*, 108):
1. Training in the perfection of morality.
2. Training in the perfection of concentration.
3. Training in the perfection of wisdom.

The Dalai Lama outlines a method for developing bodhicitta, the Sevenfold Cause-and-Effect Method (*Open Heart*, 119-122):
1. Recognise all beings have been our mother.
2. Appreciate all beings for the treatment they have given us as our mother: "Each dog, cat, fish, fly, and human being has at some point in the beginningless past been our mother and shown us overwhelming love and kindness."
3. Develop the desire to help change the lot of sentient beings.
4. Develop a feeling of love cherishing all sentient beings.
5. Develop compassion: the wish to separate all sentient beings from suffering.
6. Experience loving-kindness, the wish that all beings find happiness.
7. Personally assume responsibility for liberating all beings.

The Dalai Lama teaches that "Buddhahood is achieved through the unified cultivation of both motivation and wisdom" (*How to Practice*, 179-180). Through cultivating

motivation (to become enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings) the Form Bodies of a Buddha come into being, existing for the sake of liberating other sentient beings (the term for the Form Body is *Rupakaya*). This Form Body involves the development and practice of Bodhicitta and it "spontaneously and effortlessly appears before sentient beings to help them" (*Many Ways*, 89). Through cultivating wisdom (realization of emptiness) the Truth Body (*Dharmakaya*) of a Buddha comes into being, bringing the practitioner himself to perfection (*How to Practice*, 180), a state in which one is free from all elaborations – subject-object duality and conventional appearances (*Many Ways*, 89). Here "bodies" means "types of qualities" with the Dalai Lama teaching that the Form Body represents the best form of human emotion and the Truth Body the best form of intelligence (*Many Ways*, 89).

In his writings the Dalai Lama often notes how people make comparisons between the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Buddhist notion of the three Kayas: Dharmakaya, Samboghakaya and Nirmanakaya. He himself sees significant differences.

The Dalai Lama teaches that there are different Form Bodies (*How to Practice*, 208-209):

1. The Complete Enjoyment Body accessed by highly advanced trainees. This is "a manifestation that has physical form but is invisible to nearly all of us. The enjoyment body can be perceived only by very highly realized beings, bodhisattvas whose profound experience of the ultimate truth is motivated by their intense desire to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all" (*Open Heart*, 166).
2. Emanation Bodies of various kinds. "Unlike the enjoyment body, these manifestations of the fully enlightened attainment of Buddhahood *are* visible and accessible to common beings, beings like us. It is by means of emanation bodies that a Buddha is able to assist us. In other words, these manifestations are embodiments of the enlightened being. They are assumed exclusively and purely for our benefit. They come into being at the time when the practitioner attains full enlightenment, as a result of his or her compassionate aspiration to help others. It is by means of these physical emanations that a Buddha teaches others the method by which he himself attained his state of freedom from suffering." So Shakyamuni Buddha was an Emanation Body (*Open Heart*, 166).

The Dalai Lama comments,

> If our understanding of Buddha were limited to the historic figure of Shakyamuni, we would be seeking refuge in someone who died long ago and who no longer has the power to help us (*Open Heart*, 167).

While some of the enlightenment qualities, the "bodies" assume physical form others do not – bodies achieved through the 'wisdom' aspect of the path. Those that don't include the Truth Body, that is, purified mind. They also include the Wisdom Body, that is, the "omniscient quality of the enlightened mind, its ability to constantly perceive all phenomena as well as their nature of being empty of inherent existence" (*Open Heart*, 165).

The Truth Body is of two types:

1. The Nature Body (two subtypes):
    a. A state of natural purification.
    b. A state of purification of adventitious (or caused) defilements.

2. The Exalted Wisdom Body (Maitreya's Ornament for Clear Realisation identifies 21 types which can be further subdivided into 146 types).

The Dalai Lama explains that there are different levels of nirvana and that it is possible, for example, to actualize a kind of nirvana which is but the cessation of afflictive emotions and still leaves enlightenment or Buddhahood to be attained (*Many Ways*, 32).

The Buddha and Jesus

The Dalai Lama claims that "as a Buddhist, my attitude toward Jesus Christ is that he was either a fully enlightened being or a bodhisattva or a very high spiritual realization" (*Good Heart*, 83).

The Dalai Lama encourages his readers to entrust themselves to the Buddha as their teacher because of his compassion for all sentient beings (*Joy of Living*, xv-xvi).

The Christian responds that if compassion of the teacher is the basis for entrusting oneself to the teacher then Jesus, not the Buddha, is the Teacher to follow:

> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:7-8).

The Dalai Lama, in accord with the standard Tibetan understanding, believes that Shakyamuni Buddha was actually enlightened in a prior state of existence and that in his sixth century BC incarnation he was merely demonstrating the path (*How to Practise*, 19).

The Dalai Lama pontificates that Buddha Shakyamuni is "an infallible person, on whom we can safely rely" (*Joy of Living*, xvi). But on what basis can the Dalai Lama declare him to be infallible? What yardstick is used to assess whether the teachings of the Buddha are infallible or not? Indeed, as we have seen, the Bible is at odds with this claim. The Buddha's most fundamental diagnosis of the human condition, that the root cause of suffering is ignorance, is itself a reflection of the Buddha's own ignorance and is very much a fallible and, indeed, fatal diagnosis that leaves his would-be patients untreated.

The Dalai Lama notes that among Buddhists there is a divergence of opinion about Buddha's final nirvana:

> One school of thought – principally in the ancient Indian *Vaibhāṣika* school – maintains that Buddha's nirvana constitutes the end of Buddha's existence. Just as his coming into being was a historical fact, his passing away was a historical fact; Buddha's life began and ended there. The final nirvana is seen like the last moment of a flame. When you extinguish the flame, that's the end of the flame; there is total nothingness. Even the continuation of the Buddha's consciousness ceases. Followers of the *Vaibhāṣika* school maintain that consciousness, although it is beginningless, has an end. It can cease to exist.
>
> Then the question is raised, if that is the case, what point is there for the followers of the Buddha to venerate and worship and pray to him? What is the benefit? What point is there in doing such a thing if the Buddha is no more? The response given by this tradition is that the Buddha attained full enlightenment as a result of accumulating merits and perfecting his wisdom through innumerable eons. And during this time, Buddha developed and cultivated a very forceful, altruistic intention to be of benefit

> and service to all. The power of that energy and truth is still there. It is the power that assists and helps when you worship and venerate the Buddha. However, insofar as the historical person of the Buddha is concerned, that was the end.
> This is not, however, the standpoint of many other Buddhist traditions, including Tibetan Buddhism. According to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, buddhahood, or full enlightenment, should be understood more in terms of the doctrine of the three *kāya*s, the three embodiments. From that point of view, Buddha Shakyamuni was a historical figure – he existed at a particular point of time and in a particular space, context, and environment – and his final nirvana at Kushinagar was a historical event. But Buddha's consciousness and mindstream has continued and is ever-present. Buddha, in the emanation form of a human being, may have ceased; but he is still present in the form known as his *sambhogakāya*, the state of perfect resourcefulness. And he continues to emanate and manifest in various forms that are most suited and beneficial to other sentient beings. From that point of view, although Buddha Shakyamuni as a historical figure has ceased to exist, Buddha's presence is still there. From the point of view of this tradition, consciousness is both beginningless and endless in terms of its continuity.
> For a practising Buddhist, Buddha's final nirvana has a very symbolic meaning because the last words uttered by the Buddha were on the doctrine of impermanence and the transient nature of all things. He stated that all things and events are transient, impermanent and non-enduring. He also stated that the body of a fully enlightened being – the Buddha, or *Tathāgata* – is also impermanent and subject to the same laws. And with these words, he passed away. So for a practising Buddhist, the Buddha's final nirvana, the historical act of passing away, reemphasises the importance of the practice of impermanence (*Good Heart*, 119-120).

He continues:

> In Buddhism it is thought that there is a special relationship between the emanation and the emanating force, and that an emanation comes to an end when it has fulfilled its destiny. There is an idea that the emanation is reabsorbed into its source, although in some cases the emanation disappears of its own accord. For example, in the case of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, after his final nirvana the physical body of the Buddha was clearly there; the Buddha's body was cremated, and everybody could see it. A practising Buddhist would say that the Buddha's consciousness, the Buddha's own transcendent mind, had reentered or been reabsorbed into the *dharmakāya* state. In some Buddhist texts there are also references to another sort of phenomenon – highly evolved spiritual beings who are actually able to go to different pure realms without having to discard their physical bodies (*Good Heart, 120).*

Sources

Comment

Of the books listed below *Ancient Wisdom*, *The Art of Happiness* and *The Wisdom of Forgiveness* really skirt around the edges and don't penetrate to the depths of Buddhist philosophy. These are books which are written with Westerners particularly in mind. By contrast, in the *Joy of Living*, we get a much deeper appreciation as to how Buddhism has shaped the way the Dalai Lama thinks.

Dalai Lama,

Ancient Wisdom, Modern World. Ethics for a New Millenium (Great Britain: Little, Brown and Company, 1999)

An Open Heart. Practicing Compassion in Everyday Life (ed. Nicholas Vreeland; Sydney: Hodder, 2002)

"The Buddhism of Tibet" in *The Buddhism of Tibet* (The Wisdom of Tibet Series 1 & 2; trans. Jeffrey Hopkins with Anne Klein; London/Boston/Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1975) 13-47

*The Good Heart (*ed. Robert Kiely; trans. Geshe Thupten Jinpa; London / Sydney / Auckland / Rosebank: Random House, 1997)

How to Practise. The Way to a Meaningful Life (trans. & ed. Jeffrey Hopkins; Sydney / Auckland / Parktown: Random House, 2002)

The Joy of Living and Dying in Peace (The Library of Tibet; The Path to Enlightenment Series; trans. & eds. Geshey Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Gangchenpa & Jeremy Russell; London: Thorsons, 1997)

"The Key to the Middle Way. A Treatise on the Realisation of Emptiness" in *The Buddhism of Tibet* (The Wisdom of Tibet Series 1 & 2; trans. Jeffrey Hopkins & Lati Rimpoche with Alexander Berzin, Jonathan Landaw & Anne Klein; London/Boston/Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1975) 49-89

The Many Ways to Nirvana (ed. Renuka Singh; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004)

Widening the Circle of Love (trans. & ed. Jeffrey Hopkins; Sydney / Auckland / Houghton: Random House, 2006)

Dalai Lama & Howard C. Cutler,
The Art of Happiness. A Handbook for Living (Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder, 1998)

Dalai Lama & Victor Chan,
The Wisdom of Forgiveness. Intimate Conversations and Journeys (Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder, 2004)

Daniel Goleman,
Destructive Emotions and How We Can Overcome Them. A Dialogue with the Dalai Lama (Mind and Life Series; London: Bloomsbury, 2004)

[1] The word bodhisattva describes those who are heroically intent (*sattva*) on achieving enlightenment (*bodhi*) to be more effective in helping other sentient beings attain enlightenment.
[2] Nalanda is the name of an ancient Buddhist university located near Patna in India.
[3] For the Dalai Lama the Sangha is not to be identified merely with the monastic community but is composed of "the individuals, both past and present, who have attained… states of freedom from suffering" (*Open Heart*, 37).
[4] In his writings the Dalai Lama often notes attempts to compare the Christian doctrine of the Trinity with the Three Refuges, though he himself doesn't encourage this.
[5] The Dalai Lama uses the metaphor of a seed being the substantial cause of a sprout coming into existence, with water, sunlight, soil and fertilizer being cooperative conditions (*Open Heart*, 58).
[6] It is tragic that the Catholic mystic responding to the Dalai Lama's misreading of this passage, Father Laurence, commends him for reading "the words of Jesus with such purity and deep understanding of their meaning" (*Good Heart*, 56).
[7] The Buddhist term for Truth Body is *dharmakaya*.

[8] The Dalai Lama identifies Nagarjuna, founder of the Middle Way school, and Asanga, the main lineage master of the "method" aspect of Buddhist practice. He speaks of a visualization which also sees surrounding the Buddha, masters of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism – Sakya, Gelug, Nyingma and Kagyu. He then encourages his readers to see themselves surrounded by all sentient beings (*Open Heart*, 171-172).

[9] So, for example, the historical Shakyamuni is believed by Buddhists to be an Emanation Body, "an emanation that is assumed in order to suit the mental dispositions and needs of a particular time, place, and context" and this emanation "comes from a preceding emanation, the *sambhogakaya*, or perfect resourceful state, which has arisen from the timeless expanse of the *dharmakaya*" (*Good Heart*, 61).