

## WHOEVER SERIES



# **“WHOEVER” IS A BUDDHIST**

**Michael K. Wilson**

This booklet is written to give Christians a basic sense of the world in which our Buddhist friends live. It takes a bird's eye view of Buddhism's attraction, history, beliefs and practices. It looks at what it means to be a Buddhist in multicultural Australia. It promotes positive measures for Christians to adopt in relating to their Buddhist friends.

## “WHOEVER” IS A BUDDHIST

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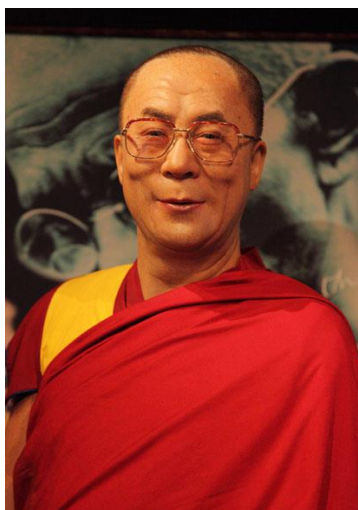
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#### *Facing the Challenge*

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#### Competing for Allegiance

Migration has been by far the primary determinant of religious affiliation in Australia. Accordingly, Buddhism is now the second largest religion in Australia.



DALAI LAMA IV (TENZIN GYATSO). PHOTO BY PETR KRATOCHVIL

Many celebrities have raised the profile of Buddhism in the West, such as Richard Gere, Keanu Reeves, Tina Turner, Steven Segal, Orlando Bloom, Roberto Baggio, Leonard Cohen, Herbie Hancock, Steve Jobs, Courtney Love, Adam Yauch, George Lucas, Oliver Stone, Naomi Watts, Tiger Woods and many others. Also of immense influence have been the Dalai Lama and prolific writer and activist, Thich Nhat Hanh.

Augustine observed, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Increasing secularisation leaves an inevitable spiritual vacuum. To fill this void many experiment with exotic eastern religions and New Age spirituality. Buddhism is part of this mix. Composer Philip Glass, co-founder with Robert Thurman (father of Uma) of Tibet House US, describes himself as “a Jewish-Taoist-Hindu-Toltec-Buddhist.”

Such is Buddhism’s breadth that it can be blended with almost any conceivable way of life. So it appeals to those who are disenchanted with Western materialism. Yet there are many rich Westerners who find some version of Buddhism quite compatible with sustaining their lifestyles.

A level of philosophical sophistication within Buddhism appeals greatly to those of an intellectual bent. Others see it as offering a path to inner peace. The usually unpressured voluntary nature of becoming Buddhist appeals to many people.

## “WHOEVER” YOU ARE...

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Whoever you are:

- God loves you
- Jesus died for you
- Believe in Jesus
- Receive life

## Historical Forces



LUMBINI, DECLARED BY KING ASHOKA TO BE THE BUDDHA'S BIRTHPLACE

Buddhism begins with a man called “the Buddha”, that is, “awakened one.” His family name was Gotama (Gautama). At birth he was named Siddhartha, “Aim Attained.” He was born in present-day Nepal. He belonged to the Shakya tribe and so was known as Shakyamuni, the “Sage of the Shakyas.” He was probably born in the fifth century BC, not in the sixth century, as is popularly assumed.

Like all ancient communities, India had a rigid hierarchical system of classes. It was believed that the priests (*brahmins*) emanated from Brahma’s mouth and head. They acted as custodians of highly venerated oral tradition and performed the

religious rites, especially sacrifices, which people understood to be absolutely essential for the preservation of the cosmic order and maintaining the regularity of the seasons.

Siddhartha came from the second highest “warrior” class (*kshatriya*), emanating from Brahma’s chest and arms. Below these classes lay the merchants (*vaishya*) from Brahma’s thighs, and the menial workers (*sudra*), from Brahma’s polluted feet. In reaction to the elitism of Brahmanism, Buddhism emerged, contending that all individuals could attain the ultimate state, regardless of social class.

According to tradition, after the Buddha’s death, his personal attendant, Ananda, presided over a First Council to deal with different interpretations of the Buddha’s teaching. From this eventually emerged the collecting of Buddhist writings in three sections or “baskets”, the so called *Tripitaka* (“Three Baskets”).

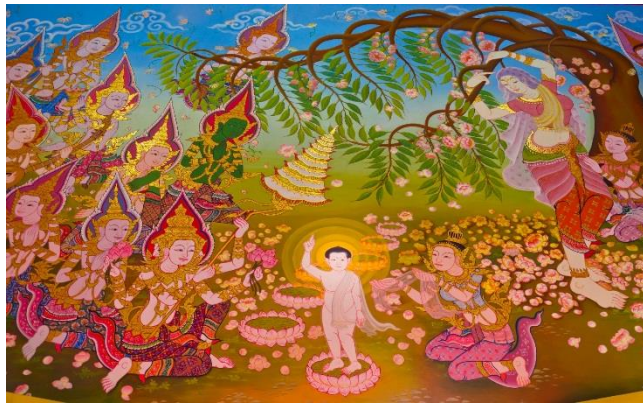
When the Second Council of Vaishali was convened (383 BC?) Buddhism was very small-scale. Buddhism split into two schools (*vadas*), which disagreed over fundamentals. The school that became more dominant was *Theravada*.

Buddhism would have remained a minor religion but for the conversion of King Ashoka in the third century BC, followed by the conversion of Menander. Ashoka was responsible for much of the early dispersion of Buddhist teaching. Yet the spread of Buddhism has owed more to Chinese influence than Indian.



## The Unimportance of History in Buddhism

Many Buddhists believe the birth of the Buddha was supernatural. A tree branch magically bent to allow Queen Maya to grasp it while she painlessly gave birth to her son. The new-born babe immediately walked, with lotus flowers springing up wherever he placed his feet. He lifted his finger, declaring “I am the leader of the world. I am the guide of the world. This is my final birth.”



THE BIRTH OF THE BUDDHA.

It was hundreds of years after the Buddha’s death that accounts of his life began to be written. Therefore, it is almost impossible to recover an accurate historical record of his life. We do not even know for sure what language he spoke.

He is portrayed as a prince who enjoyed every pleasure and never suffered. He was immensely strong, exceptionally handsome, and impressively cultured - the most accomplished mathematician and linguist, the greatest archer, the best wrestler and the most skilful horse rider. At the age of 16 he married an extraordinarily beautiful woman, Yashodhara.



A SKELETAL GOLDEN BUDDHA IN  
WAT BENCHAMABOPHIT, BANGKOK

But then Siddhartha saw “the four sights” - an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a religious beggar. Aged 29 and determined to solve the problem of suffering, Siddhartha left his wife and newly born son, Rahula (“fetter”), to become a forest ascetic.

Siddhartha achieved extraordinary yogic states of mind. So extreme was this that his hair fell out and his body became like a living skeleton. During this time he was attended by five ascetics.

Changing his approach, Siddhartha decided to adopt *The Middle Way*, avoiding the extremes of asceticism and indulgence. At Bodhgaya he sat under a pipal tree, vowing to attain enlightenment or die in the attempt. Mara’s demonic attacks could not unsettle his composed mind. One night he perfected the deepest state of meditation and appealed to the earth to be his witness that he deserved to be enlightened.

The Buddha devoted himself to teaching others the path to enlightenment. He founded an order of monks and, later, of nuns (the *Sangha*). He died, aged 80, after eating “pig’s soft food” (either contaminated pork or food eaten by pigs). His divided ashes were placed in various mounds (*stupas*).

Buddhists divide the defining moments of the Buddha’s life into twelve “great acts”:

1. Existence in Tushita heaven as a *deva*.
2. Descent from Tushita heaven.
3. Entering his mother’s the womb by the right side without causing her any pain.
4. Birth as a prince.
5. Proficiency in the worldly arts.
6. Life in the Palace, including marriage, fatherhood and the four great sights.
7. The Renunciation (departure).
8. Practice of austerities, reducing himself to the condition of a skeleton.
9. Defeat of Mara.
10. Enlightenment.
11. Turning (setting in motion) the Wheel of Doctrine. The Buddha preaches his doctrine; conversions result.
12. Final Nirvana following death.

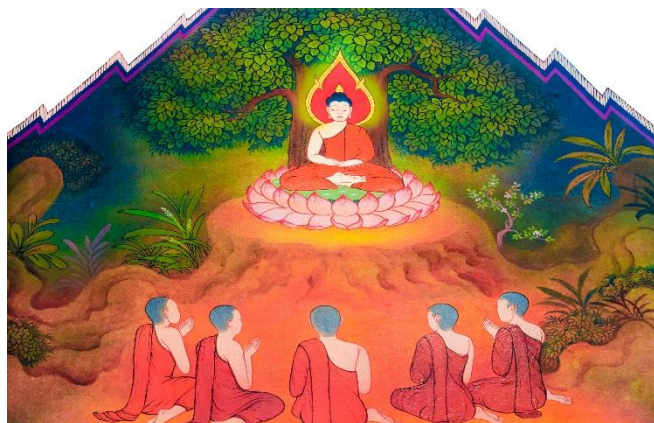
#### Siddhartha Achieves Enlightenment

*“Knowledge arose in me; insight arose that the release of my mind is unshakable; this is my last existence; now there is no rebirth”* (Samyutta-Nikaya 5:420).

Shakyamuni’s first sermon, at Deer Park near Varanasi.

For most Buddhists historicity is not important. In his book *Going Home. Jesus and Buddha as Brothers*, Thich Nhat Hanh states:

“In the Buddhist tradition, whether the Buddha was born in Kapilavastu or another place is not important. Whether he was son of Suddhodana and Mahamaya is not important. Whether he was born from the side of his mother or in the usual way does not matter. Whether after his birth he took seven steps and lotuses bloomed on his steps or not does not matter. What matters is that he has offered a teaching that is available, a very concrete teaching dealing with suffering and a path out of suffering, and you can try out all these things. And through that teaching and the practice, you touch Shakyamuni Buddha as a reality and not just a concept.”



TURNING THE WHEEL OF DOCTRINE. THE BUDDHA TEACHES HIS FELLOW RENUNCIANTS



## Buddhist Beliefs and Practice

Some essentials are basic to Buddhism in almost all its forms. Many of these are graphically captured by the Wheel of Life (*Bhavacakra*).

In the hub are three animals, representing *Three Poisons*. The Dalai Lama (XIV) explains:

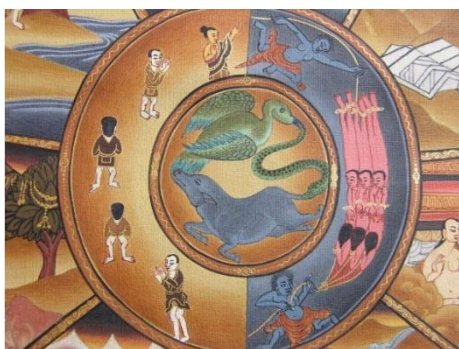
“Since beginningless time our intrinsic Buddha-Nature has been obscured by the forces of ignorance, greed, and aggression, as symbolized by the pig, the rooster, and the snake depicted in the center of Tibetan paintings of the Wheel of Life. These creatures of the mind obscure our limitless inborn potential and are the root cause of our frustrating transmigrations through cyclic existence.”

Ignorance, greed and aggression create the illusion that each of us is a unique and important individual. It is because we suppose we are unique selves that we remain locked into the cycle of ‘frustrating transmigrations.’ The antidote is to lose our individuality through realisation of our Buddha nature.



PHOTO BY <http://www.mountainsoftravelphotos.com>

The entire wheel is held by a monster who wears a crown of five skulls. Each ‘transmigration’ ends inevitably in death. Impermanence traps all reborn sentient beings. The Wheel represents *samsara* - “our frustrating transmigrations through cyclic existence.” Buddhists call these rebirths not reincarnations. They are ‘frustrating’ because it is highly ‘unsatisfactory’ to be reborn. The three essential characteristics of reality for the Buddhist are non-self, impermanence and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*, often inadequately translated as “suffering”).



The second concentric circle is split into two halves. On the left hand side rising figures experience a positive rebirth. They are making progress towards enlightenment. The right hand side depicts negative rebirth. These beings are regressing. In this version of the Wheel of the Life these figures are naked, chained and descend with terror on their faces.

Buddhists especially think of *karma* in explaining this. One's actions predetermine the nature of future rebirths. But 'one's actions' include those accumulated in past rebirths. People must bear some personal responsibility for being born with deformities or handicaps or into unfortunate life-situations. Philosophically, *karma* is habit-energy. If one develops the right habits, particularly right habits of mind, then this generates positive energy towards ensuring a more favourable rebirth.

Positive energy is generated by observing *The Five Precepts*: don't kill (any life-forms), don't steal, don't commit sexual misconduct, don't lie and don't have anything to do with intoxicants (e.g. drugs and alcohol). None of these things are evil in themselves, but only 'bad' in that they are not conducive to the calm, controlled and focused mind needed for making progress towards enlightenment.

Until then one will continue to experience rebirth. In most Buddhist sects the chances of being reborn as a human are extremely low. The third circle, the largest, is divided into six segments. Each is a realm of existence into which one might be reborn. *Karma* dictates even the particular kind of sentient being one will become.

Immediately below the monster's mouth is the realm of the *devas*. They have godlike abilities and live for vast epochs in paradises devoid of suffering. However, it is still characterised by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and a failure to grasp the reality of non-self. The time comes when these gods are also reborn. Shakyamuni was a *deva* in his penultimate rebirth.

Shakyamuni attained enlightenment in the human realm. This is the most desired realm for advancement. However, bad *karma*, for example, a life of greed, might cause someone to be reborn in the third realm, that of hungry ghosts. These beings have bloated bellies and but pin-holes for mouths. Any food or drink they manage to consume causes excruciating pain in their bellies.

Even more terrible is to be reborn as a hell-being, the fourth and bottom-most realm. All versions of the Wheel of Life show many forms of torture. There are many hells, some hot, some cold and the worst are cold hells. But even this

state is impermanent and even here it is possible to accumulate good *karma* and thus be reborn in a higher state.

The fifth realm is that of animals and the sixth that of warlike beings who are kill and are killed. In his former 'beginningless' rebirths Shakyamuni had spent time in all of these realms.

The 12 sections of the outermost concentric circle illustrate the *law of dependent origination*. Existence, whether physical or mental, is but an ever-changing series of interdependent events that flash by like the frames of a movie. Buddhists do not believe in 'nothingness.' They do believe there is a reality. Rather, Buddhists believe in 'no-thingness.' That is, there is no thing that has enduring, permanent substance or identity. This applies to all sentient beings, including humans. Hence Buddhist belief in non-self.

#### No-thingness

*"Assertions of an independent self or an independent creator contradict the presentation that things arise merely in dependence on their causes"*  
(Dalai Lama IV, *Joy of Living*).

This belief appears to render pointless all efforts to accumulate good *karma*. For if each moment I am a different non-entity (a contradiction in terms?) then how can it ever be possible for non-me to ever direct "my" efforts to achieving any desired consequence?

#### The Only Permanent Reality: Buddha Nature

*"This clear light nature, basic and luminous, is the final root of all minds – forever indestructible, immutable like a diamond"* (Dalai Lama IV, *Widening the Circle of Love*).

The exception to impermanence is Buddhahood, the realisation of 'our intrinsic Buddha-Nature.' Only upon realisation of this, coinciding with the utter end of 'my' individuality, do we escape the Wheel and the need to be reborn in yet another state of frustrating unsatisfactoriness. In the top right hand corner of the diagram a Buddha points to the left. He is pointing the way to enlightenment, symbolized by disciples learning at the Buddha's feet.

This is suggestive of the *Three Refuges* or the *Triple Gem* of Buddhism. When Buddhists chant they voice taking refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* (his teaching) and the *Sangha* (order of monks and nuns who submit to this teaching).



### Three Refuges and Four Noble Truths

*“Take refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, and you will grasp the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path that takes you beyond suffering. That is your best refuge, your only refuge. When you reach it, all sorrow falls away” (Dhammapada).*

Buddhist thought is also captured by the *Four Noble Truths*. The first truth is that all existence is unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). Shakyamuni initially sought to find the way to remove suffering. He came to believe that every state of existence within *samsara* is necessarily *dukkha*, even a paradise enjoyed by *devas*.

The second noble truth identifies the cause of such unsatisfactoriness: desire or craving. At its root is a longing for one's own continued existence as a unique individual. The third noble truth, that suffering ends when craving is extinguished, involves grasping the reality of non-self, that there is no real 'me.' Only then will there be no-thing to hold on to. Only then have I escaped clinging to that which is impermanent.

The fourth noble truth sets out how to achieve this state: *The Noble Eightfold Path*. These are *right views* (beliefs/understanding), *right thought*, *right speech*, *right conduct* (think of the Five Precepts), *right livelihood* (some professions are off-limits, e.g. that involve killing or involvement with the sex trade or intoxicants), *right (mental) effort*, *right mindfulness*, and *right concentration*.

As this indicates, the key to solving the problem of unsatisfactoriness is to be found in reshaping the mind until it grasps the threefold nature of reality, including the reality of non-self. Such mind control necessarily presupposes and requires control of one's speech, conduct and livelihood. Buddhist methodology very much centres around the practice of meditation.

The cartoon (see right) unintentionally illustrates a major aim of Buddhist meditation: the actualisation of non-self. At the climax of the Enlightenment scene in the movie *The Little Buddha*, Siddhartha (played by Keanu Reeves) looks at himself and exclaims, “Architect, finally I have met you. You will not rebuild your house again.” The reply comes: “But I am your house and you live in me.” He declares, “Oh Lord of my own ego. You are pure illusion. You do not exist. The earth is my witness.”



## Buddhist Practice

Buddhists practise their religion in vastly different ways. Any attempt to explain Buddhism is complicated by this. The great majority of the world's Buddhists belong to the code of Buddhism we know as *Mahayana*, "the Great Vehicle." Most of these Mahayana Buddhists are of various Chinese ethnicities.

In many Buddhist societies people accumulate merit, good *karma*, by showing their reverence to monks and serving them. Monks play a crucial role in the organisation and rituals associated with dedicating new houses and marriage ceremonies. They are relied upon to guide the deceased from the realm of chaos to a better rebirth, while safeguarding the peace of the living.

Monks are honoured for their occult powers, their ability to make amulets, holy water, and to insert protective power into Buddha images, to make astrological calculations, and for various practices which ward off evil, including tattooing.

### The Sangha of the Pure Mind

*"Those who put on the saffron robe without purifying the mind, who lack truthfulness and self-control, are not fit to wear the saffron robe. But those who have purified their minds, who are endowed with truth and self-control, are truly fit to wear the saffron robe"* (Dhammapada).

Rules for governing personal conduct (*patimokha*) of monks and nuns are set out in the Tripitaka. There are 227 for monks (*bhikkhus*) and 311 for nuns (*bhikkhunis*). These rules include eating only prior to midday and having nothing to do with the handling of money. The punishments range widely in severity, from simple confession (e.g., if a monk behaves disrespectfully) to permanent expulsion from the Sangha (e.g., if a monk commits homicide). There are in fact four rules, which if broken, automatically require expulsion: killing a human being, sexual intercourse, theft and falsely claiming supernatural powers.

In practice, what a monk is allowed to do or prohibited from doing varies considerably from sect to sect. In some sects vegetarianism is optional (the Buddha himself ate meat), while others are strictly vegetarian. Some sects prohibit monks from handling money, while others merely prohibit the amassing of wealth. In many sects monks are required to be celibate, but in some sects they can marry.

Buddhism did not originate as a secular philosophy. Buddhist Scriptures, in all traditions, are suffused with supernatural phenomena. In an uncreated universe, this necessarily presupposes uncreated mystical and magical powers. Wherever Buddhism has developed it has merged with often animistic pre-existing religions.



SPINNING PRAYER WHEELS

Seeking to tap unseen powers is pervasive in Buddhist practice. Spinning prayer wheels does not involve prayer as Christians know it, but is an exercise in magic. Similarly, the utterance of mantras, for example, the untranslatable *om mani padme hum* often written on paper and inserted into prayer wheels or inscribed on rocks.

Divination is commonly practiced. In the temple a Buddhist, while presenting offerings, might shake a holder containing numbered sticks until one falls out. The worshiper then collects a piece of paper with a corresponding number to find guidance.

In all non-Western Buddhist traditions, and even in many Western forms as well, meditation takes the mind into mysticism, magic and, at times, the occult. For example, some practise deity yoga, visualizing themselves as a deity, using *mandalas*, diagrammatic aids to meditation which depict the Buddhist universe.



TIBETAN MANDALA. MANDALAS ARE SOMETIMES CONSTRUCTED WITH COLOURED SAND, WHICH IS ALLOWED TO BLOW AWAY AFTER COMPLETION TO SYMBOLISE IMPERMANENCE.

## Buddhists in Multicultural Australia

Following the Gold Rushes of the 1850s over 100,000 Chinese came to Australia. In 1901 the Immigration Restriction Act was passed which then closed the door to immigration from Asia. The resultant White Australia Policy meant that Buddhism, along with Hinduism and Islam, virtually died out in Australia.

Post-war migration and the fading away of the White Australia Policy has radically changed the ethnic composition of Australia and this in turn has fundamentally altered the religious composition of the nation.

Alfred Deakin, Australia's second prime minister was an adherent of what he called a "pure esoteric Buddhism" which he believed had been debased in Asia and would be resurrected in the West. Today ethnic Buddhist communities in New South Wales include Burmese, Malaysian, Chinese, Khmer, Koreans, Lao, multiethnic, Sri Lankan, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese.



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## *The Biblical Challenge*

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From a Christian perspective Buddhism is suicidal, because Buddhists are seeking to achieve a state which involves saying goodbye to one's own unique, God-created individuality. Buddhists would deny this. They may ask, "How can we be committing suicide when there is no self to kill?"

At a time when the apostle Peter failed to see non-Jewish people with gospel eyes, Paul reminded him of something they both knew:

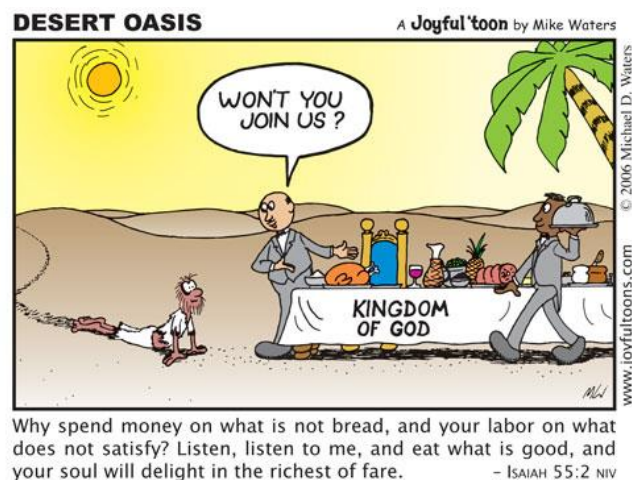
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Paul was reminding Peter that as Jews they both shared exactly the same problem as Gentiles. They were sinners in desperate need. They were incapable of doing anything that would cause God to declare them to be right in his sight and thus clear of sin. So in verse 20 Paul is saying what every Christian can say. What a wonder! Each of us can say, "The Son of God loved *me* and gave himself for *me*"!

But this means that there is a "me" that has a particular, unique identity and is treasured by God. Remove the doctrine of creation, which Buddhism does, and, like Buddhists, we end up with a dehumanizing worldview.

Galatians 2:20 is striking since it does involve death to self. But, unlike Buddhism, it is not the extinction of our individual self, but the recognition that what needs to die, and has been dealt with on the cross, is the sin-gripped self we once were apart from Christ. Our selves then enjoy not the realisation of something that was always inherent, but the indwelling of Christ, and with that a life beyond compare.

The challenge that lies before us is that of helping our Buddhist friends to see that the fundamental problem we face is not 'suffering' (however this is understood) but sin; that the solution does not lie in escaping from ourselves but in seeing ourselves through the eyes of the One who loved us and gave himself for us.



### **Some Comparisons and Contrasts**

From a Buddhist perspective since enlightened beings are not reborn, it follows that all people are unenlightened and therefore ignorant. This ignorance is a failure to come to terms with the three essentials of reality: impermanence, non-self and unsatisfactoriness. In a world where there is no Creator God there is no one who can demand that anyone behave in a particular way. We are acting foolishly, not sinfully, if we choose to remain in a state of ignorance. There was no personal moral corruption that obstructed Shakyamuni from attaining ultimate truth, that is, enlightenment.

The biblical perspective is very different. People are created in God's image and at creation were free of all moral corruption. This image has not been obliterated and indeed there is still a great deal of nobility to be seen in the lives of even those who are estranged from God. Nevertheless, as Romans 1 teaches, all people are also radically wicked. Significantly, this wickedness is evidenced by the inherent inability of anyone to digest and respond rightly to ultimate truth. Ignorance is not a neutral moral state, but is culpable – "people are without excuse."

In seeking an ultimate truth that does not involve honouring and thanking our good Creator, Buddhists are stepping into a quicksand of futile thought. The fact is that our mental capacities have been damaged by our moral corruption and until this is addressed it is impossible to grasp ultimate truth.

Buddhists believe they can 'save' themselves. But the Bible teaches us that we ourselves are incapable of dealing with our moral corruption. The death and resurrection of Christ involve an unleashing of the power of God. That's what "the kingdom of God" primarily means, the exercise of

### **ROMANS 1:18-23**

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them. 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 people are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

God's dynamic rule with particular intent to rescue and restore those incapable of doing this for themselves.

In order to save themselves from entrapment in the Wheel Buddhists seek to tap all manner of mystical and magical powers. Most of the world's Buddhists derive special magical power and benefit from making pilgrimages to *stupas* and sacred sites, from venerating monks and reciting sacred names and magic formulas. Pure Land Buddhism vests magical power in the utterance of the name of Amitabha (Japanese: Amida) and Nichiren Buddhism in the recitation of the Lotus Sutra.

In Ephesians there are two great prayers:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (1:18-19).

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (3:17-19).

Enlightenment occurs when believers grasp their certain hope, realize that they themselves are treasured by God as his inheritance, and experience "his incomparably great power." It is the experience of God's power that alone enables us to grasp ultimate truth and there is no greater truth that we can possibly absorb than the love of God in all its immensity.

Buddhism teaches that ultimate truth transcends human reason and even words. God's love takes in all our human capacities to know this reality and then far exceeds them.

### **A Few Tips**

1. Introduce your Buddhist friends to a welcoming, loving Christian community. In the main, Buddhist practice is individual not communal. Many from Buddhist backgrounds are profoundly moved when they experience love and joy in healthy churches.
2. Many Buddhists will be prone to incorporate Christ into their Buddhist worldview. When you are communicating the gospel be sure to make clear comparisons and contrasts. Use stories and illustrations.
3. Buddhism lacks a doctrine of sin. So pray that the Holy Spirit will convict your friends of their need of forgiveness. For many Buddhists not merely the guilt but especially the shame of sin needs to be communicated.



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## Recommended Resources

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*The Little Buddha*. A 1993 film directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. It stars Keanu Reeves as Siddhartha. Bridget Fonda and Chris Isaak are the parents of a boy considered to be the possible rebirth of a deceased Bhutanese lama. This is not a Christian movie. But it does an excellent job of accurately depicting core Buddhist traditions, while incorporating many key Buddhist reflections.

Enid Adam & Philip J. Hughes, *The Buddhists in Australia* (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research; Religious Community Profiles; ed. P.J. Hughes; Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996)

Ravi Zacharias, *The Lotus and the Cross. Jesus Talks with Buddha* (Oregon: Multnomah Publishers Inc., 2001)

Michael K. Wilson, *Resources for Studying Buddhism*.  
<http://www.facetofaceintercultural.com.au/resources-for-the-study-of-religion/>

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## Questions

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1. How does the Buddhist view of people differ from the biblical view? What implications does this difference have for the way people live their lives?
2. How do Buddhists and Christians differ in their estimation of the fundamental problem we face and what should be done about it?
3. How do Buddhists and Christians differ in their concepts of power?

For more titles in the “Whoever” and “Contending with Culture” series of booklets see the listings at: [www.facetofaceintercultural.com.au](http://www.facetofaceintercultural.com.au)



In an Australia that is becoming ever more multicultural, “whoever” will often be someone coming from a quite different culture. This presents particular challenges for churches intent on reaching “whoever.” We think here of all churches, not merely dominant culture churches that may be predominantly Anglo-Celtic in composition. As your church faces these challenges may you know God’s guidance and enabling as you set yourself to be the channel of God’s love to “whoever.”

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### *Need Advice?*

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Contact Mike Wilson, [facetofaceintercultural@gmail.com](mailto:facetofaceintercultural@gmail.com)

More resources: [www.facetofaceintercultural.com.au](http://www.facetofaceintercultural.com.au)

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