

# Salvation and Destiny

- as understood in Buddhism and Christianity

Buddhism and Christianity, properly understood, are close at so many points  
 However they have completely opposing worldviews  
 Buddhism is world denying, Christianity is world-affirming

## The Teacher

<p><b>The Buddha</b> – ('awoken') - <b>Siddhartha</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth and youth</li> <li>• The Four Sights</li> <li>• Life as an ascetic</li> <li>• Enlightenment</li> <li>• Death and <i>nirvana</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>The Christ</b> – ('anointed') - <b>Jesus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth and youth</li> <li>• Baptism</li> <li>• Ministry – 'words and works'</li> <li>• Death and Resurrection</li> <li>• Ascension</li> </ul>
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## The Message

<p><b>The Dharma</b> – 'the truth'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Three Universal Truths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Anicca</i> - impermanence</li> <li>• <i>Anatta</i> - soullessness</li> <li>• <i>Dukkha</i> - suffering</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ <b>Four Noble Truths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dukkha</i> – suffering - (symptom)</li> <li>• <i>Samudaya</i> – desire - (illness)</li> <li>• <i>Nirodha</i> – cessation - (cure)</li> <li>• <i>Magga</i> – path – (prescription)</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ <b>Noble Eightfold Path</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Prajna</i> - wisdom               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right view</li> <li>• Right intention</li> <li>• Right action</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <i>Sila</i> - morality               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right livelihood</li> <li>• Right effort</li> <li>• Right speech</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <i>Samadhi</i> - meditation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right mindfulness</li> <li>• Right concentration</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>The Gospel</b> – 'the good news'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Greatest Commandment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love your God, body, soul, mind</li> <li>• Love your neighbour</li> <li>• Love yourself</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ <b>Path of Discipleship</b> – (Learning)           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following – Jesus the example</li> <li>• Forgiving – others who offend</li> <li>• Fruitfulness – good actions</li> <li>• Formation – good character</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ <b>Eight Beatitudes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'Blessed are ...'</li> <li>• The poor in spirit ... kingdom</li> <li>• The mourners ... comfort</li> <li>• The meek ... inherit the earth</li> <li>• The righteous ... filled</li> <li>• The merciful ... receive mercy</li> <li>• The pure ... see God</li> <li>• The peacemaker ... God's child</li> <li>• The persecuted ... kingdom</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ <b>Repentance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think and live differently</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### The Need of Salvation

<p><b>Wheel of Samsara</b></p> <p>Human condition</p> <p>'Wheel of Becoming'</p> <p>- birth – death – rebirth -</p> <p>greed, ignorance, hatred</p> <p>- pig – rooster – snake -</p> <p>the cause of <i>dukkha</i></p> <p>Two directions</p> <p>- downward torment – upward joy -</p> <p>Six realms of existence</p> <p>- hell - earth - heaven -</p> <p>Everything linked</p> <p>- cause and effect – <i>karma</i> -</p>	<p><b>This Age</b></p> <p>'The World'</p> <p>- principalities and powers -</p> <p>'The Flesh'</p> <p>- lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life -</p> <p>'The Devil'</p> <p>- the prince of this world -</p> <p>'Death'</p> <p>- 'death spread to all, for all have sinned' -</p> <p>'Suffering'</p> <p>- 'the sufferings of this present age'-</p> <p>'Wheat and the Weeds'</p> <p>growing together</p>
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### The Goal of Salvation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Enlightenment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Awakened' to reality</li> <li>• Experiencing 'cessation' (<i>nirodha</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Nirvana</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No more rebirths</li> <li>• Not 'heaven' but 'cessation'</li> <li>• Bliss!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Kingdom of God</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New birth</li> <li>• Life of the Spirit</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Creation redeemed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parousia</i></li> <li>• Resurrection and judgement</li> <li>• New heaven and earth</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### The Means of Salvation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Five Precepts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical integrity – good <i>karma</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 5px;">Abstain</th> <th style="padding: 5px;">Action</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Killing</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Loving kindness</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Theft</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Generosity</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Immorality</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Purity</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Wrong speech</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Truthfulness</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Stimulants</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Mindfulness</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Arhats</b> (Theravada) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'perfected saint'</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Bodhisatvas</b> (Mahayana) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'a becoming Buddha'</li> <li>• postponing <i>nirvana</i> to help others</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Maitreya</b> – 'the Kindly One' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'yet to be born' – incarnation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Abstain	Action	Killing	Loving kindness	Theft	Generosity	Immorality	Purity	Wrong speech	Truthfulness	Stimulants	Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Atonement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life, death, resurrection of Jesus</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Means of Grace</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith</li> <li>• Baptism</li> <li>• Breaking bread</li> <li>• Sanctification</li> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Fasting</li> <li>• Learning and study</li> <li>• Fellowship</li> <li>• Care for others</li> <li>• Witness</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>'Holy Ones'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holy Spirit – <i>agapetos</i></li> <li>• Fruit of the Spirit</li> <li>• 'one another'</li> <li>• <i>Parousia</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Abstain	Action												
Killing	Loving kindness												
Theft	Generosity												
Immorality	Purity												
Wrong speech	Truthfulness												
Stimulants	Mindfulness												



# *buddhist-christian parallels*

<b>Parallel Beginnings</b>	
God	the Unconditioned
Heaven	Nirvana
Jesus (Yeshua of Nazareth)	Gautama (Siddartha Gautama)
Jewish founder of Christianity	Hindu founder of Buddhism
virgin birth account	virgin birth account
tempted by Satan	tempted by Mara
Good News of the Kingdom of God	the Dharma (law) of Liberation
Sermon on the Mount	Sermon of "Turning the Wheel of Dharma"
taught in parables	taught in parables
Feet kissed by Mary Magdalene	Feet kissed by Pasanedi
Betrayed by Judas	Betrayed by Devadatta
Crucified	<i>possibly</i> poisoned
Ascension	Parinirvana
the Anointed One (Messiah, Christ)	the Awakened One (Buddha, Enlightened)
Savior	Bodhisattva
<b>Parallel developments</b>	
the Church	the Sangha
Gospels	Sutras
Bible	Tripitaka, Prajna Paramita, and many other writings
Apostolic succession	Lineage of dharma transmission
Faith promoted 300 years later by Emperor Constantine	Faith promoted 300 years later by Emperor Ashoka
Church councils	Buddhist councils
missionaries	missionaries
monasteries	monasteries
After flourishing in the Middle East, now a minority religion in area of its birth	After flourishing in India, now a minority religion in area of its birth



## Parallel Paths

<i>agape</i> (spiritual love)	<i>maitri</i> (lovingkindness)
the world	<i>samsara</i>
Purification (Purgatory)	Rebirth (Reincarnation)
hell	hell realms
<i>imago Dei</i> (image of God)	Buddha-nature
Christ within you	Realizing your Buddha-nature
<b>Theosis/Deification</b>	Awakening, Enlightenment
the Way	the Dharma
chant	chant
prayer candles	prayer flags
saints	buddhas, bodhisattvas
angels	<i>devas</i>
demons	demons
relics	relics
Shroud of Turin	Buddha's Tooth
Four Spiritual Laws	Four Noble Truths
10 Commandments	Eightfold Path
rosaries	rosaries ( <i>malas</i> )
icons	icons ( <i>thangkas</i> )
statues	statues
the "Jesus Prayer"	<i>nembutsu</i>
Sign of the Cross	Taking Refuge
<b>contemplation</b>	meditation
New Jerusalem	Western Paradise
sin	<i>dukkha</i> (unsatisfactoriness)

## Parallel Schools

Eastern Orthodoxy (teachings of the Church Fathers)	Theravada (teachings of the Elders)
devotional Catholicism (saints, Heaven)	Kwan Yin, Amitabha, Pure Land (enlightened beings, Paradise)
<b>Mysticism</b> (direct experience of God)	Zen (direct experience of the Ultimate)
Protestantism (Scripture and salvation)	Nichiren, Pure Land (Scripture and salvation)
Charismatic / Pentecostal (enthusiasm)	Vajrayana (enthusiasm)



## Buddhism

Buddhism is a path that seeks to help individuals to overcome suffering and reach a state of enlightenment. In many ways it is less a religion and more a philosophy. It requires no belief in God, but rather a commitment to following the Buddha and his teachings (the *Dharma*). Buddhists, or 'followers of the teachings of the Buddha', as many prefer to be called, form part of the *Sangha* (Buddhist community) but are encouraged to seek their own path towards enlightenment. The title 'Buddha' means 'awakened one' and Buddhists believe that everyone has the potential to become enlightened, and follow in the example of Siddhartha Gautama who became the first Buddha.

### The Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama was born in Lumbini, in Northern India (modern day Nepal) in the 6th century BCE. At that time much of India was divided into small 'Kingdoms' controlled by tribal groups or clans and Siddhartha was born the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mahamaya of the Shakya clan. It was predicted that the new prince would grow up to be either a great King or a great teacher and holy man. Wanting his son to follow in his footsteps, the King decided that if Siddhartha knew nothing of suffering and hard-ship then he would not seek after truth or religion. So Siddhartha was given everything he desired and was kept in isolation in the palace. He saw no decay or illness or death; even falling petals from dying flowers were removed by servants before the young prince could see them and ask questions. When he was sixteen Siddhartha married Yasodhara, the daughter of another ruling family and they had a son, Rahula (Chains).

Despite the luxury of his life Siddhartha became dissatisfied and was curious to see something of life outside the palace. He persuaded his charioteer Channa to take him on visits to the villages outside the palace walls. Once outside he encountered an old man, a sick person, a corpse and a holy man. Distraught at the suffering he had seen and the fact that his father had lied to him about the realities of life, Siddhartha decided to leave home to seek a solution to the scourge of suffering. He stripped himself of his fine clothes and gold jewellery and set out to become a holy man or *Sadhu*. He started his quest by studying meditation with two masters. But he became tired of their teaching and instead decided to join a group of ascetics living in the forest. For six years he deprived his body of proper rest and nourishment, in the hope that by starving himself he would find answers to the questions of why people had to grow old, and get sick and die. Some stories say that for a while he lived on just one grain of rice a day.

By now he was 36 years old and felt no closer to the truth than when he started. He had experienced both great wealth and great poverty but had found satisfaction in neither. So he decided to break his fast and sit under a Bodhi tree and meditate until the answer came to him. While there Mara, the evil one, came to him and tempted him with his daughters (lust) and promises of wealth and power and tried to plant seeds of self-doubt in Siddhartha's mind. But Siddhartha refused to give in and by dawn he had reached enlightenment and had come to an understanding of all things. He was no longer bound by the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance and was in a state of perfect peace and happiness.



After his enlightenment the Buddha set out to find the ascetics who had left him when he broke his fast, so that he could impart his new found wisdom and understanding to them. He met them in the deer park at Sarnath, near Benares and he taught them the *dharma* (teaching) and one by one they too became enlightened and decided to follow him. For some forty-five years travelled around northern India teaching people by answering their questions and telling them stories to help them understand his teaching. By the time of his death in his eighties by food poisoning, he was the leader of a large religious movement, and was well known throughout the north of India.

## **Theravada/Mahayana Buddhism**

After the Buddha's death his disciples divided themselves into different groups, all based on the Buddha's teachings but with slightly differing ideas about the philosophy of Buddhism. The different groups moved from India in various directions and two main forms of Buddhism developed.

### *Hinayana (small vehicle)*

This name was given by more progressive Buddhists to the strict monastic Buddhism found mostly in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, known as *Theravada*. Theravadins believe that only some disciples of the Buddha will become enlightened but they will never attain the same greatness as Siddhartha Buddha. This teaching led to progressive Buddhists calling them the 'small' or 'lesser vehicle'.

### *Mahayana (great vehicle)*

The second main school of Buddhism follows the same teachings as the *Theravada*, but have other scriptures and teachings as well. They give themselves the name *Mahayana* because they believe their teachings are more comprehensive and they believe that all beings have the capacity to become enlightened Buddhas, and all eventually will. This school of Buddhism spread to China, followed by Korea and Japan where it adapted to suit the needs of those cultures (Zen, Pure Land, Nichiren). Another form of Buddhism developed within the *Mahayana* school and spread towards Nepal and Tibet. This is known as *Vajrayana* (diamond vehicle) and it involves emotions and imagination as well as the mind. Its worship involves chanting and hand movements and ornate, elaborate images, and is often referred to today as Tantric or Tibetan Buddhism.

## **The Three Marks of Existence**

*"Behold this body – a painted image, a mass of heaped up sores, infirm, full of hankering – of which nothing is lasting or stable." Dhammapada 147*

The Three Marks of Existence (or the Three Universal Truths) are among the first of the Buddha's teachings. While sitting under the Bodhi tree he came to a realisation that everything is impermanent; everything changes and nothing remains the same forever. Our physical bodies (*rupa*) change over time and even in death. The sensations that we experience and our resultant feelings (*vedana*) are constantly changing. Our character traits (*sankhara*) can change depending on who we are with and whether or not we are comfortable in a particular situation. Our cognitions



(sanna) change as does our knowledge and understanding. And our consciousness (vinnana) can change as we begin to question our own existence and awareness. This understanding of the impermanence of everything is the first Mark of Existence: Anicca.

If everything is changing, including our awareness and understanding, it is likely that we will begin to question our own existence and to what extent we exist as a unique entity. What makes you, you? Experiences? Personality? Physicality? Opinions? Position is society? If all of these change then what remains? Buddhists believe that there is no 'you'. The idea that a 'you' exists at all is an illusion, and a dangerous one at that as it makes you attach yourself to things. This is the second Mark of Existence: *Anatta* (soul-lessness); the idea that there is no permanent self or identity. If we believe that there is no self, then there is no need to be selfish. If we understand that we cease to exist outside of our interactions with others then we will pay more attention to those interactions and less attention to our-'selves'.

Because nothing stays the same, and because we are inclined to attach ourselves to things both material and experiential, we open ourselves up to suffering. We fail to understand the illusory nature of this attachment and are always seeking after newer and better things and different experiences. We will experience old age, sickness and death and at some point we may become aware that the world is unsatisfactory and will never provide us with the permanent happiness we seek. This is *Dukkha* (suffering), the third Mark of Existence.

### The Four Noble Truths

If you are sick and go to a doctor, you want to know:

1. What is wrong
2. What has caused your illness
3. What will cure it
4. How to get treatment

Many people think of the Buddha as a doctor and say that his teaching about the Four Noble Truths is a guide to curing the problems in society.

<b>First Noble Truth</b> (The symptom) <i>Dukkha</i>	All life involves suffering; either someone will suffer or feel that life is not perfect. Buddhist teaching aims to help people understand suffering and overcome it.
<b>Second Noble Truth</b> (The illness) <i>Samudaya</i>	Wanting more and more things causes suffering. This feeling of desire cannot bring happiness because things are always changing.
<b>Third Noble Truth</b> (The cure) <i>Nirodha</i>	Accept that things change. Treasure each moment, living the best way you can. Don't be self-centred. If you live in a way that is good and helps others you will be happy.
<b>Fourth Noble Truth</b> (The prescription) <i>Magga</i>	Learn to 'let go' and find the 'middle way' between too much and too little. Follow the Noble Eightfold path, so that you are at peace with yourself and the world.



The Buddha had lived a life of luxury, and had also tried hardship and poverty. Neither had brought him happiness or helped him to find a way to overcome suffering. He therefore taught a 'middle way' between these extremes. This middle way involves 'letting go' which means to give up craving. It is outlined in eight steps and is a guide to living that Buddhists call the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhists believe that by following this guide, they can be cured of their craving and find happiness.

## **The Noble Eightfold Path**

*"If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of suffering follows the beast that draws the cart...If a man speaks or acts with a pure mind, joy follows him as his own shadow."* Dhammapada 1-2

The Buddha's final noble truth includes the description of a practical way to escape suffering and its cause (desire or craving). The Noble Eightfold Path is a set of guidelines for living which help to avoid living a life of extremes. There are eight steps or paths centred around three aspects: wisdom, morality and meditation.

### **Wisdom (*Prajna*)**

- Right View
- Right Intention
- Right Action

### **Morality (*Sila*)**

- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Speech

### **Meditation (*Samadhi*)**

- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration

The Noble Eightfold Path is often represented as a wheel with eight spokes (one for each of the steps of the Path). This reinforces the idea that a person can start anywhere. Wisdom is not required in order to move onto the rest of the path. In fact, wisdom is often a result of practising the steps of morality and meditation. The Path is a means towards enlightenment, but it is also a set of guiding principles leading towards an ethical lifestyle.

## **The Wheel of Samsara**

*"Through many a birth in samsara have I wandered in vain, seeking the builder of this house (of life). Repeated birth is indeed suffering!"* Dhammapada 153

To properly understand the need for enlightenment it is necessary to understand in a little more depth the human condition and what exactly it is Buddhists believe we need to detach ourselves from.



One of the popular Hindu ideas taking root at the time of the Buddha was the notion that the world was like a giant wheel of birth, death and rebirth. People are trapped on this cycle of suffering and death unless they can escape. The Buddha accepted some of these ideas and adapted them into The Wheel of *Samsara*. While Hindus believe in a soul (*atman*) that moves after death to a new body and is reborn, Buddhists do not believe that there is a soul to move from one life to the next. Rather they believe that we are reformed as a result of cause and effect, or the *karma* that builds up over our lifetimes. The habits that we form in one life cause the next rebirth. The *karma* that is left over at the end of life is transferred to the next life and so some rebirths are better than others.

The Wheel of *Samsara* is often represented as a wheel divided into four circles, at the centre of which is a pig, a rooster and a snake (these are the three root poisons of greed, delusion or ignorance, and hatred). The three animals are chasing each other and eating each other's tails, suggesting that the three poisons feed off each other. It is greed, ignorance and hatred that Buddhists see as being the starting point of the problem of the human condition.

The next circle is divided into two. On one side men and women are in a state of torment and unhappiness and are falling downwards, while on the other side they are happy and are moving upwards. Moving outwards, the next circle is divided into six segments representing the realms of existence through which people move as they are reborn again and again. At the bottom is the realm of hell full of human suffering and despair, followed by the realm of the animals where the beings are concerned only with having their physical needs met. Next is the realm of hungry ghosts who are never satisfied and are always craving more. Then the *asuras* or angry beings who are constantly fighting with one another, followed by the human realm where some control can be had over the next rebirth. Finally there is the realm of heaven or the realm of the gods where everything is provided. This realm is not the goal and it is possible to move from this realm back to the others. The outermost circle contains twelve scenes called *nidanas* (links). They show how things link to each other through cause and effect (*karma*), and therefore why the wheel of *samsara* keeps on moving. The scenes include a blind man symbolising ignorance, and a man and woman embracing as a representation of contact between perception and reality. The wheel is a visual way of illustrating the idea that everything is in constant motion and is connected. The goal of the Buddhist is to break free from the cycle of *samsara* by detaching from desire and becoming awakened or enlightened.

## Enlightenment and Nirvana

Buddhists believe that when Siddhartha Buddha was enlightened he was awakened to the true nature of reality, and he understood the truth of all things. Once we cease to crave we will cease to suffer, and once we have liberated ourselves from ignorance, greed and hatred we will escape *samsara* and will reach enlightenment or *nirvana*. *Nirvana* is often described as the Buddhist version of heaven, but this is not quite correct. The Buddha refused to answer the question of whether there was any life after the final death because it was the here and now which was important. It is possible to achieve *nirvana* now but someone won't know what it is until they have attained it. If someone feels that they want to tell someone then they are



experiencing desire and ignorance and have not actually attained *nirvana*. Attaining enlightenment and hence *nirvana* means that there will be no more rebirth.

## The Five Precepts

All Buddhists agree that following the Noble Eightfold Path will help them to attain *nirvana*. The path requires them to focus on wisdom, morality and meditation. Ethical integrity is believed to be a foundation upon which to build the qualities of the Buddhist life. Basic to this Buddhist life, and thus required for moving towards enlightenment, are the Five Precepts. They are not absolute rules, but are guidelines which can help develop good *karma*, and help someone progress spiritually. The precepts can be looked at both negatively (in terms of what one should not do), and positively (in terms of what one can do in order to develop).

1. I undertake to abstain from taking life / By deeds of loving kindness I purify my body
2. I undertake to abstain from taking that which is not freely given / With open-handed generosity I purify my body
3. I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct / With stillness, simplicity and contentment I purify my body
4. I undertake to abstain from wrong speech / With truthful communication, I purify my speech
5. I undertake to abstain from taking drugs and alcohol which cloud the mind / With mindfulness, clear and radiant, I purify my mind

## Arhats and Bodhisattvas

One of the reasons Mahayana Buddhists call Theravada 'the lesser vehicle' is because Theravadins believe that in order to reach *nirvana* you must pass through three stages of progression and finally become an Arhat or a 'perfected saint'. This takes many lifetimes and a strict adherence to the Noble Eightfold Path. You are more likely to become an *Arhat* if you are a monk or a nun because you will be able to focus on the Noble Eightfold Path without the fetters of everyday life getting in the way. Therefore Theravada Buddhism stresses the importance of entering a monastery for at least some time, especially for males.

Mahayana Buddhists however argue that everyone should have the chance to reach *nirvana*, not just those living a monastic life. They believe that the Buddha, in his lives prior to reaching *nirvana* was a Bodhisattva or 'becoming-Buddha' who had turned his back on *nirvana* in favour of continuing the process of rebirths so that he could help other people attain enlightenment. This combined two key principles of Buddhism, compassion and wisdom, and Mahayana Buddhists believe that anyone can display these traits by striving to become a *Bodhisattva* and vowing not to enter *nirvana* until they have helped others reach it too. A present day example of a *Bodhisattva* is the Dalai Lama. Just as there are three stages towards the fourth and final stage of becoming an *Arhat* in Theravada Buddhism, there are also three stages prior to reaching Buddhahood for the *Bodhisattva*. The first is 'intention' (sincerity in the search for enlightenment), the second is 'vow' (determination to be enlightened and to help others reach it), and the third is 'the path' (the practice of charity, morality, patience, vigour, meditation, and wisdom).



## Maitreya

*Maitreya* or 'the Kindly One' is an early Bodhisattva also mentioned in Theravadin writings. In China he is known as Mi-lo-fo and is a large, bald, pot-bellied laughing Buddha, usually carrying a sack or presents for children. In other Buddhist traditions he is usually depicted wearing robes, sitting on a throne. *Maitreya* is believed by most Buddhists to be the next major incarnation of the Buddha. He is yet to be reborn. He will be a successor of the original Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, and will teach the pure *dharma*.

*"Preferring to be known simply as the Teacher, Maitreya has not come as a religious leader, or to found a new religion, but as a teacher and guide for people of every religion and those of no religion. At this time of great political, economic and social crisis Maitreya will inspire humanity to see itself as one family, and create a civilization based on sharing, economic and social justice, and global cooperation. He will launch a call to action to save the millions of people who starve to death every year in a world of plenty. Among Maitreya's recommendations will be a shift in social priorities so that adequate food, housing, clothing, education, and medical care become universal rights. Under Maitreya's inspiration, humanity itself will make the required changes and create a saner and more just world for all"*  
<http://www.shareintl.org/maitreya>

## Buddhist-Christian Salvation and Destiny

As we stated at the outset, Buddhism and Christianity properly understood, are close at so many points (well illustrated by the charts on pages 3 and 4 above). However, each hold completely different worldviews: Buddhism is world denying, while Christianity is world affirming. Christian destiny is not Heaven (some presumed equivalent to Nirvana); rather it is in a renewed heaven and earth (eg. Rev 21:1-2).

Nevertheless, the ethos of the life that both Gautama and Jesus called their followers too has a very similar character to it, both being based on living by values. Though the role of the Holy Spirit is unique to Christianity.

### Further reading:

David Burnett (1996) *'The Spirit of Buddhism: a Christian perspective on Buddhist thought'*, Monarch Publications

Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) *'Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as brothers'*, Rider Books

Thich Nhat Hanh (2007) *'Living Buddha, Living Christ'*, Riverhead Books

Walpola Rahula (1967) *'What the Buddha Taught'*, Gordon Fraser

Paul Williams (2002) *'The Unexpected Way: on converting from Buddhism to Catholicism'*. Continuum -T&T Clark

