

**The Buddhist Side and the  
Eastern philosophical bases for the “need” to bury Jesus**

As far as I know, this is the first book on Jesus-in-India that has attempted to grapple with the philosophical and religious issues surrounding this theory in as much depth as will be presented in this section. I do not pretend to be an expert on philosophy, but I hope that I have covered this issue sufficiently well. It will be exciting for me, personally, to read what any future author might write in this area [That’s an invitation!] Though this section begins with the words, “The Buddhist Side,” the Buddhist perspective is actually just a subset of an overall Eastern religious and philosophical perspective often different than that of the Western/Christian religious and philosophical perspective. So, I ask that the reader, while reading this section, keep in mind that the intent is to contrast the general Eastern philosophical and religious perspective with that of the Western/Christian one.

If philosophy turns you off, you might want to skip this section. Others will enjoy this section. For the reader who is not familiar with Eastern religious philosophy, I ask your patience in reading this section. It will be important to carefully read this section, because this section presents the essential underlying philosophical issues raised by those who believe that Jesus survived the crucifixion, and that he was a mere mortal being. Whether or not one agrees with this presentation, an understanding of it will enlighten you on the philosophical and religious cosmological issues underlying this theory. As you will discover, the issue of Jesus-in-India has much deeper significance than the question of historical accuracy with regard to the events surrounding the crucifixion.

With regard to the concept of humankind's relationship to, and interaction with, a Supreme Being, while reading this section you must keep in mind that although the various Eastern religions share a concept of humankind's relationship to God as one of interactive and interdependent, there are some differences which practitioners of certain Eastern religions would highlight that distinguish those religions from others. For instance, while Islam shares Hinduism's idea of interactivity between Allah (God) and humankind, it is much more strict with regard to the idea of interdependence. Islam views Hinduism's doctrines of the interrelationship and interdependence of all things as too loose, and the God of Islam is held by Muslims to be As-Samad (Independent).

Yet, despite this and other particular differences, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism do share an understanding of the everpresent reality and interrelationship of God, humankind and nature that, they believe, is not to be found within Christianity.

Buddhist teachings are at total variance with the ideas espoused by the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith that we examined in the previous section, as well as some of the fundamental teachings of Christianity. The basis for this difference might well be explained by examining a simple vision that was experienced by the Buddha.

After the Buddha had reached his enlightenment, he experienced a vision in which he saw the entire human race as a bed of flowers. Some of the lotuses were still mired in mud, others were just emerging from it, and others were on the point of blooming.

In short, this vision is symbolic of the idea that all people have the ability to unfold their spiritual potential, though some need

a little help to do so. Obviously, the idea that people can unfold their spiritual potential and reach enlightenment without Jesus Christ is a concept that is anathema to Christianity.

Buddhism incorporates the idea of life as constant change, and that one can take advantage of this fundamental reality by making conscious efforts to change oneself for the better. The primary means of bringing about this change, according to Buddhism, is by methods that work on the mind, such as meditation. Such methods allow one, according to Buddhism, to gain a complete understanding of oneself, others and life itself.

This and other views of Buddhism are diametrically opposed to Christianity in that Christianity teaches that human beings cannot possibly change their spiritual condition due to the original sin that each human being has inherited through the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. From the standpoint of Christianity, humanity cannot spiritually transform itself. The transformation of humanity spiritually can only take place by the recognition that Jesus Christ is the savior of all mankind who died on the cross for the sins of humanity.

Having already examined the fundamental differences between Buddhism and Christianity, I will now quote Mr. Kersten at length and the reader will compare his views with the views expressed by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. You will see that Mr. Kersten views the figure of Jesus Christ in Christianity exactly the opposite as do Christians. In his view, the Christian idea of Jesus Christ's place at the very center of religion/spirituality (including prayer and meditation) has served to externalize the religious experience, taking it away from the deep religious and

spiritual experiences an individual may obtain through delving inside himself or herself. Also, the view of the Christian Church, as stated earlier, that Christians need the Church in guiding it with regards to matters of prayer is vociferously opposed by Kersten and those who view religious experience as something that occurs directly between the individual and some source, whether they perceive that source as God or higher consciousness or Universal Mind.

In some sense, this sounds somewhat like the idea of that spark (see the Introduction) that the Gnostic Christians believed existed in human beings. That spark, according to the Gnostics, was composed of the very essence of God, and one could achieve perfect knowledge of the authentic truths of existence, including knowledge of God, through the attainment of perfect Gnosis [or perhaps what the Buddhists would call enlightenment]. Kersten states:

**“...Jesus first tried to extricate humanity from the hold of official Churches, with their ecclesiastical bureaucracy, their laws and their figureheads, their inflexibility, their strife in matters of exegesis, their hierarchy and claims to unique authority, and their cult, idolatry and sectarianism. Jesus wanted the direct communication between God and Mankind, and did not intend to foster any ambitious ecclesiastical careers.”<sup>5</sup>**

Now in looking back at the quotes from the letter of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and comparing portions of that letter with the above quote from Kersten, we see very easily the diametrically opposed positions of both Buddhism and Christianity. In the Buddhistic tradition that Kersten understands, for instance, there can be

no intermediary—not an institution in the form of a Church that seeks to guide the believer in proper forms of prayer, nor a figure, such as Jesus Christ—that stands as the focal point (a wholly external one, at that, as perceived by Buddhists) of religion/spirituality/meditation [notwithstanding the statues, prayer beads, etc., that non-Buddhists might criticize as no less intermediaries than the figure of Jesus Christ]. Kersten continues:

“But Jesus’ voice no longer reaches us **in its natural directness**. Access to it can only be gained by privileged experts and through the arbitration of a professional corps. Jesus has been managed, marketed, codified and ‘booked’...”

“**The Divine is not at some Utopian distance, but in each of us**; and it inspires us to lead our lives in harmony with the Infinite, and to recognize our short existence as a part of the eternal whole.

“For centuries, Western man has learned to view himself as a being separate from God; and in the ‘enlightened’ twentieth century, Western man seems less certain than ever about possible answers to the most ancient human questions about God and the meaning of life.

“All over the world, new spiritual centers have sprung up, attempting to give answers to those questions which a rigid Church officialdom cannot answer. **A kind of syncretic world religion of the future is in ascendance**. It is moving towards full **self-realization**, to the

search for religious enlightenment, to a mystical all inclusive vision of the cosmic context of one's individual existence, and this by means of contemplation, self-knowledge and meditation."<sup>6</sup>

Kersten's assertion that "Western man has learned to view himself as a being separate from God," seems to be supported by the following statement, which we examined earlier, from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "They incite him to try to overcome the distance separating creature from Creator, **as though there ought not to be such a distance.**" This statement from the Vatican Congregation represents an acknowledgement of observations made by such Eastern thinkers as Seyyed Hossein Nasr that Christianity evolved a system of religious doctrine that separated man from God.

To some of the proponents of the Jesus-in-India theory, this separation has had direct, tangible and negative impact on the course of human affairs, even within the field of science. But how could this have impacted on issues of the environment and human affairs, for instance? The separation of man from God and God from nature, which I will deal with in length throughout this section, has guided the course of human development, particularly in the field of science, especially since the Age of the Enlightenment, when the application of strict rationality in the solving of human problems replaced religious or spiritual ideas. The Age of Enlightenment (more on it later) represented, in part, a rejection of the Church and its doctrines, especially those doctrines that were deemed incomprehensible, unbelievable or irrational—doctrines such as the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus Christ. With the exception of those philosophers who adopted the idea of Deism (more on that

later), most Enlightenment philosophers rejected religion altogether, though that rejection was, in fact, more a rejection of Christianity and its specific doctrines.

Yet this rejection of Christianity served to distance European philosophers from religion in general. This was ironic, because both the Church and European philosophers—ostensibly at opposite poles of the religious/spiritual spectrum—had separated mankind from God and God from nature, the Church doing so as a matter of doctrine, and the Enlightenment philosophers doing so as a rejection of the supernatural.

Unlike in Eastern religious philosophy where the presence of God in nature was never threatened by the introduction of ideas to the contrary, where humankind has always been viewed as an intimate part of nature, and where it is understood that a deep relationship exists between man and nature and God, both Christianity and Enlightenment philosophers succeeded in excising cognizance of these relationships from the human psyche, Christianity doing so through creating an external God, and Enlightenment philosophers doing so by rejecting God all together.

This, in turn, led to the idea of nature as purely a resource to be used without regard to how that use might impact upon humanity, especially in the long run. As a result, science generally proceeded along the lines of a utilitarian notion of nature that precluded the idea of incorporating spiritual insights into the scientific method. As the president of the Foundation on Economic Trends, Jeremy Rifkin, states:

“The past several centuries have been dominated by the mechanistic thinking of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on the

privatization and commodification of nature and man; detachment and isolation from the natural world; and a near pathological obsession with creating a secure, autonomous existence, independent of the forces of nature.”<sup>7</sup>

As he states, “global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain, deforestation, desertification, and species extinction” are some of the environmental problems that have emerged directly as a result of philosophical and spiritual ideas emanating both from the Church, on the one hand, and the embodiment of reaction against the Church, on the other hand, that took shape in the form of the Enlightenment, with its total shift of consciousness from the supernatural and spiritual to the strictly rational.

Personally, I am not so willing to totally give up the idea of rational process. As I state again later, it is my view that elements of eastern religious philosophy should be combined with the Western rational approach. It is very heartening to know, for example, that Chinese hospitals that employ traditional Chinese practices such as acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine therapy now also include Western medical ideas where appropriate. And, though it took a little longer, Western medical institutions are now incorporating eastern and spiritual health care healing regimens. The National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, for example, has formally recognized prayer as a viable tool in health care. I think that Dr. Larry Dossey is to be given credit for being one of the pioneers who promoted the idea of the inclusion of prayer as a serious health care tool.

He relates, for instance, the example of the Spindrift experiments: