



Buddhist Thoughts

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Rev. Hirano's contact numbers: Office: 801-363-4742,
home: 801-299-8727,
Emergency 801- 819-2648

How Christianity Helps Me be Buddhist

J.K. Hirano

Generally speaking, people are considered to be good and faithful followers if they lead a moral life, attend church services and participate in welfare activities. In Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, however, while these practices are encouraged, they alone do not constitute the Buddhist way of life. What is critically important is that the teachings radically transform our way of thinking and living so that we become true individuals: strong in crisis, humble in success, tender in our feelings and grateful at all times.

The Awareness of Self, Rev. Gyodo Haguri

Much of my spiritual life as a Buddhist has been defined and strengthened by the Christianity that has surrounded and even embraced me. The fact that I was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, is probably one of the foremost reasons that I developed a spiritual life at all. This environment of having been surrounded by faithful followers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (The Mormons) has forced me to think about and choose my own personal religious beliefs.

First of all, I was very lucky to be born into a very open Buddhist family. My father, mother, grandparents were all Buddhists. Jichan and Bachan (Grandfather and Grandmother) were Jodo Shinshu and Grandma and Grandpa went to the Nichiren Buddhist Temple. We differentiates Mom and Dad's parents by using Japanese or English words. At that time, I never knew of any differences. My father's family were members of the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple. My father was on the temple board; my Auntie Maxine was one my Sunday School teachers and my disciplinarian at Sunday School. I remember my father would often come home very upset after the board meetings, but he never said anything against the minister. In fact, he would be upset by how badly he felt the board treated the ministers.

The ministers of the temple as I was growing up were Rev. Shintatsu Sanada, Rev. Seiki Ishihara and Rev. Hirofumi (Hakubun) Watanabe. These ministers would often hang out at my Jichan's house to just talk with him. From the way my Jichan and father treated these men, I knew that they were respected and honored and should especially be honored and respected by me, although, to be honest I could barely understand a word they said in their Dharma Talks. I may have mentioned this before, but I was already in high school when I realized I was saying "I

put my faith in Buddha,” not “I put my FACE in Buddha.” Either way was fine with me. Around the time of this discovery of “putting my faith in Buddha”, my father had told me, “Jerry, I am a Buddhist. Your Mother, Bachan and Jichan are Buddhists. You cannot call yourself a Buddhist until you decide for yourself. I wanted you to go to the temple to develop a sense of a spiritual home, but you are at the age when you must decide who and what you are religiously. You must find your own spiritual home.”

Mom and Dad had always let me attend the Mormon Church across the street from my house. The Mormon Church had a variety of wonderful programs for youth. I was never asked, “Are you or your parents members of the church?” They never asked me to pay any tithe. I went to the Primary School, the weekday program for elementary school students. In high school I joined the Mutual for High School students. The church sports teams allowed two non-members for softball, basketball and the yearly road shows where we would put on skits for other churches. I was also a member of their Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. I was not very athletic or a very good scout but I had a great time. Although I had gone to the Mormon Church on the weekdays, on Sundays I would be at the Buddhist Temple. I believe that Buddhism does not say you have to be at the temple to be religious. However, it is important to go to the temple, especially as children, to develop a sense of having a place where spirituality is emphasized. For most of us, our home life is not centered on spiritual growth. Although I am a minister, I believe it is at the temple that my children can find their true and real home.

An example of this was revealed in a conversation I recently had with Michelle Soga, the daughter of Rev. Jeffrey and Kumika Soga of Hilo, Hawaii. Rev. Soga has four children and I had met them when they were very small. On this most recent trip, I had the opportunity to speak with Michelle. She had grown up as the daughter of a minister and in Hawaii, the ministers have to go to many temples throughout their career and their children must adjust to life in a variety of places. Michelle had gone to the mainland for her undergraduate studies, but had returned to her parents when she went to graduate school. I asked her about where she feels her home is. I had often worried about my own children, because I knew of some ministers’ children who felt they never had a place to call home. Michelle first said her home is where her parents are living. The next day, she told me that she had really thought about what I had asked her, and said she felt it was the temple that was her home. Whenever she was at a Buddhist temple, she felt comfortable, wherever that location may be. The temple was her home. I was extremely impressed with her understanding. By coming to the temple, we are allowed to really begin to find our true and real home. That is why I encourage you to bring your children to the temple.

In about Junior High, my Jichan and Grandpa died. Both men were in their 80s and they both died in their sleep. These funerals were the first time I questioned what we were doing at church. I remember asking the minister where should I go to or read to find out what happened to my Jichan. Although these questions may sound very Christian, this was the context of where I lived and what I knew of religion. In America, we are living in a very Christian society. My questions would naturally arise from how America views life after death, heaven or hell, etc. The minister told me to read the “Evan and Weitz translation of the Tibetan Book of the Dead.” I didn’t realize that it was Tibetan and not Japanese Buddhism. I read it, didn’t understand much of it, but thought it was really cool. More than anything, what this book showed me was that Buddhism had answers. They may have been different from those provided by my Mormon friends. But they got me to really wonder about the bigger questions. The questions I wondered about were the questions I had heard at the Mormon Church growing up. Who was God? Would

I or my family be going to heaven or hell? These preceded the even bigger questions which life gave me; What happens when I die and why am I even here?

I have been a minister for about 28 years now, and looking back on my childhood, I realize I have been a Buddhist for the other thirty years. This would not have been possible without my Christian friends. Their Christianity helped me be a Buddhist.

Question: Are God and Buddha the same?

Answer: It depends on how you define God.

If your God is a Caucasian or even Middle Eastern-looking man in a robe with long flowing hair who sits in judgment of my thoughts, words and deeds, then no, I don't believe in that. My wife does that for me. She is probably a better judge on those things too.

On the other hand, if your God is a dynamic force of love, wisdom and compassion; if this God is not outside myself waiting and judging, but a part of myself, embracing me, just as I am, then I say, yes!

Question: Did God create the world?

Answer: "I don't know, but probably not. I guess it depends on the question of how you define God." I can't even remember the names of the Presidents of the United States that go way back in history. Did the Presidents create the United States? Science has shown me that the Earth is millions of years old. God as creator holds as much evidential truth as aliens creating the Earth. I just don't know, and ultimately it doesn't really matter to me.

The God I believe in is defined to me as Amida Buddha. Not a Judge or Creator but a Parent loving me without question, accepting me as I am. Amida Buddha's Vow is the prayer of the Universe, praying for my benefit that I wake up to true and real life now, not after I'm dead.

Question: Is there a heaven and hell?

Answer: I do not believe that there is a heaven or hell after we die. Heaven and Hell are created in this life, by our own illusions, our ego. From my personal experience, I believe that at death, we are all embraced in compassionate light. As I explained to some Muslim Clerics that came to our temple a few years ago, I believe I am embraced in the light of wisdom and compassion at this moment. You may call him Allah, our Christian and Jewish friends call it God. I call it Amida Buddha. I do not believe that Amida, God or Allah would abandon me, when I may need it the most. So I don't worry about after death, but about what I am doing now.

Question: Do Buddhists pray?

Answer: Well, I guess if Amida Buddha prays, so do I. Prayer is a human yearning for life, for authenticity. My response to this prayer is a prayer: Namo Amida Butsu. It is a response of awareness and appreciation for this prayer that had been answered countless of lifetimes before, just for me - the foolish being who can't even memorize the presidents' names.

Question: Do you believe or have faith in Jesus Christ as your savior?

Answer: I don't think so, but I really don't know, because I'm still not sure what I have to be saved from. I do have faith that I am a foolish being and that I have been saved time and time again from my own foolishness. This is why I believe in a force of love, wisdom and compassion that embraces me at all times. My existence at this moment is a physical manifestation of this faith. I exist because of others. On my own, I don't have a chance. To say I believe in Jesus Christ as my savior would be a blind faith, which I do not believe in.

Question: Do you believe God punishes the bad?

Answer: When there is a catastrophe in life, many people feel that God is punishing them for some transgression. First of all, I do not believe God is messing around with the intimate details of our lives. Ignorant, greedy and angry humans are the reasons for most all the catastrophes in the world, whether this is war, heinous crime or climate change. I believe in the natural and Buddhist law of cause and effect and interdependence. If examined carefully this is hard to deny. If there is a God, I don't think he or she would be personally involved to invalidate this precious law.

I know that there are other questions you may have. I hope that you will come to the temple so we may discuss them. It is in a Sangha that we become Buddhists. It is very difficult on our own. As a Buddhist minister, I don't have your answers to these important life questions, but together, we may find answers for ourselves. As Rev. Haguri says, "*so that we become true individuals: strong in crisis, humble in success, tender in our feelings and grateful at all times.*"

This quote I began with is by Rev. Gyodo Haguri from his book Awareness of Self. I feel that Rev. Haguri is describing the ideal Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. Although going to the temple is important, and even more than that is participating in general welfare activities that benefit humanity. I believe that none of this can be done without first developing our personal spiritual life and thought. Our self is determined by our relationship to others. There is no self without other.

We live in a largely Christian society. There are those who develop a sense of "us" and "them." This only diminishes our shared humanity. In being a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, I naturally embrace the teachings of Shinran. This is the foundation of my spiritual home. But a home is more than just a foundation. My spiritual home is also made up and of many materials provided by my Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Daoist, Confucian, shamanic neighbors and friends. I could not have my Buddhist home without these neighbors and friends; we are defined by our relationship to others. This year, because Salt Lake City is hosting the Parliament of World Religions, we have the opportunity to learn from the World, I hope you can join us. Namo Amida Butsu!

BWA News

Elaine Endo

We will be having our April BWA meeting on Sunday, April 5 right after service. At this meeting, we will be discussing plans for Nihonmatsuri on Saturday, April 25. We need a ton of help in the kitchen and booth outside. Please plan on helping that day if possible.

Dharma School News

Stephanie Sueoka & Sherrie Hayashi

Thank you to **Faye Mitsunaga and Ashley Holbrook** for organizing the Dharma School Bowling Party at Bonwood Bowl on March 1. The Dharma School kids had a lot of fun!

There will be a Dharma School Board meeting on **April 5th**, after class. We will create the nominating committee for the Board at this meeting. If you are interested in serving on the board, please let us know. Stephanie Sueoka will be attending the Dharma School Teachers Conference in Los Angeles, April 24-26th.

Our appreciation to all the parents and kids for making the effort to attend on Sundays so the kids can practice and prepare for a fantastic Hanamatsuri program. **Hanamatsuri is Sunday, April 12th**. We hope to see a great turnout to watch our fun and talented kids!

Ogden Hanamatsuri is the following **Sunday, April 19th**, and we encourage everyone to help support the Ogden Buddhist Temple.

There will be no Dharma School on April 26th because it will be the day after Nihon Matsuri, and hopefully everyone will be recuperating from a busy and well attended event.

Special Awards

Paul Terashima

The Salt Lake Buddhist Temple has resumed the "SPECIAL AWARDS FUND RAISING" this year. We have sold 188 tickets this year, which means your odds are better than 200 to 1. The Temple would like to thank all the people who went out and sold all these tickets.

On February 22nd we drew for January and February. Shawna Kageyama-Kim was the winner for January. Grace Matsumura was our February winner. Congratulations to our two lucky winners.

We will keep you informed of all the winners throughout the year. "Good Luck" to everyone and "Thank you" for your donation.

BWA Trip to Las Vegas Obon 2015

August 7,8,9 and 10 2015

Jane Sakashita

Le Bus reserved and California Hotel also reserved for three nights stay.

Three Nights Stay:

\$190.00 per person-double occupancy
\$240.00 per person-single occupancy

Shotsuki Hoyo

April 12, 10:00 am

Deceased	Date of	Next of kin
Akimoto Landon	4/12/92	Tracy Roberson
Akiyama Kiyoshi	4/28/39	Francis Akiyama
Arishita Ayako	4/23/00	Sam Arishita
Fujimoto Rae	4/20/97	Grace Oshita
Hachisuka Shiroku	4/4/69	Nancy Takagi
Imada Shizuye	4/24/51	
Iwasaki Kamesaburo	4/13/67	Dean Iwasaki
Iwasaki Toshimasa	4/9/98	Dean Iwasaki
Koga Ichizo	4/16/62	
Koga Shigeichi	4/20/62	
Konishi Toraye	4/30/88	Jeanne Konishi
Masuda Tatsuro	4/6/91	Hatsuye Masuda
Matsuura Chotaro	4/4/50	Francis Akimoto
Minakawa Harushige	4/13/70	Dean Iwasaki
Mitsunaga Shizuko	4/14/90	Tomio Mitsunaga
Oda Fumi		Shigeru Sasaki
Oda Hayano		
Sakashita George	4/2/75	Jane Sakashita
Sugihara Yoshio	4/12/86	Dorothy Sugihara
Tachiki Kayo	4/?/27	Steve Tachiki
Takenaka Yoso	4/9/95	Takenaka Family
Taketa Shinobu	4/18/82	Nanae Taketa
Okada Hito	4/5/84	Aiko Okada
Terashima Kiyoyuki	4/29/66	Paul Terashima
Mayeda Chieko	4/6/99	Craig Mayeda
Shizue Adachi	4/8/01	Tamiko Adachi
Hasegawa Miyuki	4/7/02	Roxanne Hasegawa
Chow Choy Lan	4/8/02	Chuck Chow
Sekino Lillian	4/17/02	David Sekino
Aoki Eva	4/2/03	Nob Aoki
Oishi Tai	4/25/03	Victor Oishi
Shigeru Shimada	4/9/09	Lynn Shimada
Kozo Minaga	4/2/10	Hisako Minaga
Larene Yamashita	4/7/11	Becky Tachiki
Lois Crook	4/5/12	Kathleen Takenaka
Fujie Kunimoto	4/1/12	Karen Sato

2015 FEBRUARY-MARCH DONATIONS

(February 25 – March 22, 2015)

Our Dana Campaign, to raise money for our Foundation Fund, will be run similarly to previous Building Fund campaigns. The Dana Campaign will run for 5 year time periods. The current campaign will run November 2014 to December 31, 2019. At the end of the campaign, your donations will be totalled and categorized. Names of donors in the Copper to Diamond categories will be placed onto a plaque, which will be hung in the Temple. Names of Valued Donors will be printed onto paper and displayed for a year or so.

Diamond: \$100,000 +
 Platinum: \$50,000 to 99,999
 Gold: \$25,000 to 49,999
 Silver: \$10,000 to 24,999
 Bronze: \$5,000 to 9,999
 Copper: \$1,000 to 4,999
 Valued Donors: \$1.00 to 999

Dana Campaign

Hiroshi & Mary Aramaki 100

Joya-E

Byron & Reiko Watanabe 50 Ronald & Linda Omori 25

Hoonko

Marcus & Karie Minaga-Miya 50 Roberto Toro 10
 May Akiyama 25

Nehan-E

Marcus & Karie Minaga-Miya 50

Ohigan

May Akiyama	25	Tomio & Junko Mitsunaga	25
Karen Cone-Uemura	15	Marcus & Karie Minaga-Miya	50
Ichiro & Takeko Doi	25	Setsuko Nagata	25
Stan & Elaine Endo	50	Dot Richeda	30
Mits & Terry Fujinami	25	Jane Sakashita	25
Maxine Furubayashi	25	Charlie Sasaki	20
Rev. Jerry and Carmela Hirano	100	Paul & Kathy Terashima	25
Jeanne Konishi	50	Sachiko Tohinaka	20
Mark & Gail Minaga	25	Robert & Tami Tokita	30

Shotsuki Hoyo

Nanae Taketa 25
 Paul & Kathy Terashima 25
 Yoshiko Uno 25
 Craige Mayeda 50
 Karen Cone-Uemura 25
 Bob Sugino 20
 Akiko Kato 50
 LeAnn Leach 30
 Jeanne Konishi 100

In Memory Of:

Ada Koseki
 Amy Brouwer
 Chieko Mayeda
 Ethan Cone
 Gentaro Ogawa
 Grace Kasai
 Graham Leach
 Jinzaburo & Chiyo Matsumiya

Tom & Fran Akimoto	25	Kame Matsuura
Ichiro & Takeko Doi	25	Masayo Doi
Pamela Koike-Stillman	25	May Koike & Kazuyoshi Oike
Stan & Elaine Endo	25	Michiye Endo
Yutako & Yaeko Ikegami	100	Mitsuko Ikegami
Eleanor Naomi Kobayashi	25	Miyuki Hasegawa
Eleanor Naomi Kobayashi	25	Sakae Kobayashi

Dharma School

Alice Ogura	25	Goodie Bag
Paul & Kathy Terashima	25	Goodie Bag
Asako Mori	25	Goodie Bag
Takae Nakamura	20	Goodie Bag

YBA

Ichiro & Takeko Doi	50	
Leslie Robles	50	
Kristen Kano	40	Bingo Night

Buddhist Thoughts

Kenji Fujikawa	25	
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Temple General

Pho Quang Temple	170	
Ivan VanLaningham	100	
Byron & Reiko Watanabe	25	
Keizo Kobayashi	5	
Cookie Chappell	25	In memory of Harry Tsutsui
Hiroshi & Mary Aramaki	40	In memory of Misao & Elsie Doi
Allan & Nancy Hikoyeda	50	In memory of Misao & Elsie Doi
Cookie Chappell	25	In memory of Mojiro Tsutsui
Employees Charity Organization of Northrop Grumman	240	On behalf of Sharon Matsuura
Employees Charity Organization of Northrop Grumman	48	On behalf of Stan Endo
Robin ?	20	<i>Please contact Robert Tokita with last name and address, 801-571-7995.</i>
Jeannette Misaka	10	For Hirano Sensei's book

2015 PAID SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS

These members contributed \$1200 per member in this new membership category.

Richard & Lynne Doi	Dot Richeda
Carmela Javellana Hirano	Dave Sekino
Craige Mayeda	Kathy Terashima
Reiko Mitsunaga	Ivan VanLaningham
Kenneth Nodzu	

2015 PAID MEMBERSHIP

Kelvin Kojimoto

