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Beyond Immanence:

A Buddhological Observing of Grace

Being a Thesis submitted to the University of Dublin as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

John O’Grady
DECLARATION

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In this thesis I engage with the imaginative constructions of the world as offered by Buddhism and Christianity. I do this from a theologian’s perspective, with grace as the focal lens. In dialogue with Buddhists the theologian is challenged to understand how a complete worldview develops that does not require God as its legitimating and central concept. This fact sets Buddhism apart from most other religious systems, in which belief in a divinity or divinities is common. This is not to say that Buddhism is atheistic, only that it is irrelevant to it whether such a supreme being exists or not; the argument is that spending time trying to work out the answer to the question of whether God exists or not would drive one to madness. Quite apart from this, Buddhism understands that our quotidian lives are lived in ignorance: we live deluded even as to what we are. The theologian understands that it is a contradiction in terms not to seek to know (better) the being credited with creating all that is, not excluding Buddhists. Must the theologian, then, as some suggest, ‘pass over’ to the Buddhist understanding of life in order to understand from within this system that does not need God? I argue that this is not necessary. However, what I argue for is, perhaps, as challenging. And the argument I make is theological, which is to say, its justification devolves from the nature of theology and not from, say, philosophy of religion or sociology.

The methodology of this thesis involves buddhological and theological reading of certain key texts in Buddhism and Christianity; different religious adepts or geniuses from both world-religions will offer us tools for the engagement of Buddhist and Christian. I employ some sociological tools to assist the analysis, lest I adhere too easily to the thought patterns and idioms of my Christian ‘zone of proximal development’ (Lev Vygotsky). In seeking to bring out structural parallels between theology and buddhology I am aware of the dangers of an implicit supersessionism or an explicit sense of superiority. Thus, I endeavour to adopt the usages and concepts that buddhology has developed, when I treat of them in chapters two and three. In chapters four and five I engage with my own tradition, the Judeo-Christian one. This is not done with any intention of stirring up old animosities between Roman Catholic and Lutheran or Calvinist, for instance, but to try and see what construction Augustine, Luther and Calvin made of the Christian message in the world. In other words, how did they construct their theologies. In the sixth and final chapter I build on the insights gained from the previous four chapters in order to suggest a modern construction of grace that will allow for greater dialogue. This construction, properly called an imaginaire to remind us of its constructed origins, is not put in opposition to the way theology rather consistently portrays grace, but, taking the basic notion of grace as divine favour, is thereby able to bring together ‘things both old and new.

In the first chapter I use a particular Buddhist’s lens in order to observe what he makes of the putatively Christian West. This, with a brief account of how some of the major theologians of the past hundred years have structured their theologies in relation to the thematic of grace, will help explain why theology fails to address adequately the dialogue with peoples of other religions and
cultures, indeed, why theology seems still enmeshed in old and bitter controversies stemming from the Reformation. ‘Our’ starting point virtually demands that they, the other dialogue-partner, ‘buy into’ our categories.

In the final chapter, chapter 6, I bring together insights, key conceptualities, and critical concerns from the earlier chapters and begin the task of (re)constructing the elements of a theological imaginaire of grace that provides a basis for interreligious dialogue and is informed by buddhology for its own proper enrichment.

As tariki remains within Buddhism proper, so theology, or, rather, the theologies of particular Christian denominations, may learn, in a way that I call upāyaic, to accommodate difference in their own self-descriptions; here upāya, a Buddhist concept used to express the skillfulness of a buddha or bodhisattva in helping others to enlightenment or ‘awakening’ (bodhi). We engage openly, without feelings of superiority, to enrich and be enriched. Structural parallels between developments in Buddhism and Christianity, without any known contact between these religions, are to be found; the impulse to reform is in both. In conclusion, I arrive at an imaginaire that sees the modalities of grace as awakening, freeing and trusting. Consequently, the theologian can directly engage with a buddhologist, a Christian with a Buddhist, without having to convert to the other’s faith; and, the theologian’s own repertoire of tools is significantly enhanced.
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With Fergus, I have the honour to be a member of the Irish School of Ecumenics Trust Council. To Professor Linda Hogan, Head of School, and the other members of the Trust I owe a great debt for their support in various ways. Most supportive, too, have been my Board of Management (Our Lady Immaculate School, Darndale), under the then Chair, Patrick Greene SJ, and the Principal, Kevin O’Meara; they enabled me to take up a Government of Ireland Research Scholarship offered by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (2002-2004). The application process for this scholarship helped me focus on the real issue of the thesis; therefore, I am doubly indebted to the IRCHSS for its assistance to me, financially and methodologically.

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DEDICATION

To

MY PARENTS

JAMES O'GRADY R.I.P. AND MARGARET O'GRADY
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INTRODUCTION

In the new context created by global communication and trade, systems of knowledge and authority that purport to legislate for the ‘whole’ lack credibility, for the emerging global system knows only functionally differentiated subsystems, none of which exhaustively defines it.¹

John D’Arcy May

A buddhological observing of grace, the subtitle of this dissertation, is the subject matter in nuce of the thesis that I propose. This proposal is an argument for a reconceptualization of the doctrine of grace in the Christian religion, with particular though not exclusive attention to its treatment in the Roman Catholic tradition, on the basis of an exploration of a Buddhist, that is to say a putatively non-grace-based, understanding of all that is. By the doctrine of grace I denote the central theological proposition that God, creator and sustainer of all, acts for the good of all in a self-communication that, while powerful, liberative, and enlightening, neither overwhelms the recipients to the point of dominating them so totally that no volition remains nor pretends to make the Giver wholly transparent to human understanding. ‘Grace’ denotes divine favour; ‘grace’ describes divine working in, through, and for creation – a term which itself expresses theologically the divine provenance of all that is and in whose divine care all resides – and is the thematic of christological and trinitarian reflection; ‘grace’ recapitulates a number of key categories that have dominated Christian theological discourse for millennia, including creation, incarnation, forgiveness of sin, redemption, regeneration, sanctification, and deification; ‘grace’ intersects with many other categories of theology, too, such as the ethical and practical, sacramental, ecclesiological and missiological; thus, as a normative and regulative principle or doctrine grace is arguably the single most important conceptual construction in theological discourse. To manage such a historically and conceptually wide-ranging notion some specific lenses have to be adopted and adapted to give focus in this account of grace. In the first place, I designate my approach as an observing of grace, which alerts us to my development of a particular sociological tool, ‘observation’, from the work of the German sociological theorist, Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998). This tool assists me in linking a singularly theological way of looking at or observing the world with a no less

singly non-theological worldview, namely, Buddhism. For, being avowedly non-theistic, Buddhism requires implicitly of theology that it take account of this other, buddhological, way of observing reality. This requirement has to be met precisely at the heart of theology’s own account of divine communication or action in the world as that is explicated in the doctrine of grace. As Christianity and Buddhism are both comprehensive worldviews, knowledge of Buddhism by Christianity poses a challenge to the Christian who has a particular patrimony of theological reflection, arising out of a Judeo-Christian background interacting with a Greco-Roman social world, though not excluding possible or actual interactions with other belief systems, on how God acts in our world. How, in light of this, is the Buddhist ‘other’ to be explained in terms of theology when the very subject of theology, namely, God, is, if not always denied, at least agnostically left aside as not profitable for human consideration? Can such an other be reasonably accounted for in ‘our’ system? If such another cannot, what does this entail for the coherence and vitality of our system? How may changes in theological fundamentals be accommodated such that original insights are not lost but taken up in newer – hopefully better – ways? Can the old be legitimately expressed in the new, and ever more faithfully? This thesis seeks to contribute to these discussions, discussions that embrace modern debates on religious pluralism, interfaith dialogue, multiple saviours, diverse soteriologies, etc. Nevertheless and despite the fundamental theological import of the topic at hand and the resolution I work towards, this does not claim to be the definitive account, if such there be; what I do offer, though, is a way for theology to take account of Buddhism in spite of its agnosticism, a way for theology to cut through some of its own inter-Christian theological knots that the history of the doctrine of grace has abetted, a way for grace to be theologically reappropriated by Christians at least such that it is more fully expressive of the relation of God to humanity and the world that grace claims to be in the first instance.

\[\text{\footnotesize 2 For the present we need only note that a Luhmannian approach entails a way of describing contact and communications between two or more relatively incommensurable entities – as theology and buddhology would seem to be.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 3 I write as a Roman Catholic layperson, born and raised in the Western world, which for long and in the main conceived the theological agenda in an inter-Christian way, by which I mean debates on problems raised by schools, traditions and denominations within Western Christendom; this challenge of Buddhism is not simply of academic interest and therefore contingent on that interest, but, is, I believe, one of the central issues that theology has necessarily to address; this thesis, in aiming to clarify that necessity and contribute to discussion of the issue, has, therefore, its own exigency.}\]
Context

Already in the above descriptive précis I indicate something of the content of the thesis proper. This content needs to be more systematically outlined and a context provided so that an appreciation of the contribution of the thesis to the field of theology may be clarified. The topic is grace, and the problematic of that topic arises from the failure of the notion of grace, i.e., the understanding of grace that we have inherited from a past that is, in at least some crucial aspects, narrower and more contentious than at present, to reasonably adequately account for the plurality and diversity of world religiousness, which according to that notion it should be able to do, but which, as the debates concerning the Joint Declaration on Justification between two Christian denominations, viz., the Lutheran and Roman Catholic, witness, remains undelivered. If it is true that the doctrine of grace, as Christian theology has dealt with it over centuries of scholarly disputation, not excluding open and physical conflict, has only recently begun to take notice of, explain and, more recently still, accept other accounts of the world in language that, if not so wholeheartedly then at least partially, relates to its own technical terminology, then the theologian has to examine the current state of the evolution of that doctrine in order to understand better the relation of the divine to the world.4 The problematic takes greater definition when related to what may be taken as the traditional Christian’s ultimate concern, viz., will I enter God’s blessedness and enjoy eternal life or will my sinfulness cause me to lose heaven? In other words, will I be saved; will God’s grace suffice for my sin and lack? Such questions can also take a different and more modern, though no less existential, hue: where do I find meaning and purpose for life; how do I cope with failure, particularly my own; what can be done for our besieged world with its ecological and humanly constructed crises; what are the risks that need to be taken if a better way is to be found for humanity to survive and flourish?

At the heart of such seemingly diffuse questioning is a quest for something more wholesome, true, noble and worthy of personal and life-long commitment and concentrated attention. This questing is subsumed in theology as soteriology and the divine dynamic that brings salvation from all that threatens to negate and obliterate and that, instead, brings a sense of healing, regeneration, and wholeness.5 This questing is encapsulated in the doctrine of grace. Our present context for theology is not just historico-theological debate, though it is that; it is not just a series of hermeneutically sensitive theologies, though it is that, too; it is also and vitally

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4 The presumptiveness of the task is not an argument for not attempting it, but for doing so with due care and humility.

5 This understanding derives from salvation as ‘salus’, Latin for ‘whole, safe, salutary’; its Greek counterpart, ‘sōtēria’, connotes ‘saving, deliverance, means of safety, safety’, as in the phrase ἡ οἰκαδὲ σωτηρία, a safe return home.
an ecumenical or whole-world context, by which we mean all-of-reality-as-given has to be accorded its place within the categories that theology in general, and that grace in particular, construct, maintain and develop. If God is creator then all that is becomes both the locus of divine action and the *topoi* of theology. Our theologies, in accommodating this awareness, have to expand beyond the ‘normatively’ constructed categories set by Western agendas. Already, though, we see that people’s sense of where the problem in life lies changes over time. We are conditioned by the times and places in which we live, and today change itself is perhaps more consciously part of the framing of the problem of living than heretofore. Our churches’ official responses to their times change too. Within the Roman Catholic tradition, for instance, it was long held that one would not and could not be saved unless one adhered to the authority of the Pope as such. That teaching has been revised over the years so that those who suffered invincible ignorance of Christ’s salvific work and of the necessity of the church, but who yet followed the precepts of God as ‘written in their conscience’, might be saved, and various theological innovations, such as ‘baptism by desire’, were constructed to explain and make plausible the new understandings. This same Roman Catholic church has made significant progress in opening itself to the modern world; we remember, for example, that the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) stated, ‘for our time’, both that there is in other religions ‘what is true and holy...the spiritual and moral truths’ and that they are not to be rejected (*Nostra Aetate* #2). In other words, the doctrine of grace, though itself highly contentious between various Christian denominations since at least the days of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, is only latterly facing the reality that its own account of divine action in the world needs reformulation as a result of a singularly christomonistic interpretation of divine activity in the world that is at once normative and exclusive, sacramentalized and reified. Such reformulation has been encouraged by the diversity of forms of understanding of the world, both secular and religious, that modern communications has made us familiar with. On the presupposition that, whatever ‘grace’ seeks to communicate about divine communication may be in an ultimate sense, it is – always and everywhere in our present

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6 The Greek or Christian idea of the *oikoumenē*, the whole earth, or *oikos tou theou*, the house(hold) of God, lies behind our notion of the ecumenical or social system here; the use of ‘ecumenical’ for the interrelationships of Christian churches, especially as they seek to overcome centuries of misunderstanding and hostility, is a more narrow understanding.

7 Pope Boniface VII (r. 1294-1303), in his bull, *Unam sanctam* (1302), declared, taught and defined that it was a matter of salvific necessity to be under the Pope: ‘[p]orro subesse Romano pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, diffinimus omnino esse de necessitate salutis’, see Henricus Denzinger and Adolffus Schönmetzer (eds.), *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, Herder: Barcinone, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Romae, Neo-Eboraci, 1967**: #875.
sublunary world – God gifting us in a way that is purposeful, necessary and sufficient: it is only for our good because God is good and communicates in grace, necessary for our wellbeing because God is the only truly self-subsistent ‘being’, and sufficient for our happiness because the heart of the creature seeks integration and wholeness with its creator, as Christians have affirmed since Augustine. Nevertheless, it must also be admitted that the present magisterium or teaching authority of the Roman Catholic church also clearly denies to other religions the same relationship to truth that it maintains it itself enjoys: the Christian faith, as ‘the acceptance in grace of revealed truth’, is to be distinguished from that religious belief which is the ‘sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute’. Indeed, the teaching that the fullness of God’s revelation is to be found in Jesus Christ and in him alone is made a shibboleth with which to differentiate those who in true faith enjoy revealed truth from those who, at best, enjoy merely human knowledge of God. Hence, the charge that ‘we’ do not take enough cognisance of the religious terminologies of people from the East and South. Our Northern – that is to say, Western or Christian – terminologies need, on the one hand, to be less hegemonic, and, on the

8 His famous: Tu [Domine] excitas ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te, see Augustine, Confessiones 1.1; Henry Chadwick translates it thus: ‘You [God] stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you’, see Saint Augustine, Confessions, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Chadwick, in Oxford World’s Classics series, OUP: Oxford, New York et alia, 1991: 3.

9 See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration ‘Dominus Jesus’: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of the Jesus Christ and the Church, Rome, 2000; the rationale, context and explicit concern of the declaration all centre on the place of Christ and the church founded by him: Christ is ‘the fullness of divine truth’ and the mediator or means of it, the lodestar for all, see #5 and 23.

10 See Dominus Jesus: #6-7: ‘they [the words, deeds, and entire historical event of Jesus] possess in themselves the definitiveness and completeness of the revelation of God’s salvific ways, even if the depth of the divine mystery in itself remains transcendent and inexhaustible’, and ‘theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often [wrongly] identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself’; see also #5: ‘it must be firmly believed that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), the full revelation of divine truth is given’ (emphasis original).

other, to take account of religious categories from traditions other than Western ones. This thesis, though eschewing the formal debate on this issue, is nevertheless deeply involved with the underlying problematic, to wit, how avoid a Eurocentric (and/or Christian-centric) hegemonic attitude in dealing with theological concerns while engaged in inter-religious debate. Simply, there is no ready-made answer; the less astute will theologize from within the citadel of her or his given conceptual system, while the more astute will be ever cautious not just concerning their theological categories but also concerning both the bedrock upon which the latter are built and the very concepts employed today precisely to obviate hegemonic dispositions. As the task seems inescapably – and suspiciously – hermeneutical, our given hermeneutics must be no less suspiciously regarded.\footnote{The dilemmas involved show clearly in the debates between ‘religious studies’ and ‘theology’ and their respective places in the academy, see for example, Timothy Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies, OUP: New York, 2000, Armin W. Geertz and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.), Perspectives on Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, Brill: Leiden, 2000, Tomoko Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism, University of Chicago: Chicago, 2005, Russell T. McCutcheon, Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia, OUP: Oxford and New York, 1997, Julie A. Reuben, The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality, University of Chicago: Chicago, 1982, Donald Wiebe, The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy, Palgrave: New York, 1998.}

The world as we find it is not as we would want it to be; the Buddhist regards this unsatisfactoriness of the world, not excluding her- or himself, as duhkha or suffering; the Christian regards it as sinfulness, not excluding one’s own culpability. There seems to be a commonality, for all their undeniable differences, between these worldviews in the sense that each begins with a problem already at hand, influencing all that one is or does thereafter. The analysis of the commonality, the terms in which it is conceived and addressed, and the tentative solutions offered differ radically, of course. Part of our task will be to see how this commonality may be reconfigured such that the language-games, the theologies and buddhologies, we construct may more fruitfully (re-)engage one another. No reconfiguration, ours included, stands neutrally or innocently outside the one oikoumenē of which we all are part.

**Purpose**

The nature of communication is to connect and, if grace somehow speaks of connection between divine and human it also speaks of connection between human and human, and of connection in one’s own core, which the poet called ‘the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart’. It is from this latter experience of human inter-connecting that humans begin to have a sense
of communication, in fellowship, friendship, love, such that it goes beyond what the experience alone seems to justify or warrant. In the limited successes, failures and unsatisfactory outcomes of these human experiences a longing for and growing understanding of successful, complete and fulfilling communication evolves and develops, and as it does its attractiveness grows, its charm draws us in, and its graciousness prompts generosity from within. If this sociability of heart and mind is accompanied by a growing religious awareness, nourished perhaps by prayer and meditation, then the human experiencer comes not just to an experience of divine graciousness however inchoately but also to an understanding of grace as the religious experience of divine communication itself. Taking the Roman Catholic church as our starting point, in its *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, grace is defined first as 'favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life' before being further defined as 'a participation in the life of God' and framed in a trinitarian way beginning with the 'grace of Christ'. This grace sanctifies, i.e., makes the creature able 'to live with God, to act by his love'; it does this even in the sense of preparing people for the reception of grace; it is to be distinguished from 'actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification'; and, it both demands and makes possible a 'free response' from us. Already here we see 'grace' used in different ways: it is a divine reality in which we hope to participate, it is the means towards that reality in a double sense, both as foundation for the path to eternal bliss and as specific 'interventions' which are to be differentiated from the grace-ful backdrop of divine favour towards the created, and it is the condition of the possibility of its own acceptance. Nevertheless, the language of grace, inherited from our scriptural tradition, is often such as to lend itself to reification in the sense that it appears as a thing, a quantity, something calculable. This is at the expense of grace as symbol *par excellence* of divine communication and action: sacraments parcel it out, and priesthoods administer (or deny) it, some work for it and some can never accept it unless they earn it, others presume it and delimit it to themselves, and all of us are constrained by the limits of our language to express adequately what of itself, coming from the divine, exceeds our ability to grasp. Grace, we say, is a mystery, and this is a traditionally theological way of preserving its integrity in the face of our limitations; and yet, we have to seek to understand as best we may.


even though we risk misunderstanding. What we seek is an understanding of grace that, yet true to its roots in divine communication, still enables theology to engage with non-Christian ways of understanding our immanent world such that open, friendly dialogue is permitted for the sake of mutual benefit, learning and teaching. Once this is recognized the deeper dialogue can begin in which the very way we dialogue, the terms in which we construct and reconstruct ourselves and others, i.e., our theology (and, perhaps, buddhology) is renewed and altered; such a renewed theology can never naïvely go back to its old terms and modes of thinking for it has been changed in the process. Here we are trying to imagine communication about grace between the theological and the non-theological, recognizing that we are doing so theologically. However, if we get grace wrong then almost all of theology is set to go awry.

Methodological Approach
The first chapter begins in medias res; the problematic of grace is set in the contemporary. A Buddhist interpretation of that context follows so that we are taken immediately into another way of analyzing our so-called Western situation. The starkness of the problem of how grace can be understood today in a globalized and fragmented, obscenely rich and shockingly poor, destructive and life-bearing world is most easily observable in a theologian’s attempts to respond to a worldview that formally eschews theology or God-talk. Buddhism offers its own critique here. Critique alone, though, is not enough and in seeking to find a way of promoting a conceptual link between theology and buddhology – and that in relation to grace – I appeal to some sociological tools in order to engage with a number of issues which will have to be more fully developed in separate, successive chapters. Only then can the lineaments of a new observation or ‘cartography of grace’ be mapped. The final part of this chapter looks at grace as a current theological category and points out the problem created when the doctrine of grace is by-and-large filtered through a christological lens. In this first chapter, then, all of the key elements of the thesis are adumbrated: the theologian’s quest, social context, and appeal to theology’s ‘other’, in this case, Buddhism.

The second chapter begins the second part of the thesis, which is designed to bring us more fully into the heart of buddhological thinking, in particular, the notions of no-self and the interconnectedness of all. The context is ‘early Buddhism’, often if too glibly termed Theravâda, the tradition of the elders. We look at its accounts of reality, the nature of the latter’s unsatisfactoriness, the development of escape from this into a state of awakening,

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15 The phrase is Serene Jones’s, see her Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace, in Guides to Theological Inquiry series, Fortress: Minneapolis, 2000.

16 The study of the scriptural texts of Buddhism is only in its infancy and what we say of original Buddhism, of what the Buddha did and taught, and of the evolution of Buddhism is of necessity cautious and tentative.
called bodhi, and final release called nirvāna. The third chapter leads to a particular historical development within Buddhism, namely, True Pure Land Buddhism, that developed from Pure Land Buddhism, which had its origins in early Buddhism and yet it came to operate with a Christian-like notion of grace. This chapter begins, however, with other and key buddhological formulations that help define the next and largest historical development within Buddhism, i.e., Mahāyāna Buddhism, in order that we come to some, limited understanding of what ‘reformation’ in Buddhism might mean. This reformation issued in an understanding of final, nirvānic release that adjoined the salvific action of a buddha, known as Amida Buddha, who both wills to and does bring everyone who has true faith in his power (Japanese: tariki) to his own buddha-land or ‘pure land’. The next part of the thesis reprises, in two chapters, various elements of the Christian tradition in relation to the development of the doctrine of grace. Chapter four takes some key terms from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures that fed into the theology of grace; it attends to Saint Paul’s usages in particular. It ends with the more formal account of grace that we associate with the so-called ‘doctor gratiae’, Saint Augustine, whose personal story and whose theological controversies put grace at the heart of Latin Christianity. The next chapter, the fifth, takes up this theology of grace as it becomes embroiled in the controversies of the Reformation in the 16th century. Theologians and leaders, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, looked to Paul and Augustine even as their adversaries did. The sixth and final chapter constitutes the last part of the dissertation. Here, more speculatively and synthetically, I propose an understanding of grace – an imaginaire – that, like a bark or raft, having left its usual moorings (in christology) and sailed into the unfamiliarly charted waters of buddhology, returns the theologian, in a conceptually more fruitful way, to her or his task. Further, this imaginaire, when examined in that perspective, seems more faithful to the essence of grace itself as divine communication in favour of humanity and creation.

17 Bodhi is the origin of the words buddha, bodhisattva, etc. It is often translated as ‘emancipation’ or ‘liberation’. It derives from budhi ‘to awaken, to understand’; hence my preference for ‘awakening’, see also below.
18 It would be more than eight centuries before the truly formal theology of grace would be written by Thomas Aquinas.
19 In the end, a hermeneutics of exploration finds itself to be a hermeneutics of retrieval even though it could not have considered itself such unless it had travelled this new terrain. One is not to presume from the comments above that I abjure either christology or Christ, for I do not; however, the theological reconstruction of all theology to christology is, in my opinion, both a reduction and a mistake: even for the person who unquestioningly affirms Jesus Christ as Son of God, second person of the Trinity, and son of Mary, fully human, in an orthodox Nicea-Chalcedonian affirmation, no internally coherent understanding of this belief is possible
Findings

Various elements of buddhology such as the distinction between ultimate and relative or conventional in terms of truth or reality are robust enough to offer lasting insight. Related to this, there are tools, particularly upāya (skilful means), that complement and strengthen theology's mode of conceptualizing the divine such that theological concepts are less likely to conscript the divine to inevitably human categories. A similar human dynamic in Reformation theology is observed in jōdoshinshū, so far as we know without any contact between Kamakura Buddhism and Western Christianity. On a constructivist level, grace is preserved as God's, though always recognized as coming only in human terms. Grace is seen as true grace only when it is somehow able to account for grace-ful elements outside a Christian frame of reference. As we have to construct our account of grace from elements common to our humanity and world so we have been able to construct newer elements from dialogue with Buddhism. A principle of grace can be established whereby other dimensions, such as mission, sacramental theology and ethics, of a Christian worldview become ripe for renewal: for instance, not everyone, though perhaps most, would agree that they stand in need of conversion; there may be elements of the non-Christian 'world', such as Amida Buddha's shinjin (profound faith), that communicate much of what a theologian sees as grace; and, the scope of moral and ethical action as well as of interpretation may be widened and deepened respectively. From an examination of their respective ways of constructing reality theologian and buddhologist are seen to exhibit a mode of differentiation, not simply despite its marking of different sides of such distinctions as person/no-self and truth/delusion but precisely because of it, that permits us to posit the paradoxically contingent necessity – necessary because the modern religious context of interreligious dialogue necessitates it, or something like it, and contingent because it could have been otherwise in a different construal of reality – of their interpenetration. Though I believe this to be the case for both Christianity and Buddhism, I will be arguing for it only from the Christian perspective.

Originality

Although what is offered here is but one attempt to deal with a theological conundrum, the nature of that conundrum, the centrality of the theological context in which it is situated, and the vital import of what belief in the divine, whether monotheistic or polytheistic, expresses in varied ways, namely, that there is a creator who interacts with what is created, all point to the explicit, central and unambiguous importance of the topic of grace to theology proper and justify our concern with it. Though I depart from the theological presuppositions of many unless one has some broader framework for understanding how the divine communicates to and with us. And it is the doctrine of grace which denotes this very framework.
theologians in that I do not begin from a christocentric base, or, indeed, from a trinitarian one, and though I at least attempt to dialogue with my putative partner, Buddhism, on its terms and not those of my own tradition, the originality of the thesis is not to be found in this either. Nor is it to be found in the application of a particular social theorist, Luhmann, to the interaction of theology and buddhology as if it were a sort of conceptual midwifery. Here I construct a positive and modern approach to grace that offers a critical resourcing for Christian theology. In the end, of course, it will be not so much a new imaginaire of grace as a recognition that grace is itself a particular imaginaire and that this, once it is recognized, makes grace stand out ever more clearly as descriptive of the reality of divine acting than heretofore. The core originality, then, derives in the first place from the combination of the different elements – theology, social theory, and buddhology – in a single conceptual framework such that a new mutuality of interdependency is observed between them and made constitutive of operative theology from now on. Further and in the second place, these elements, in their several appeal to heterogeneous constituencies, manifest definite, if limited and unostentatious, understandings of reality that go beyond what they can prove; in other words, they manifest a move beyond what is immanent to them. I do not claim, nor wish to be taken to claim, that this offers a justification for the reality of the transcendent; such an argument is not my aim here. Nevertheless, it is significant that the various accounts of reality presented rely on evidence that is unprovable. In my own case, I presuppose the reality of the divine and the dependence of all that exists on it. Yet, I maintain that there is a flaw in how many of us conceive that reality’s interaction with us and our dependence on it; and this issue is worth pursuing not only in spite of the presuppositions but precisely because of them; and, because all of this involves some risk – at least, of unfaithfulness – we have to learn to trust in the worth of the enterprise as such and, in a new move, believe in the grace we perhaps too knowingly discuss. Of course, the risk of reconceptualizing a concept so central to all of theology as grace is should be warranted by the possibility of bringing something fresh and original to the issue. If I do not wish to either neglect or disparage the achievements of past theological debate neither do I wish to be a slave to them as that entails also falling prey to their limitations. Thus, to form a new imaginaire and so risk new limitations is balanced by the double exigency of lending grace a conceptuality that seeks to more readily foster dialogue between Christian and Buddhist at one level and of faithfulness to the divine self-communication, at another. In our humanity we continue to fashion both models of idealized ‘lands’ and saving figures of boundless compassion for others; we wonder how we came to be in the situation we find ourselves in; and, we latch onto explanations that offer a glimmer of hope that we may be released. We try to make sense of the world by
making use of constructs, which are perceptual categories that we use to help us make evaluations or judgements. In religions we note that often our constructs have polarity; thus, to theorize goodness or wholesomeness is to also postulate their opposites, evil or unwholesomeness, malum or duhkha, respectively. While some constructs lie more at the core of our frames than others because they are thought to more crucially relate to what one thinks is truly important, what we need to be alert to is the constructivist nature of so much of our thinking. In seeking to develop new imaginaires we recognize a change of constructs. This restructuring necessarily alters how we conceive of the future, and therefore carries risk. Our frame(work) expresses that combination of mental constructs, beliefs, and habits of mind that, like tinted glasses, colour all that we see and experience. Knowing our frame means deciding how we will employ it for it is no longer only subconsciously active in us.

Finally, all knowledge, it is said, is a response to a question. The question that drives this dissertation is the possibility (or not) of theology being able to develop a theologically adequate account of its own conception of the divine-human relation such that the recent challenge of Buddhism, which resulted from the discovery of another religious interpretation of reality that is, seemingly, conceptually contrary to its own, is not a theological aporia but capable of integration to the betterment of theology. The task that arises in consequence demands observing our current conceptualities, our regnant imaginaires, and seeing if a new one can be created out of what is presented. Though any one of us may fail in the attempt to complete the task the necessity of the task is clear or else theology is impoverished.

Before moving to the dissertation proper I should clarify one operative principle. At first glance it may seem that the proper thematic of the present work is divine transcendence. However, my remit is narrower, and on the rare occasions that I employ it as a category, I do so aware of the dangers inherent in it. Glib talk of transcendence by a theologian may hide more than reveal. So much is presupposed by ‘transcendence’ that it becomes too much of an imposition on a thematic such as mine that also takes account of buddhological categories and presumes to be ‘relatively adequately’ faithful to Buddhism. Though the title of his own Transcendence and Violence suggests that John D’Arcy May intends ‘an exercise in high theory’ his explicit disavowal of such a project in favour of a study of how particular traditions encounter other traditions, how these latter cope with this, and how all this relates to violence evidences a general categorization of transcendence which I expressly wish to avoid.
in the present work. As May also states, transcendence for a Buddhist ‘is not a theoretical problem but a practical task.’ Thus, this formulation of the relationship of the divine to the human and world would not properly pertain to the subject at hand here. This leads us to a further clarification: delineations of the more personal, in the sense of somatic, emotional and psychological, qualities of individuals as they are affected by (and effect) grace are generally avoided here as they constitute a separate area of study in their own right and would, if sufficiently treated, wholly overbalance this work.

Note:
Many difficulties beset anyone foolish enough to enter another discourse and engage with its terms and conceptualities. In order to appear less foolish I generally use the Sanskrit rather than the Pāli form of buddhological terms, except where the Pāli is directly at issue. Though at times this will seem forced there is no perfect solution, if for no other reason than that the Buddha’s own language is lost to us. To use Pāli terminology primarily may seem either to privilege the Theravāda tradition, or to denigrate the traditions of the Chinese, the Korean, the Japanese, the Vietnamese, the Tibetans, etc., or to do both. Hopefully, however, there is a doubly pedagogic advantage in constantly using terms from these and other languages: on the one hand, we become less assured of our own language’s imputed superiority, and, on the other, we glimpse the ‘blissful lands’ of other languages and learn to see the world from quite other perspectives; enriched with fresh insights, we are ready for a renewed exploration of what – possibly – we had risked to lose.

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20 May, *Transcendence and Violence*: 11. May is well aware of different transcendences, see 110f. and 133f. Later, I will refer to ‘transcendence’ in a meta-language sense, though still eschewing more doctrinal understandings.


22 We do not have the language of the Buddha; he wanted his message to be in the vernacular; however, as with Latin in Christendom until quite recent times, a lingua franca was called for and so a process of Sanskritization of original – often Middle Indo-Aryan – texts began. Therefore, as Western texts are often dotted with Latin locutions, so are Eastern buddhological texts with Sanskrit ones, see K.R. Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism: The Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai Lectures 1994*, Pali Text Society: Lancaster, 2006: 123-145.
Part I

PROBLEMATIC
Chapter 1  
Our Babylonian Captivity

We live in a second-order reality, constructed out of science and technology. Reality has become an unstable product of the spirit of the laboratory. This imbues science and technology more deeply than ever with the promise of salvation, as is surely nowhere so apparent as where both are damned and praised at once as poison and antidote.

Ulrich Beck23

Introduction

A decade ago it seemed that one of the main planks of disunity between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, at least, Lutheranism, had been removed, almost five hundred years of hostility and mutual condemnation ended, and a new phase of Christian living and theological convergence inaugurated. I refer to the signing of the Joint Declaration on Justification between the Roman Catholic church and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999. This momentous event centred on the doctrine of justification, another way of speaking about the divine-human relationship, deriving mainly from Reformation controversies but with scriptural roots. The event was soon marred by controversy, though, as opposition mounted and fears that ‘our’ side had sold out to ‘them’ and had thereby betrayed what ‘our’ forebears had suffered and died for. Historical animosities, theologically framed, were self-righteously aired as if God, truth and patrimony had been jettisoned, to be replaced by untruth and betrayal. An examination of some of the issues from this controversy is instructive and it will help to frame my approach in light of the particular problematic that I first raise; for now, we leave the Declaration aside and turn to the problem as I see it. In this chapter I introduce and contextualize the problem concerning grace as I see it. First, from the outsider perspective of buddhology, an analysis or diagnosis of our Western, market-driven, globalizing and totalizing situation is offered. Then I seek a way of looking at both Buddhism and Christianity so that they communicate across their undoubted boundaries and arrive at the possibility of mutual contact on the issue of grace. Finally, I delineate the dynamic within the theology of grace that I believe has led to the difficulties theology faces when dialoguing with buddhology, and when dialoguing generally whether with fellow Christians, Jews, or members of other religions or humanist worldviews.

1.1 **BUDDHOLOGICAL CRITIQUE**

The buddhological critique whets the appetite, at a second stage in the next chapter, for a more deep observing or analysis of the worldview of Buddhism in order to arrive at some understanding of what it is to which Buddhists interpret their belief-system to be the answer. For Buddhism is deeply connected with what theology calls soteriology, and what buddhology itself terms *nirvāṇa* (Pāli: *nibbāna*): humans are in a sorry state and have to be helped to overcome their ‘false views’, destroy what leads them astray, and become liberated or enlightened. For the Buddhist the world of false views and ignorance is *samsāra* (both Sanskrit and Pāli), the round of birth-and-rebirth. In this chapter, in order to bring our Western mindset somewhat up short, I present a Buddhist critique of the way people in the West come to their false construction of the world; this critique is designed to help us wake up to the fact that the truth, what the Buddha called *dharma* (Pāli: *dhamma*), has to be sought, mindfully. First, though, we need to briefly introduce the social world of the Buddha and see what he made of it.

1.1.1 **Construction of Reality**

Buddhism arose in India almost two and a half millennia ago and scholars are still unsure of many details about that social world. Nevertheless, we can say that, as a consequence of both the creative challenge it offered to the Brahmanism of its day and the charismatic quality of Gautama himself, Buddhism soon exerted an influence of its own. While Brahmanism was characterized by the caste system with its own elitist and exclusionary actions, Gautama offered an inclusive and ‘democratic’ model. Perhaps it is these fundamentally egalitarian and strongly interconnected buddhological principles that still appeal to people who hold with the modern principles of liberty, equality and fraternity; for, various forms of Buddhism are attractive for many in the West today. However, in the Buddha’s day as today, there is a profound difference between a sense of the world as being wholesome (Sanskrit: *kuśala*; Pāli: *kusala*).

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25 See below. Since humans – whether Christian, Buddhist or otherwise – develop belief-systems in specific contexts the value of our research will derive from the possibilities that are opened for us by a comparison of the worldviews out of which the (individual) belief-systems arise.

26 *Dharma* eschews adequate translation; its range covers: a fact, a thing such as it is, a law, justice, and truth.

27 This is not the whole story, of course: sometimes one of more other elements, such as exoticism of the unfamiliar, rejection of the familiar, intellectual conviction, ‘going with the flow’, etc., may be determinative.
kusala) or unwholesome, not good. The highest ideal in Buddhism is expressed in the notion of nirvāṇa.

Nirvāṇa

As the ultimate spiritual goal of all human effort, nirvāṇa (Pāli: nibbāna) is beyond description and it is beyond spatio-temporal causation. In the Buddhist scriptures it is imagined variously: as freedom (Sanskrit: vimukti; Pāli: vimutti) from bondage, as bliss (Pāli: sukha)28, as perfection (Sanskrit and Pāli: pāramitā), as wisdom (Sanskrit: prajñā; Pāli: paññā).29 Freedom is also a profoundly Buddhist thematic and it helps to explicate nirvāṇa, though a fuller account waits on the next chapter. Nirvāṇa qua freedom has the sense of liberation from the fetters30 that bind us to saṃsāric existence and from the poisons32 that lead us to being deluded. It is freedom from ignorance. And this very ending of the un-free way of thinking is what we mean by ‘awakening’ (Sanskrit and Pāli: bodhi). The Buddha taught a way of becoming awake to truth, and one who is successful in this way is called a bodhisattva (Pāli: bodhisatta) or, especially in the traditions most closely identified with Buddhism of the Pāli canon, an arahant (Sanskrit: arhat)33. For instance, when asked what the Buddha’s ‘jewel of freedom’ is, Nāgasena, the monk who debated with King Milinda,

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28 This is in contrast to the state of misery or unsatisfactoriness, duḥkha; the place of a Buddha-land is called sukhāvati.
29 See Gradual Sayings II: 146f., in relation to freedom from diseases of the body and the mind, especially for the person ‘who has gone forth (from the worldly life)’, see also 173f.
30 Usually enumerated as 10: belief in personhood, doubts, mere rules and rituals, craving of desires, ill-will, craving for material world, craving for immaterial world, conceit, restlessness and ignorance, see Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary, s.v., saṃyojana.
31 This adjective is derived from saṃsāra (round of rebirth, see above), which is the unresting, ceaseless flow of being born, growing old, suffering, dying, followed by being born, growing old... It connotes being trapped in our defilements, clinging to what is only conventional as if it were absolute truth, being unenlightened or unawakened. What we call a life(-time) is but a miniscule and fleeting moment in this ‘round’. Saṃsāric contrasts with ‘nirvānic’; this latter is derived from nirvāṇa, the blowing out of life with its passions, delusions and rebirths, and in this way come to represent ultimate liberation from all delusion or full awakening to the true state of things.
32 These are greed (Pāli: lobha or rāga), hatred (Pāli: dosa) and delusion (Pāli: moha or avijjā); as such they are the roots (Pāli: mūla) of karmic evil, see below.
33 The distinctions between these will be of concern later. The arhat is the fourth or highest stage of those who seek the liberation of nirvāṇa. The stages are: first, stream-winners (Pāli: sotāpanna), second, once-returners (Pāli: sakadāgāmi), third, non-returners (Pāli: anāgāmi), and, fourth, holy ones (Pāli: arahant), see Chapter 2 below. Thus, on the path to enlightenment some have truly begun, though they will have to be reborn many times; others, more advanced, will need but one more rebirth; still others will be enlightened at the end of their current life-cycle; the few are already ‘worthy’ and ‘awakened’. 23
replies to him that it is arhatship, for to be an arhat is indeed ‘to be decked out with this jewel’. From what, though, is one to be freed? The Buddha preached a doctrine of escape from the suffering of daily living and the round of rebirths – samsāra – that he saw people trapped in. To attain nirvāṇa means to be liberated from samsāric existence, and he dedicated his life to teaching people this good news of escape from suffering. The underlying image used here is of a candle, symbolizing a life lived in – consumed by – all sorts of desires and attachments. With a puff the candle is snuffed out; thus, burning by consumption ends, and what we think is living is emptied of delusion and ignorance. The Buddha teaches that, by right mindfulness and right speech and right action, one can become free from suffering. Nirvāṇa, then, is humanly attainable. At this stage we only note that attaining nirvāṇa is treated as a two-stage process. First, nirvāṇa is attainable in a given moment, when the conditions are right; in this sense, nirvāṇa is the ending of delusion and recovery from the poisons of greed, hatred and delusion, those very things the Buddha’s teaching alerts us to and helps us to extirpate. This state may be arrived at at any stage of a person’s life. The second stage, parinirvāṇa, is when natural death occurs to an enlightened or awakened one, who will not again be reborn into the cycle of rebirths. This parinirvāṇa is usually a reference to the death of a buddha; it marked Gautama Buddha’s death some forty-five years after his own moment of liberative insight, emancipation or awakening, i.e., nirvāṇa.

1.1.2 Lack and Delusion in the West

At this point we turn to a latter-day follower of the Buddha and who is also a Western scholar of Buddhism. If we take a Buddhist lens then we have another way of seeing how the world is constructed. To adopt the samsāric-nirvānic modality and apply it to ‘our’ normative view of the world might be revealing. Such a lens has already been provided for us in the work of David Loy, who has spent many years in Japan. In Lack and Transcendence Loy discusses death and life either as opposed tendencies, which is the common view, or as a fundamentally joint issue. In favouring the latter he argues that we make a mistake when we do not recognize or when we fail to remember that death is part of life. The notion of ‘lack’ comes

34 Milinda pañha: 338; Milinda’s Questions II: 183.
35 See Samyutta-Nikāya IV:251; Connected Discourses: 1294; destruction of the poisons is further equated with arhatship, see 1295; see also George Grimm, Buddhist Wisdom: The Mystery of the Self, translated by Carroll Aikins, edited by M. Keller-Grimm, Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Chennai, Bangalore, Calcutta, Pune, Mumbai, 1979: 54.
36 It is not synonymous with one’s passing from this world to another or future life. Indeed, it means that there is no question of rebirth again.
to name the contradiction between what I am and what I am not.\textsuperscript{37} Buddhism bases its understanding of what we conventionally take to be ‘the real thing’, reality, on the notion of impermanence, a concept to which we will return. For now, let us reflect on death as the one inevitable reality for one and all and on the enlightening experience of the young man Gautama.

\textbf{Lack of Life}

What we take to be the case is only a conventional understanding, adequate for daily talk – and, in this sense, necessary – though wholly inadequate for a full or ultimate understanding.\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, in this latter sense, to take ‘reality’ at face value is to live in a fool’s paradise; it may even become our equally conventional hell. The way we perceive and understand is riven with illusion, distortion, error. We take so much for granted in the hope that our dream for it is – or, if not yet, will soon become – real. What we reject and repress comes back, as our (psycho)analysts warn, to haunt us. More fundamentally, when we take something to be true that, on reflection, could not be, we fall into what the Buddha called ‘mistaken views’ (Pāli: \textit{micchā-dīti}). One such view is that we can go on living.

Yet, the fact is that we are fated to die. Already Martin Heidegger has described us, in our \textit{suchness} or \textit{Dasein}, as being-toward-death (\textit{Sein-zum-Tode}).\textsuperscript{39} Yet, we live trying to forget about it. When at last something forces awareness of death upon us, and if we are caught unawares and unprepared, the inbreaking of reality may be experienced only destructively. This is not how the Buddhist Loy would have us remain. Like the Buddha, we should awake; one of the famous four sights that the young and pampered Siddhārtha Gautama (Pāli: Siddhattha Gotama)\textsuperscript{40} faced was of a body being borne on a bier. This, some day, he came to realize, would be his reality too; and, if it would be, so it is wise to be aware of it now. This


\textsuperscript{38} This distinction will be taken up later for discussion.


\textsuperscript{40} Various titles and attributions are given to Gautama Buddha, some of which are used regularly in the texts and in this thesis, especially Tathāgata (Pāli for ‘the One Thus Come/Gone’) and Śākyamuni (Sanskrit for ‘the Wise One of the Śākya clan’).
event, we may say, quoting the lyrics of the Cole Porter song, made him hear the advice, ‘use your mentality, wake up to reality’. Not yet fully awake, but beginning, like the surgery patient, to come around, Gautama was setting out on a road that would lead to ‘enlightenment’, as bodhi (Sanskrit and Pāli) is usually translated, though here I prefer to speak of ‘awakening’. A buddha is one who has fully awoken to the truth of how things really are. This stage of perfection is preceded by that known as bodhisatta (Sanskrit: bodhisattva), one on the way to bodhi. Gautama, while he was still a bodhisatta, the story of the Buddha goes on to relate, quit the ‘good life’ and sought the path of the ascetic, living in stringent self-denial and following near-death practices until at last, after six years, he renounced strict asceticism and, in the course of one night, achieved such an insight into the true nature of affairs that he fully woke up to the realization that all that we take to be substantial, real and true is actually impermanent, not-real and delusional; this was his bodhi-experience. This is to acknowledge one side of what Gautama awoke to. The other side is that his bodhi enabled him to see the interconnectedness of all things; this is the basis of the key Buddhist idea of pratityasamutpāda (Pāli: paticcassamuppāda) or the dependent (co-)origination of all things. The point is that he saw that any one thing, hitherto claiming to

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41 Here, based on budhi (see above), I follow Rupert Gethin’s usage, see R.M.L. Gethin, The Buddhist Path to Awakening, Oneworld: Oxford, 2001: passim.

42 The canon or scriptures of the earliest Buddhist tradition as it has come down to us is usually called the Pāli Canon. This canon consists of many texts, many times the length of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, organized into three sections, collectively called the Tipitaka (Sanskrit: Tripitaka) or ‘three baskets’. The ‘baskets’ refer to these three main collections of texts, viz., Vinaya (on discipline), Sutta ([Sanskrit: sûtra] discourses of the Buddha) and Abhidhamma (reflections on the Buddha’s teachings). Most of the texts from the canon to which we refer below come from the Sutta-Pitaka, which purports to be a collection of the discourses of the Buddha during his ‘awakened’ state. In turn, these discourses are sub-divided under five categories or nikāyas. The five nikāyas of the Sutta-Pitaka, then, are: Anguttara, Dīgha, Khuddaka, Majjhima, and Saṃyutta. Of these the ones that will primarily concern us are the Dīgha-Nikāya or ‘the long discourses of the Buddha’, the Majjhima-Nikāya or ‘middle length discourse of the Buddha’, and the Saṃyutta-Nikāya or ‘the connected discourses of the Buddha’. The texts used are mainly those of the Pali Text Society, though I also make much use of Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha: Dīgha Nikāya, translated from the Pali by Maurice Walshe, Wisdom: London, 1987 (for the Dīgha-Nikāya), and The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: a Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, translated from the Pāli by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications: Boston, 2000 [single volume edition]; in citing these I will give, first, the (standard) reference to the Pali Text Society’s edition of the original, edited text, and, second, the reference to the translated text used. The translation used for the Anguttara-Nikāya is The Book of Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikāya) or More-Numbered Suttas volumes 1-5, translated by F.L. Woodward and E.M. Hare, with Introductions by Mrs Rhys Davids, Pali Text Society: Oxford, 1932-1936.

43 These features will occupy us at a later stage.
be self-sufficient, stand-alone, self-natured, is contingent upon all other things, and that they are likewise connected with it.\textsuperscript{44} Facing death, then, may awaken us to the way things really are. For, life is contingent, and death marks a major distinction in life. Even in a world of constant denial of death, it is impossible to ignore the change brought about by death – most forcefully but not only, a death done by choice; it marks out human finitude in a way that cannot be ignored: we experience ourselves as limited, constrained, hemmed in, bound. And, in our awareness of this finiteness we experience anxiety. The view of death as external, out there, affecting someone else is challenged in the way death hits us. However, the passing of someone close to us is a wake-up call that some day I too will die. This should have some bearing on the way I live my life: \textit{sub specie mortis}.\textsuperscript{45} If life is finite and contingent, so too, Loy reminds us, is our sense of being free.

\textbf{Lack of Freedom}

The analysis of our Western preoccupation with freedom offered by Loy provides us with an important and significant insight, for freedom is one of the defining values of the modern Western world that he critiques. We may say that the world’s leading economic and military power, the USA, defines itself as defender of freedom and liberty. Democracy, presented as progress in freedom, is sold as solution to all problems on the world stage.\textsuperscript{46} Freedom is given ‘paramount value’ and Loy is surely correct to see this as dangerous.\textsuperscript{47} For, the ‘freedoms’ to do things undreamt of only a couple of generations ago and that many enjoy every day now as a result of technological advances – TV, fridges, computers, dentistry, etc. – are threatening to overwhelm and destroy nature, which is the material-base for both consumer and consumed. Progress and construction are modernity’s watchwords; yet, they betoken other realities, too. For progress is not unambiguous; it is not, as implicitly assumed, an endless possibility; it is rarely free of unforeseen and profoundly negative consequences, such as widespread ecological degradation.\textsuperscript{48} However, it is the idea of construction that perhaps best unfolds some of the hidden dynamics of the modern world. Of course, there is the rather obvious and

\textsuperscript{44} Contingency, too, will be important later.

\textsuperscript{45} A Christian believer and theologian, as part of her or his stock in trade, will readily interpret this awareness as \textit{sub specie aeternitatis} and, yet, a Buddhist, avowedly not committed to any belief in a divine other-worldly Creator-God, becomes aware, also in quite a profound way, that death is one of the key elements in life and that a correct or ‘right view’ is that we live – buddhologically, thinking, acting, speaking – in awareness of it. In traditional Buddhist cosmology, each ‘person’ undergoes cycles of birth-death-rebirth until she or he is able to escape and become finally free, like a candle blown out.

\textsuperscript{46} See Loy, \textit{A Buddhist History of the West}: 40.

\textsuperscript{47} Loy, \textit{A Buddhist History of the West}: 17.

\textsuperscript{48} Loy, \textit{A Buddhist History of the West}: 39.
literal concretization of the physical world – what Loy has elsewhere called ‘paving the planet’\(^9\), but this is not what I am referring to exclusively. Rather, there is the daily construction of self that we increasingly practise today, a process that reminds us that we lack a true self. Our thinking is distorted and it is not so easy to escape our warped thoughts and desires; neither did the Greeks find it easy to ‘escape the gods’ as their focus on *logos* or rationality led them to think.\(^{50}\) Today, we in the West are increasingly self-conscious. Our sense of ourselves entails a heightening of self-regard, a setting apart of our individuality into, as it were, a separate realm, a *sanctum*.\(^{51}\) The *persona* takes on increased importance and is granted – and demands – greater personal autonomy. This is but one side of the coin. Accompanying this growth in personhood are tension and anxiety concerning its achievement or attainment. Naturally, to want and to be ‘more’ is to know that now I have and am ‘less’. My sense of self defaults to high anxiety as I wonder what is wrong with me. This is the very condition that Loy calls ‘lack’.\(^{52}\) Unnaturally, however, these constructions of ourselves are but attempts to make ourselves ‘real’.\(^{53}\) The self, we may say, is that malleable entity that can be made and re-made as the fashion takes us, and as ideology is simply that. Instead, the renewable self proves the fundamentally empty self, even if we do not take it so. We make a fictive selfhood. From a buddhological perspective, there is *no-self*\(^{54}\), i.e., that what we take to be unique, self-subsistent, independent, real, is all a mirage, a delusional fiction. Here Loy’s buddhological approach resonates with much of our experience of being-in-the-world.\(^{55}\) Where, though, does he see the roots of our current predicament?

In taking a basically historical approach Loy looks first to the ancient Greek world and sees there the rise of individuality, of a sense of the human person and of the mind’s rationality. This view, though, in his analysis, merely fed the wolf that was the self’s lack of worth.\(^{56}\) The

\(^9\) See Loy, *The Great Awakening: a Buddhist Social Theory*: 82; there is a pun here; the original idea refers to the Buddhist answer that, if one fears to walk on thorny ground, it is better to put on shoes than to stay barefoot and, instead, pave the world.

\(^{50}\) See Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*: 27; Freud would take rich pickings from just such gods.

\(^{51}\) Because the problem is largely a spiritual one, so must the solution be spiritual, see Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*: 213.

\(^{52}\) Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*: 29.


\(^{54}\) This is the doctrine of *anattā*, (Sanskrit: *anātman*), see below.

\(^{55}\) Buddhism is helpful because it emphasizes that we have both wholesome and unwholesome traits; the former are to be cultivated, the latter eliminated, see Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*: 221n9.

\(^{56}\) Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West*: 27; for instance, the Greek emphasis on harmony and Apollonian peace masked a deeply anxious and restless spirit, which the Greek genius for scepticism exacerbated.
freedom that Loy associates with the Greeks is that of the freeing of ‘reason from myth’. From poetry (Homer) to politics (Solon, Pericles), the gods were sceptically dethroned. Fuelling these tendencies was Greek competitiveness in which the law was used to resolve all sorts of disputes. Of course, what we in retrospect see as a great cultural flowering was contemporaneously deeply disturbing: generals were more likely to be executed by the courts than killed in battle and great thinkers were tried for heresy, as the story of Socrates paradigmatically shows. In spite of its developing introspection, the Greek mind, still patriarchal and imperialist, could not free women or slaves or avoid the lure of travel and conquest. From such perceptions Loy leads on to a discussion of the West’s preoccupation with personal sin and guilt. For, the interiorization of reflection that began with the Greeks becomes more so under the influence of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE).

Loy sees, under Augustine, the notion of freedom bifurcate; the freedom that people experienced in the world of action became differentiated from that experienced in the crucible of the mind; and, where the latter is emphasized the former is seen as less and less real. Outer freedom, then, is distinguished from inner and a new definition constructed. Loy understands, somewhat naively, certainly, the Christian notion of sin as arising from the failures of the ancient Greek world to explain lack. Loy is helpful, though, in seeing through the ‘freedom’ that is really lack of freedom. On the one hand, in some cultures we valorize individuality, and to be free is to act and do ‘because you’re worth it’. Conversely, we feel that we will never have enough freedoms. In the end, says Loy, we need to be free from such freedoms, for all that they really do is enslave us. Instead, responsibility has to become our keynote.

Lack of Trust
However, responsibility raises its own questions. To whom am I responsible? And why? The problem that raises its head turns on the paradox that the inner need for trust is usually accompanied by a co-existent drive for external or extrinsic validation and assurance. Loy observes:

Our supposedly secular affairs are validated by their role within a religious soteriology. God places us on this earth and guarantees that

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58 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 28; it ‘exceeded even our own’.
60 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 34.
62 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 34.
63 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 40.
by obediently following our calling and employing our reason, our lack will be resolved."  

However, it is humans who do the validating; humans are the ones who place trust. Thus, he is led to a pessimistic view of ‘the new civil society’ especially in its ‘full development in the United States, calling it ‘nothing more than a conventional arrangement’ by which people pursue personal goals. Loy traces his argument for the development of such instrumentalizing thinking through the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-1776): these thinkers make us ‘owners’ of ourselves, with Hume responsible for the reason-value split and thereby ‘commodifying part of our own minds.’ Loy then extends his critique to the founders of the Reformation, which he sees as an attempt to reform society...a human attempt. With Luther, each individual was now in direct relation with God, and grace, as the gift of God, was now privatized.  

There is, at and as the root of this development, a misplaced trust, a trust that in our making of society – particularly, in the form of the modern state – we have not been wise. A better way, Loy thinks, would be for modern civil society to include the religious dimension. For Loy, the religions, whose role is to provide ‘alternative explanations of what our lack is and how to address it’, are ‘well-placed’ to challenge what I would call a principal modern construction of social life. In sum, for Loy, the key issue is ‘our sense of lack’. Coming to terms with lack entails knowing what to do about it and that requires that we ‘come to some social understanding of what it [lack] is and whether our ultimate commitments are conscious or unconscious.’ Thus, we see in Loy an emphasis on both interconnectedness, not  

64 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 153.  

65 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 160.  


67 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 157. Loy instructively contrasts the different views of reason propounded by Hobbes and Gerrard Winstanley, a contemporary social activist and pacifist: for Hobbes, reason is calculation and reckoning, hence the need for a Leviathan-state to rationalize the various ‘manmade’ pacts which alone create the common good; for Winstanley, reason is a better name for God who leads our deceiving minds and ‘selfish imaginations’ to find Christ resurrected in the heart of each person; the identification of the basic problem as human selfish imaginations makes Winstanley’s the more buddhologically helpful analysis, see 148-151.  

68 With the establishment of the Puritans in New England the ground was readied for an interiorization of grace ‘into individual conscience’ and ‘the foundational myth of the sacred American nation’ was planted, see Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 161-3.  

69 See Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 170.  

70 Loy, A Buddhist History of the West: 169, (emphasis mine); here is also a reference to the development of mindfulness.
individuality, and conscious decision-making or responsible consciousness; these qualities we will find in Buddhism per se, too.

1.2 Observing Reality

If Loy is so helpful for analyzing the West and its ills, why bother with a sociological analysis? Indeed, why deal with human communication if our stated concern is with matters that pertain to the divine? To postulate the divine is to engage in and with human communication, which is to say that we humans employ language and other communicative means such as gestures and art to communicate as humans. Whatever gateway we possess to the divine is given in the means and language that we use in order to communicate. It is not our contention nor do we propose, though it is not per se impossible, that some few have been given a unique, divinely-given capability that enables divine-human communication in a non-normatively human way; we must prescind from this. What I seek to explicate is the divine-human communication in terms that humans otherwise engage with and practise, in the ways they construct, maintain and develop their images of what reality really is all about. As indicated, systems theory offers, in however incomplete and imperfect a way, an entry-point for discussion of divine-human reaction and interaction in the sense that it not only posits but demands that each of the ‘partners’ or systems is distinct from and unable to see into the other; this latter accords with theology’s apophatic principle and preserves divine otherness. If theology concerns a communicating between creator and created, then that theory which defines and distinguishes all systems as communications may offer a less unworthy dialogue-partner for theology in its on-going attempts to discern the lineaments of whatever communicates between human and divine.

To regard life, freedom and trust as above betrays the fact that I regard certain human activities and constructs as universal and not simply individual and singular. There are aspects of the Christian and Buddhist worldviews which, if not exactly parallel or mutually correlated, are contiguous in that they relate to common concerns, modes of thinking or proposed solutions. No doubt, there are elements of incommensurability but these should not be exaggerated lest the incommensurable circuitously becomes the one, effective commensurate. This in turn reveals my own theological starting point, viz., as created beings all humans are helped by the Creator. Indeed, in this help they are not coerced but, rather, enabled to live, act in freedom, and both show and gain trust. Nevertheless, how do we relate such different worldview-systems so that something meaningful and coherent emerges? How may we respect those aspects that are incommensurable? Can we avoid one system becoming
hegemonic over the other? Such questions will not be answered easily, nor will their inherent values be always faithfully followed; yet, they serve here as useful cautions and serviceable expedients, particularly as we now engage with one, rather unusual, construction of the social world.

1.2.1 Sociological Construction

Religions like Christianity and Buddhism are sociological phenomena as well as being systems of meaning and value for their adherents. To examine a religion from the point of view of its social facticity provides another lens through which issues that purport to be solely or almost wholly religious, spiritual or mystical may be observed and assessed. Is this dissertation, then, also a sociological analysis of the religions, or even of specific parts of those religions, whose central self-understanding is examined here? Simply, it is not, for space does not permit; yet, concerns that sociology raises indicate that, whether we take account of it or not, extra-theological dimensions play an often vital role in theological exploring and that it would, in consequence, be wiser to include certain tools from sociology that enhance understanding and argument. What is needed here is a sort of toolkit, the high abstraction-level of which will conduce to the elucidation of more properly theological – and, I venture, buddhological – points. Various, recent sociologists such as Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Ernest Gellner suggest themselves. Nevertheless, one sociologist in particular offers that level of abstraction useful, with modification and adaptation, to my task. Although it will be neither necessary nor advisable to adopt wholesale the approach of Niklas Luhmann for space is lacking and we do not need to commit unilaterally to any one sociological construction, his theory offers both an overall perspective on Buddhism and Christianity as social systems built on communication as well as precise conceptualities such as structural coupling, risk and double contingency that prove amenable to theological appropriation. Because the Luhmannian schema is so ‘Western’ in its approach while


72 Luhmann has been a prolific writer and theorist. His oeuvre totals more than seventy books and hundreds of articles. We will be able to deal with only a few, and many have still to be translated. My focus is on certain key texts such as his masterwork, Social Systems, translated by John Bednarz Jr. with Dirk Baecker, foreword by Eva M. Knodt, in Writing Science series, Stanford University: Stanford CA, 1995 [1984], Observations on Modernity, translated by William Whobrey, in Writing Science series, Stanford University: Stanford CA, 1998

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simultaneously running so contrary to some of the West’s most cherished notions, especially, the centrality of the human person, it assists us in coming to terms with the different worldview of Buddhism, which, albeit with a completely different connotation, also thematizes – if negatively – personhood or attā.

It is clear from Luhmann’s writings that issues in theology and religion concern him even if his sometimes caustic comments camouflage this. However, it is quite something else to say that his theory helps to ground our theological enterprise here in a way that may, with relative legitimacy, be called buddhological; this will be clearest in the final chapter. We begin with an overview of the Luhmannian approach before assessing some of the tools.

Communication

Luhmann has a broad understanding of what communication is and a precise one of what society is when he comes to relate communication and society. Luhmann sees communication as ‘the basal process of social systems’ and it is constituted by three elements: information, utterance and understanding. From the convergence of the latter emerges the communication-system, which takes different forms, for instance, in social and psychic systems. Looking at the system that is our own consciousness we see that understanding is achieved in the recognition of the difference between utterance and information. This understanding is made from an array of possible options and is, therefore, another act of choosing. Because I cannot know what is in the mind of another person, one who has made a particular utterance and passed me information, by word and/or gesture, I have to choose from a potentially incalculable, though hopefully more restricted, range; in the


See Luhmann, *Social Systems*: 140-146, 151f. The word ‘element’, it should be remarked, is primarily used by me in a distinctly Luhmannian sense. For Luhmann, ‘elements’ of a system compose that system, but, conversely, it is the system’s use of elements that make them elements of that system. In other words, an element is not ‘ontologically pre-given’; whatever unity it has is determined by the system that relates it to other elements, see Luhmann, *Social Systems*: 21f. This is essentially the process known as autopoiesis, long associated with Luhmann but deriving ultimately from the work of Humberto Maturano and Francisco Varela, see Humberto R. Maturano and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*, in Boston Studies in Philosophy of Science series, D. Reidel Publishing: Dordrecht, 1980 , and Humberto R. Maturano, ‘Reality: The Search for Objectivity or the Quest for a Compelling Argument’, in *Irish Journal of Psychology* 9,1 (1988): 25-82. Consequently, the notion of ‘relation’ takes on new significance.
way I distinguish between the utterance and the information that I have just received I come
to my understanding of the communication itself. Unfortunately, with such a plethora of
possible utterances, ‘pieces’ of information, and understandings, and with attendant
associations for each possibility, misinterpretation is often the order of the day. Also, the full
range of utterances and their possible forms are not knowable to the observer. Though they
make up the communication and are therefore interrelated, their opacity, that is, the fact that
the acts of choosing are ‘in’ minds and, therefore, not observable, poses a problem for
interpretation. If someone else, or, indeed, another system, seeks to interpret this
communication as such then she or he or it is drawn into another act constituted from choices
made in information, utterance and understanding. In other words, there may be
communication about communication, and if there is it too is qualified by opacity.
Consequentially, communication becomes problematized: in order to have communication
about communication the naturally occurring complexity needs to be reduced. Of course, this
reduction is a distorting of a situation’s full complexity; yet, it is a necessary outcome of all
communication. The advantage, however, is that communication, which is always in play, so
to speak, can be entered into from points that are otherwise ‘wrong’ or distorted; for,
distortion is recognized as an ungrandsayable element in communication, and there is no
undistorted place from which to begin. Is there a principle that explains the reduction of
complexity such that further differentiations are possible on its basis? Luhmann answers that
there is: binary coding. Coding entails the duplication of information in the form of utterance;
thus, on the one hand, the information, even though ‘it makes a difference’ is ‘left on the
outside’ and, on the other, is used for utterance and is so formulated; in this way
communication becomes differentiated as those events which are coded operate as
information while those that are uncoded are disturbance, irritation, noise. Binary coding is
like an internal guidance system distinguishing what is essential to the (sub)system. In
relation to law, for instance, there is the binary code of lawful and not-lawful; in economics,
the binary code of paying or not, of having or not having which is the basis of economic
transaction; and, in religion, the binary code of transcendence or immanence. Luhmann
writes:

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Luhmann, we note, is indebted to Gregory Bateson for his definition of the basic element of information as ‘a
difference which makes a difference’, see Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, with a new foreword

Luhmann, *Social Systems*: 142; if there is standardization between ego and alter on the code then there is a
better chance for complexity to be developed and for ego or alter to anticipate or steer the communication
process, see 143.

Communication is correspondingly coded as a (positively or negatively interpreted) proposal of meaning, which can be understood or not understood, accepted or rejected. The control of this doubling and especially this negativity of not understanding or rejecting unfolds recursively and thus already determines the selection of the proposal – whether the proposal aims at agreement or conflict.\[78\]

In this scenario we are not surprised to find paradox. Communication risks loss of meaning in a ‘paradox of incommunicability’. Resolving the paradox is based on a new systemic structuring within the system. Then the system is able to know the world outside itself although it has no access to that world, because it constructs an outside world in the process of its continuing structural coupling with the environment.\[79\] This structural coupling leads to the generation of knowledge.\[80\] In sum, Luhmann is not presenting a theory either of the unity of all or of how seeming differences may be or are in reality similarities. What Luhmann offers is a theory of systems that form closed and self-referential social communications: society is really communications and communications, as with other systems, is closed; this marks the essential distinction between system and its environment, for the environment is everything that is not directly related to the system. Luhmann’s theory is built out of distinctions and the marking of one side of a given distinction. At the heart of it is the notion of contingency. However, before moving to an examination of contingency, and double contingency, we first need a more exact examination of the system-environment distinction.

System and Environment
This distinction between system (System) and environment (Umwelt) is perhaps the most famous of all Luhmann’s contributions; though, for us, it is mainly a necessary building block for his notion of contingency. The environment is defined in relation to the system: the environment is all that does not pertain to the system, and it is maintained by boundaries\[81\] which, in turn, are defined by the operations of the system. As system and environment entail each other, as noted, they constitute a unity. Thus, to speak of a system is already to postulate that which is not a system, i.e., that which is, rather, the environment of the system; Luhmann

\[78\] Luhmann, Social Systems: 445.
\[80\] This is an internal systemic process; this is also, however, an ‘external’ knowledge that is produced when the environment triggers a reaction within the system; such reactions he calls ‘irritations’.
\[81\] For instance, in the case of the communications-operation of a system (see below) the telephone could be one such boundary.
calls the environment the system’s ‘negative correlate’. To know what is not the system helps us say what the system is. There is, then, mutual dependence between them. If we say that the system acts, then the environment is what does not or cannot act, at least in so far as it relates to the system. Again, and in so far as it relates to the system, the environment is always the more complex of the two. The system ‘naturally’ self-evolves into subsystems in order to cope with the demands its own distinctions make upon it. For Luhmann, then, the system is a reality unto itself, that is, it is ‘closed’ and its boundaries are marked by the system itself, and not its environment. Any system deals only with a certain amount of all (else) that constitutes its environment; certain events, experiences, or systems normally impinge on the system rather than other ones. In addition, there are elements that are relevant because they account for the relations that are observed; these elements and their relations, like systems and their environments, constitute a unity: effective living is the regulation of complexity into relevant elements. There is a dynamism inherent in systems-theory that is absent from theories built on equilibrium. Feedback loops, in which the system modifies itself according to information it gains from the effects of its own operations, express this dynamism. Systems-theory’s integration of feedback loops into the fundamental model structures a processual understanding of the system-environment relationship. Thus, the theory had an inbuilt principle of dynamism, too.

The asymmetrical relation between system and environment entails, for any given success in reducing a system’s complexity, an increased complexity for all other environments. Paradoxically, then, both freedom and constraint can occur at once. Luhmann describes how the ‘freedom and autonomy’ that the system requires is gained by ‘indifference to its

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82 Luhmann, Social Systems: 181: “The” environment is only a negative correlate of the system. It is not a unity capable of operations; it cannot perceive, have dealings with, or influence the system. Therefore, one can say that the system totalizes itself by referring to the environment and by leaving it undetermined. The environment is simply “everything else”, (emphasis in original).

83 In consequence, then, the determination of relevancy becomes the contested zone of discourse, though, given the new differentiation that lies behind the discussion, the question of relevance has itself been removed to another level of abstraction and perforce is now observable from a perspective of non-internal elements.

84 This is employed today in many mechanisms, such as thermostats that control the temperature in our homes, the braking systems of our cars, and the saving of documents on our word-processors. The Romanian Stefan Odobleja (1902-1978), another pioneer of cybernetic theory, is credited with the law of reversibility, or the feedback loop; his double volume Psychologie Consonantiste, in 1938-1939, laid the foundation, though international recognition came much later, in 1978, with his paper ‘Diversity and Unit in Cybernetics’, see Talcott Parsons, The Social System, Routledge: London, 1991 [1950].

85 Luhmann, Social Systems: 389 (emphasis mine).

86 See Luhmann, Social Systems: 182.
environment’, even as that system is determined by its own internal connections. Much has been made of this constructiveness of Luhmann’s theory; it is a separate discussion, and need not detain us here beyond noting that all theorizing is constructing and that Luhmann is well aware that he is constructing a theory of society just as we are utilizing him in the construction of our own account of grace. The basis building blocks of a system are called elements. For Luhmann the relating of element to element within the system entails selection, and selection in turn entails the ‘cutting off of some of their [the elements’] possibilities’. So, the relationship between elements involves a reduction of possibilities and, so, of complexity. Complexity, then, requires a ‘selective relating of elements’, because, in distinguishing one from another, a difference is made. Likewise, the selectivity and pressure to select induces complexity, which may lead to the construction of another (sub-)system, which itself might involve both interpenetration, in which each interacting system reacts to the ‘structural formation’ of the other reciprocally, and co-dependency. However, with Luhmann, one may say that this makes possible ‘greater degrees of freedom’ and so is a benefit. Our use of ‘selecting’, ‘difference’ and ‘construction’ already hint at knowledge-production. When we observe we know something, and so, for Luhmann, knowledge is intimately tied to observation.

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87 See Luhmann, *Social Systems*: 183; Luhmann also describes this arrangement of relative complexities as chance.

88 See, for example, Jan Christis, ‘Luhmann’s Theory of Knowledge: Beyond Realism and Constructivism?’, in *Soziale Systeme* 7,2 (2001): 328-349.


92 Luhmann, *Social Systems*: 213; the benefit, of course, is to us as we seek correlations between theology and buddhology, systems in their own right.
1.2.2 Observation

How does Luhmann conceive observation, for this is a word already employed above, and also is adumbrated in the subtitle of the dissertation? To observe is to mark a distinction. Luhmann writes:

The lifeworld that society establishes and differentiates for itself can never fully be grasped. Observation is always distinguishing, and must therefore presuppose the unity of difference as the world and the possibility of other distinctions as contingency. But it is possible, and this is what our characterization of society attempts, to formulate this as a statement about society.

Observation is not necessarily something to be associated with humans; it has an event-like status, and is applicable to any system, such as politics, education, religion; I will most often use it in relation to theologians and buddhologists, though in the final chapter it is part of the systemic interrelationship of Buddhism and Christianity. In its most basic form it begins with and is constituted by the marking of a distinction, i.e., in the moment of observation a decision is made that what is observed is one thing and not another, even if that is only a distinction between what it itself is and everything that is not it, as in the primary distinction between system and environment. That the observation is an event indicates another of its features, viz., it is invisible to the person doing the observing. For it to become, as it were, visible, entails another or different differentiation and distinction. Thus, the effect of observing is to bring into focus some ‘thing’ rather than some other thing. In this sense, therefore, we, with Berger and Luckmann, speak of the construction of reality. Now, Luhmann marks a difference between observation simpliciter and second-order observation: in the latter one must distinguish the operative principle of the observing, i.e., the principle by which the marking of a reference is made. What happens if the observer is taken into the

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93 From the viewpoint of the working of theology and buddhology Luhmann’s account of observation might have seemed the most logical place to begin, even ahead of the system-environment distinction. Nevertheless, having proceeded with accounts of other distinguishing features of Luhmann’s theory, we are now better placed to grasp his treatment of the observer, what is observed, and the recursive quality of observing that which itself is observing.

94 The source of Luhmann’s ideas here is G. Spencer-Brown, in his Laws of Form, E.P. Dutton: New York, 1979 [1969]; he states, ‘[o]nce a distinction is drawn, the spaces, states, or contents on each side of the boundary, being distinct, can be indicated’, and ‘[t]here can be no distinction without motive, and there can be no motive unless contents are seen to differ in value.’

95 Luhmann, Social Systems: 411.

equation and made part of the process of communication? In second-order cybernetics the observing is turned upon the observer as well. At issue here is the bringing of the observer within the process of observation; the observer’s describing becomes a core element of the description, which is itself a product of the observer’s observations. This will have serious implications for the theologian and buddhologist in interfaith dialogue. The person who observes comes self-reflectively to know that she or he is observed; thus, we are responsible for the observations we have. Responsibility, then, points to the freedom with which we see and act.

By focusing on those operations that are the products of observation such that the ‘person’ can be obviated and what we often and generally take to be impersonal and even non-conscious, e.g., law, religion, a business, can be conceptualized sociologically as observing. In this way the subject-object distinction ‘proves itself’ in observational praxis, a distinction that can be applied not only to people but also to animals, as well as to social systems, perhaps even to electronic machines, if the complicated, two-termed operation of observing observers succeeds.

1.2.3 Contingency, Evolution and Risk

For Luhmann, the past, in one sense immune to future change, is reassessed as contingent through the examinations of evolutionary theory and the philosophy of history. On the basis that events may not be either true or false but undecidable Luhmann argues that the indeterminability of the future need not depend only on the many known and unknown factors but also on the present: ‘[the future] is back-coupled with the process of deciding itself, thus depending on what decisions are made in the present’. Contingency marks what is, since Aristotle, ‘neither necessary nor impossible.’ When two parties experience a mutual affecting and ‘irritation’ of one another, responding to responses that were themselves occasioned by or in the contacts, there is what Luhmann calls double contingency. Interpenetration, which we referred to above, concerns the reciprocity of systems: one system

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97 This is the decisive point at which Heinz von Foerster enters Luhmann’s schema. He is the thinker behind second-order cybernetics, which he also called the ‘cybernetics of cybernetics’, and is often appealed to by Luhmann.

98 For von Foerster, observing is the indication of something by the making of a distinction; see, Heinz von Foerster, Observing Systems: Selected Papers of Heinz von Foerster, Intersystems Publications: Seaside CA, 1981.

99 Luhmann, Theories of Distinction: 191f. (emphasis original).

100 See Luhmann, Observations on Modernity: 44.

101 Luhmann, Risk: 74.

evolves to a higher formation due to another system, which is part of the first system’s environment, acting on it. When both systems mutually interact – interpenetrate – then Luhmann speaks of double contingency. In this double contingency, made possible precisely because of interpenetration, possibility itself is foregrounded. The process implies that there is a pressure to act. For example, in that first contact, one party (ego) offers, for instance, a gift, a smile, or a glance, to another (alter or other), and awaits a response. This creates a response in return, which occasions another response, and so on. The other, alter, has a double relation to ego: on the one hand, the other is alter ego, and, on the other, is alter ego, as each interacts reciprocally. The movement of responses has a delimiting or determining effect whereby contingency, or the likelihood of absolutely anything happening, is quite reduced: though, it is equally important to remember that contingency equates to possibility, choice, freedom. Furthermore, once double contingency is seen as operating it helps reveal the world of action and agency to itself: we are able to observe our being observed by others and make assessments accordingly. However, in the knowledge that is built out of observing, there is risk. Risk is structurally bound to observation in virtue of the fact that first-order observation is blind to the outcome of the distinction that it makes at that time. This will be true, too, for the distinction made in second-order observation, hence both making a distinction and marking one side of that distinction are ‘twin risks’. In relation to knowledge, it is its exponential growth through various constructions that has now brought about the greatest threat to life on Earth, namely, the destructive power that humans are capable of unleashing. Nevertheless, taking risks and contingency point to decision-making. The very choice of distinction, because there is no predetermination of what is to be dealt with, entails a certain liberty. And, knowledge and decision-making are integral to the system we are most concerned with, religion.

103 Luhmann, Social Systems: 216. Double contingency is also ‘always otherwise possible’, and it is made possible by interpenetration, see 215f.
104 Luhmann, Social Systems: 113.
105 Luhmann, Social Systems: 125.
106 In this way an element of differentiation is built into the system so that the system can ‘see’ both its own action-generating activity as well as the ‘big picture’ within which this system itself partakes.
107 Interestingly, his sources for the origin of the term ‘risk’ are religious or theological. Not only are some of the authors cited making religious statements, Luhmann himself finds that ‘sin’ represents a ‘functional equivalent’ for human ‘uncertainty about the future’ in the sense of explaining how misfortune comes about, see Luhmann, Risk: 9-11, with reference to Annibale Romei; modern society ‘represents the future as risk’, see 37.
108 Luhmann, Risk: 74. Risk is often paired with security and distinguished from danger. In both cases, ‘risk’ indicates a complex state that is nevertheless normal in modern society, see 23.
109 This humanly constructed danger to life is what we often take to be the risk to life.
1.2.4 Religion

As a functional system religion is as bound as any other functional system to contingency and second-order observation, and has its own form of both.¹¹¹ Traditionally, says Luhmann, concern with ‘understanding that we do not understand what we do not understand’ and with ‘trying out semantics that can cope with this situation’ has been called religion.¹¹² He writes:

In retrospect it seems as if the concept of God had only provided a dress rehearsal for [the evolution of] society, with the unexpected side effect of semantically preparing society’s entry into the modern world.¹¹³

For instance, when discussing risk, Luhmann refers to transcendence-immanence, the binary code of religion, as ‘the distinction of immanence (tempus) and transcendence (aeternitas)’, as the code of religion.¹¹⁴ For, it is in second-order observation that society ‘realizes functional differentiation’, and not, for instance, in treating of theological questions. On the other hand, religion, is the only functional system that

can convey conviction and can make communicable that what we do is in the final analysis good – whether this be terrorist activities or hotel management, the construction of new weapons or new theories or a successful rhetoric of political programs, the influencing of the education of one’s own children or the hopeless, anonymous search for a personal style in art.¹¹⁵

Religion has, then, its own ‘nonintegratable functions’, and, though it cannot determine other systems it can, like the environment of any (other) system, irritate them ‘occasionally’.¹¹⁶ This downplaying of religion is taken a step further by Luhmann when he observes that modernity ’allows the individual, if he wants, to live without religion and to live well.’¹¹⁷ Yet, religion is not an observation system in the exact same sense as other systems: an observation marks only one side of the distinction, yet, in religion, what is marked is that which defies distinguishability, namely, the divine.¹¹⁸ This may seem to impinge on the question of truth,

¹¹⁰ Luhmann, Risk: 80. Sometimes, the value of the binary code changes, a reevaluation follows, and so freedom is again exercised.
¹¹² Luhmann, Observations on Modernity: 43.
¹¹⁴ See Luhmann, Risk: 34.
¹¹⁸ See his somewhat cryptic reference to Nicholas of Cusa, Luhmann, Observations on Modernity: 111.
but Luhmann has a distinctive approach to truth, too. For Luhmann, truth is coupled with untruth. He defines truth thus:

Truth is nothing more than the positive value, the designated value of a code, whose negative value (reflective value) is untruth.\(^{119}\)

For, codes are those distinctions which have an abstract, universal sort of applicability, and here, truth and untruth are the positive and negative values of a truth-untruth binary code. To take the one, say, positive, value as operative is no guarantee of correctness of choice. Indeed, Luhmann tells us, as property is no criterion in the question of whether it is worthwhile acquiring or retaining it, so truth is ‘no criterion for the truth’.\(^{120}\) Truth is thus reformulated by Luhmann at the level of a system’s observing of observation, or second-order observation. Times have changed and today ‘[n]ecessities and impossibilities no longer represent the orderly framework of the world.’\(^{121}\) Historically, Luhmann holds, Christianity has played a key role in the ‘universalization of the semantics of contingency’.\(^{122}\) He argues that it was the distinction between nature and grace, and not that between nature and technology, say, that was ‘alone sufficient enough to free technology from constraint.’\(^{123}\)

Furthermore, on the difference between belief and unbelief Luhmann aligns himself with Pascal: in the calculation of risk, to risk unbelief is in any case too high, for it is salvation that is at stake. ‘The risk of belief’, on the other hand and in other words, ‘that we genuflect quite unnecessarily, appears by contrast insignificant.’\(^{124}\) To believe, in the sense of being saved, is far less risky than not to believe. Alas, to believe is sometimes to condemn those who do not believe (what ‘we’ believe), and with this note we return again to the debate concerning justification and grace.

### 1.3 Justification, Grace, and Christ

In attempting to clarify the concept of justification in order to further ecumenical dialogue in the wake of the *Joint Declaration on Justification*, Michael Root criticizes Heike Schmoll who ‘regularly summarizes the doctrine of justification as a general anthropological truth, without any reference to God’s act in Christ.’\(^{125}\) His source for Schmoll was an article by

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\(^{120}\) See Luhmann, *Risk*: 78.


\(^{123}\) Luhmann, *Risk*: 85n5.

\(^{124}\) Luhmann, *Risk*: 11; Luhmann relates this to Pascal’s famous wager, in number 451 of his *Pensées*.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI] discussing justification and the Augsburg Accord.\(^{126}\) In seeking to bring dialogue to a deeper level between Catholics and Lutherans on the doctrine of justification Root appeals to Karl Barth’s opposition to the claim that the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* is this very doctrine of justification. For Barth (1886-1968), the true *articulus* is the confession of Jesus Christ.\(^{127}\) However, Barth is not alone amongst major theologians in putting Christ at the very centre of all theology. The ‘father of hermeneutics’, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1767-1834), with whose thinking Barth long wrestled appreciatively, had also sought to link together what is deepest within the human spirit and what is of God. For instance, he expressly determines ‘creation’ as entailing both the creation of the world and the divine providence that maintains it; if divine consciousness does not require their distinction, neither should our self-consciousness.\(^{128}\) God always relates to all\(^{129}\) and does so ‘naturally’, for even the ‘one great miracle’, viz., the coming of Christ, is ‘a natural fact’ and, even supposing the implanting were wholly a divine act\(^ {130}\), the appearance of Christ in history is ‘an action of human nature, grounded in its original constitution and prepared for by all its past history...’\(^ {131}\) The incarnation, rather than the crucifixion, has to be central to Schleiermacher’s theology, therefore, as it, the incarnation, is ‘really a continuous’ divine act.\(^ {132}\) The incarnation is the ‘beginning of the regeneration of the whole human race’.\(^ {133}\) This regeneration is due to human sinfulness, and consciousness of sin is one part of the Christian’s religious consciousness. Schleiermacher begins his treatment of grace in this context: consciousness of sin and consciousness of grace are the co-constituents of religious consciousness.\(^ {134}\) His account of grace begins, then, with the tied and common experiences of sin and grace. Here, too, though, the context is christology for both sin and grace are

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\(^{127}\) See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/I, T&T Clark: Edinburgh, :527.


\(^{130}\) Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*: 64.

\(^{131}\) Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*: 64.


discussed in relation to redemption.\textsuperscript{135} first treating of sin, he moves to its antithesis, grace\textsuperscript{136}, and then to the person and work of Christ. The workings of grace, proceeding from God in Christ, are divine; but, says Schleiermacher, they are also natural for they are mediated always through the person of Christ, historically.\textsuperscript{137} Implicit in this order is Schleiermacher’s idea of ‘the original perfection of man and the perfection of the world in relation to him’, for God’s redemptive work in Christ is truly a re-generation, not an abrogation of creation.\textsuperscript{138} Another scholar, mid-way between the time of Schleiermacher and today, who made a significant contribution, again eirenically, to Christians’ naive self-understanding that they held the (only) absolute form of religion.

It was about a century ago that Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) made the classical distinction between ‘church’ and ‘sect’ as sociologically independent types of religious order, in Christian thought.\textsuperscript{139} In his treatment of the difference between them Troeltsch talked of what we would call their ‘take’ on grace. Troeltsch emphasized that both types were to be found in the early church and both had genuine ascetical elements, though it was only the church-type that was developed. It predominated in the history of the early church; it was fundamentally conservative; it partly accepted the secular order and dominated the masses, whose adherence was determined for them at birth; it was, in principle, universal; and, through its priesthood, it contained and dispensed grace, sacramentally.\textsuperscript{140} Troeltsch says that ‘the priesthood and the hierarchy...represent the objective treasury of grace’.\textsuperscript{141} The sect-type, on the other hand, was comparatively small; it aspired to personal inward perfection; it tended to shun the world, and it directed its members to personal adherence to Christ and following of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{142} Because of its stress on personal adherence one chose to enter the sect-type, usually by

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\textsuperscript{135} See Schleiermacher, \textit{The Christian Faith}: 266.

\textsuperscript{136} See Schleiermacher, \textit{The Christian Faith}: 355 \textit{et passim}, for this thematic constitutes the whole of the second part of the text, if one includes the first part on sin.

\textsuperscript{137} Schleiermacher, \textit{The Christian Faith}: 492; Schleiermacher’s discussion here centres on the experience of conversion.

\textsuperscript{138} See Schleiermacher, \textit{The Christian Faith}: 269. We note a commendable eirenicism in Schleiermacher: he is cautious, and compassionate, in his appendix-like treatment of ‘double predestination’, a doctrine that implies damnation of some, see 548f.

\textsuperscript{139} See Ernst Troeltsch, \textit{The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches} in 2 volumes, translated by Olive Wyon, with an Introduction by H. Richard Niebuhr, University of Chicago: Chicago and London, 1981 [1931; German original 1911], especially \textit{The Social Teaching} I: 338; Troeltsch also distinguished a third type, the mystical, which arises largely out of the interplay of church and sect types, see I: 381f., and also II: 993f.

\textsuperscript{140} See Troeltsch, \textit{The Social Teaching} I: 331.

\textsuperscript{141} Troeltsch, \textit{The Social Teaching} I: 338.

\textsuperscript{142} See Troeltsch, \textit{The Social Teaching} I: 331.
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personal conversion. In this type, ‘spiritual progress does not depend upon the objective impartation of Grace through the sacrament, but upon personal individual effort’. Troeltsch summarizes the sect-type approach to grace contrastively with that of the church-type, thus:

The Church emphasizes the idea of Grace and makes it objective; the sect emphasizes and realizes the idea of subjective holiness. In the Scriptures the Church adheres to the source of redemption, whereas the sect adheres to the Law of God and of Christ.

In God’s inscrutable will it seems that the divine ‘goal of goodness and grace’ becomes invalidated, such is the unequal distribution of the divine calling, i.e., that God ‘distributes to individuals very differently along the way to this aim – making things easier for one and harder for another, holding one soul at a distance for a long time and bringing another swiftly to the goal.’ On the other hand, an argument might be made for some sort of ‘equal’ distribution of grace in creation. Perhaps the person who came closest to realizing this endeavour was Rahner.

Karl Rahner (1904-1984) has developed a theology of grace that has been highly influential in Roman Catholic theology, especially following his role as a peritus at the Second Vatican Council. In his account grace is nothing less than God’s own self-gifting to humanity: ‘God communicates himself to man in his own proper reality. That is the mystery and fullness of grace.’ Intimately related to grace is Rahner’s innovative and core theological conception of the ‘supernatural existential’. This is neither a reified object nor a parallel to (human) nature itself; instead, it expresses in conceptual form that there is a profound if non-isomorphic connection between what is essentially human, the existential, and what is wholly of God, the supernatural. The idea of the human person is, as any other concept, fundamentally historical, i.e., it is rooted in the experience and mind of human beings. This,

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143 Troeltsch, The Social Teaching I: 339.
144 Troeltsch, The Social Teaching I: 337. Also, ‘in the idea of grace, however, the sect emphasizes the subjective realization and the effects of grace, and not the objective assurance of its presence [as in the church-type]’, see I: 341.
145 This is also a reification of grace and development of a mug-and-jug image of how it is dispersed.
146 Troeltsch, The Social Teaching I: 74f.
147 Karl Rahner SJ, ‘Nature and Grace’, in his Theological Investigations IV, Darton, Longman and Todd: London and New York, 1966: 165-188: 175; later, he writes, ‘Grace is God himself, the communication in which he gives himself to man as the divinizing favour which he is himself’, see 177.
Rahner goes on, presupposes that ‘supernatural, grace-filled factors’ are involved in this radically historical human experience; and, to deny this is itself a presupposition and as such, therefore, is not provable.149 Rahner is reacting, of course, to ‘extrinsecism’, the view that grace is ‘a mere superstructure’ imposed onto human nature by God, and the supernatural existential is designed to express a more wholesome and integrated account of grace. To be God-oriented, for Rahner, is constitutive of human nature, so that, if one can speak of a pure human nature, then one must say that true humanity goes beyond this natura pura.150 Indeed, it is to grace that humans are called by virtue of their created nature.151

In being human, then, humans can expect to find God who had made Godself present as grace in the particularities of space, time and history. The form of this relation between human nature and grace is expressed by Rahner in the notion of potentia obedientialis, i.e., that there is an absolute fulfilment of (present, conditional) human nature towards which grace draws us, an ability or potentiality to receive that love which is Godself.152 However, Rahner is resolute in holding that grace is always gift; it is not something which the human can either demand as a right or expect as part of human nature (purely, that is), for grace to be itself it can never be exacted or something owed to humans.153 In grace, divine love is put at our disposal if only we are at God’s disposal. And, it is in the experience of personal love that one knows what this unexactness means and ‘not vice versa’.154 As gift grace is to be distinguished from the experience(s) of grace that one may have. Rahner makes a clear

149 Interestingly, he argues it is only on the basis of Revelation that one could separate the purely natural essence of the human from the graced conceptually: it could tell us ‘what in us is grace’ and thereby provides the means of abstracting the ‘remainder’ that is pure nature, see Rahner, Theological Investigations I: 302, and 313f. on the remainder concept or Restbegriff.

150 Of course, Rahner’s point is that there is no pura natura, as an older theology had held, see Rahner, Theological Investigations IV: 183.

151 Nevertheless, Rahner will not entertain the idea that ‘man has uncreated grace because he possesses created grace’, i.e., that humans have the free gift of grace because they are created by a loving, gracious God; indeed, uncreated grace is logically prior to created grace because formal causality precedes material causality, see ‘Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace’, in Rahner, Theological Investigations I [1961]: 319-346: 334f.

152 See Rahner, Theological Investigations IV: 186f., also I: 311.

153 Rahner, Theological Investigations I: 309f. On the debate over de Lubac’s interpretation of grace in creation and grace in the human person, in light of the implicit criticism – here presupposed by Rahner – in Pius XII’s Humani Generis, Rahner goes against de Lubac, maintaining that grace in the human is unexacted (ungeschuldet) in a way that is different from the unexactness of grace in creation or existence; in the latter I do not, as I should, receive God’s grace as ‘an unexpected miracle of his love’, see Rahner, Theological Investigations I: 303-305.

154 Rahner, Theological Investigations I: 310f.
distinction between the possibility of experiencing grace and the possibility of experiencing grace *qua* grace and goes on to make it a presupposition of his argumentation. Elsewhere Rahner says:

Let each one of us look for the experience of grace in the contemplation of our life, but not so that we can say: there it is; I have it. One cannot ‘find’ it so as to claim it triumphantly as one’s own possession. One can only look for it by forgetting oneself; one can only find it by seeking God and by giving oneself to him in a love which forgets self, and without still returning to oneself.

For Rahner, God’s love is realized in love of the neighbour, which he calls ‘the event and factuality of justification’. In this justification ‘the loving subject breaks out of the prison of its egoism and really surrenders itself unconditionally’. However, in trying to explain the experience of grace Rahner raised a host of existential questions for his readers in order to provoke in them a sense of eternity, of something more than the temporal world, for ‘the meaning and fortune of the world’ do not exhaust one’s experience of meaning as such. In a reflective response to Hans Küng’s book reconciling Karl Barth’s view of justification with that of the Roman Catholic church, Rahner ends with a clear summary of the difference between nature and grace: grace is ‘entitatively supernatural’ and so different from nature, yet nature is ‘always and necessarily endowed with a supernatural finality in its existence’ for it is ‘the presupposed condition of possibility of grace strictly speaking’. Already we see in Rahner a conception of the human that is not limited to a closed, inner world of individual minds. For Rahner, in company with all theology, God is mystery; all our theologizing is seeking after the incomprehensible. However, the human too is also mysterious, not wholly self-comprehensible. In this way Rahner is able to avoid objectifying persons, for objects are not mysteries *sensu stricte*. In discussing enthusiasm and the experience of grace Rahner refers to ‘the original experience of grace which took place in the encounter with the historical

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156 Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III: 89.
158 See Karl Rahner SJ, ‘Reflections on the Experience of Grace’, in Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III [1976]: 86-90: 87f.; to experience the spirit in this way is what he means by experiencing the supernatural, which is ‘tasted like a nothing because it is infinity’, see 89.
Christ event'\textsuperscript{161}. In all of this understanding of grace Christ is central: in concluding his discussion of the relationship between nature and grace Rahner makes plain that the context for keeping the distinction between nature and grace is the Son of God, Christ\textsuperscript{162}.

**Conclusion**

Before we take up these issues, however, we need to enter the Buddhist notion of reality and from that form some, if limited, understanding of how Buddhism sees the world. The next two chapters take us into a few of the core buddhological conceptualities that, first, pose a direct challenge to the very idea of doing theology; second, contradict what might be termed the Western obsession with individuality; third, offer a comprehensive understanding of reality as an interdependent whole; fourth, conceptualize salvation in quite a different way; and, fifth, notwithstanding the first point, offer a theology of sorts, to wit, a soteriology of grace. These ideas will be addressed in each of the following two chapters.

Effectively, then, our reflections are framed against a certain social theory, which we place on a triple register. The primary register we employ is theological, as we aim to contribute to theology as our primary field; for this purpose, a second, buddhological, register serves as the 'alien other' or *alter* which, on the one hand, we need to explain and to which, on the other, any proffered explanation must be as faithful as possible if dialogue is to be maintained. In addition, there is also this third register of social theory itself, which, of necessity due to space and time, is the least developed here\textsuperscript{163}. It has a distinctly maieutical role that, by acting as a critical control and contributory conceptuality, helps bring to fruition a more profound conceptualization of grace because of the way it enables theology and buddhology, and Christianity and Buddhism, to mutually interact with one another in a new interreligious formation that goes beyond on-the-surface dialogues to more profound and transformative relationships that are built not just on constructive cooperation but also on what Luhmann calls interpenetration and double contingency. Luhmann helps provide what we require of theory, to wit, a level of abstraction which is sufficient to account for both the organizing of reality that theology already possesses in its own semantics, and, more problematically, the arising of that organization. By this latter we mean that when theology, which offers its own account(s) for the world, is seen to do so inadequately, it requires adjusting, and in Luhmann

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it finds some key elements for this. Building on a basic systems theory view of the construction of reality we hold that second-order cybernetics, i.e., reflection on the way information is communicated, as presented by Luhmann will prove useful to the interplay of theology and buddhology communicatively or dialogically. Second, and even though his own theological obiter dicta seem to run counter to the thrust of theology, Luhmann’s preservation of the autonomy of different systems, as we generally take theology and buddhology to be here, helpfully steers us between the Scylla of a Western, or theological, supersessionism and the Charybdis of a rejection of theology tout court. Third, Luhmann’s acknowledged Western sociology yet converges with Buddhism in seeming to dethrone human selfhood from its pride of place, and thereby helps us ‘bridge’ theology and buddhology at a particularly difficult pass. Finally, his notion of double contingency will help us frame a key element of the final synthesis of our reconceptualizing of grace. In sum, Luhmann, because he treats of some of the core issues with which a renewed conceptualization of grace such as I envision it is concerned, offers us some helpful tools in the dialogue between buddhology and theology.164

Our preference for a language of communications, contingency, and process is no accident.
The contrary of a process, in so far as cybernetics is concerned, is an object. While the latter preserves constancy, process parallels dynamism and change. In an age of unprecedented change and globalization, process language seems more conceptually adequate to the task of making the Christian doctrine of grace more enabling of interreligious dialogue and more theologically coherent, too. Reified notions of grace, and indeed of creation, sin, etc., that predominated in the past now yield to processual ones that mirror our experience of ongoing change. The way that theologians tie grace to the figure of Christ likewise reifies, if not so reductively yet still unhelpfully in today’s complexity and interreligious dialogue. The theological task is to discover a way towards realizing the potential of the concept of grace to resource dialogue and give new impetus to dialogue and to theology, too. Focus on the person of Christ as the unique symbol of divine grace distorts the more basic understanding of divine operations.165 This is not to belittle let alone debunk christology; it is, simply, to place the understanding of how God operates in the world in the way that it seems to us that God has actually chosen, namely, that people discover that they are drawn by the graceful and graced, by the favour of God shown them in the heart no less than by ‘mighty hand and

164 See Part IV below.

165 This not to downplay the difficulties of God-talk as such. Armin Kreiner warns us that ‘to know that there is a God means nothing as long as you do not know what “God” means’, see his ‘What Do We Mean by “God”?’, in New Blackfriars 87,1 issue 1007 (January 2006): 26-35: 26.
outstretched arm'. In time, and in a singular place, Christ came. Were the world of his time and place not long imbued with a sense of divine presence and act and graciousness how could he have been recognized as grace in the first place; Christianity believes in Christ as grace because people already had an understanding of grace, not vice versa, by which I intend both a historical point and, more, of growing from needy child to reflective adult. By observing what buddhology has produced in terms of understanding the world and humans in that world I believe that theology, in spite of the undoubted differences of a seemingly intractable nature between Christianity and Buddhism, risks having its horizons broadened to the intrinsic benefit of its own deeper understanding of grace. We turn now to the Buddhist worldview.
Part II

BUDDHOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND

SOTERIOLOGY
Chapter 2 Early Buddhist Worldview

Prince, before my awakening, when I was not fully awakened but merely intent on awakening, I too had the idea that happiness could not be reached through happiness, but could only be reached through pain. So after some time, while still a young man with a head of black hair and the advantages of being in the first flush of youth, against the wishes of my father and mother, who wept, their faces covered with tears, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on ochre robes, and went forth from home to homelessness. Once I had gone forth like this in search of what is wholesome, in quest of the ultimate state of sublime peace, I approached Āḷāra Kāḷāma. Having approached, I said to Āḷāra: ‘My friend Kālāma, I wish to follow the spiritual life according to this teaching and discipline.

Bodhirājakumāra-sutta

Introduction

The last chapter introduced the key elements of the whole thesis: the social context in which theology and buddhology develop, buddhological critique of Western lack, and the theological difficulty created by an over-reliance on christology, especially in relation to inter-religious dialogue. The theological challenge of Buddhism is what concerns us primarily; yet, leading to and mutually affected by this challenge is this insistent presence-activity of the socio-cultural world – in an important sense then this dissertation develops in (latent) awareness that the social world impacts directly on theology (and buddhology). As a minor compensation for this conceptual but necessary foreshortening of our task I will attend to some of these larger concerns in the final part of the dissertation. However, in this part, which comprises the present and next chapters, my task is to engage with buddhological constructions of the world, though not all of them, of course, as this would exceed both competency and exigency, but such historically and conceptually key ones that my choices offer warrant and avoid self-vitiation. My lens, which will be mainly scriptural, seeks to establish buddhology’s imaginative frameworks, first, for the comprehension of theologians,

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166 ‘The Dialogue with Prince Bodhi’, in Majjhima-Nikāya II: 91-97; Middle Length Sayings II: 279-284; however, the translation I use here is that by Rupert Gethin, see Saying of the Buddha: A Selection of Suttas from the Pali Nikāyas, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Rupert Gethin, in Oxford World’s Classics (series), OUP: Oxford and New York, 2008
and, second, to set the context out of or against which a buddhology of grace will emerge in
the next chapter. This chapter, then, begins our entry into the Buddhist construction of reality,
even though that construction – to modern and Western ears – is more a deconstruction of
what ‘Westerners’ take to be reality. From the first chapter we entered into the middle of the
problematic to which this dissertation proposes to offer a solution, namely, that the intra-
Christian notion of grace, which has traditionally been centred on the person of Jesus Christ,
shows itself somewhat inadequate or lacking in face of the communicative structure of the
modern world; any putative solution should be able to meet what I have posited as the most
serious challenge to the notion of divine self-communication in grace, i.e., Buddhism. That
first chapter also offered an analysis, via the buddhological perspective of David Loy, of the
situation in which Westerners find themselves. If Buddhism offers critique, will it be able to
offer something constructive? Of course, there are many details and specifics in the Buddhist
worldview, such that we should more accurately speak of worldviews, in the plural, yet, the
point for us is that these different buddhological systems challenge theology in the most
radical way, calling into question the very premise of theology, namely, that our world is one
in which the divine is not just ‘real’ but communicates to this world in what we believe is
self-disclosure. Not even avowed atheism, with its a priori rejection of ‘God’, offers the same
degree of challenge to the enterprise of theology that buddhological indifference towards God
involves. Can there be some sense to the idea that divine self-disclosure is also
communicated in a system that does not consider either the divine or revelation as such to be
relevant or useful for human reflection and well-being? The so-called silence of the Buddha
on certain fundamental questions, including the existence of God, is one challenge, then, for
the theologian, for such silence seems to make any correlate to grace a buddhological
irrelevancy and a theological conundrum. This is also to say, pari passu, that the Buddhist
stance is itself theologically problematic for the notion of divine self-disclosure.
The investigations of Stephen Toulmin168 into the history of science show us that past ‘forms
of life’ or ‘life-worlds’ are very different from present ones; yet, there is also growth and
evolution as developments accumulate; now, in our turn to Buddhism, we must ask what is at
stake for this or that Buddhist in the way she or he answers the issues of her or his period.

167 This is not to say that I believe that the Buddhist scriptures were written down at an early stage; scholars
debate the issue, but there is widespread agreement that an oral phase of ‘text’ transmission preceded writing, see

168 See Stephen Toulmin, Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity, University of Chicago: Chicago IL,
What does buddhology say of the world? What internal mechanism guides or facilitates the Buddhist construction of the world? How might we conceptualize this facilitating mechanism in a way amenable, if never presumptuously transparent, to Western categories? Finally, how is this to become theologically useful for theology? As we will see, Buddhism formulates a very different conception of the human-world relationship, one that radically calls the notions of personhood and the phenomenal world – often taken as the world of (delusional) appearances – into question. Our specific concern, then, is with the Buddhist deconstruction of the self as permanent and self-subsisting, that is, as a true thing in its own right, not dependent on other factors or entities. This seems to mark a radical difference between what we may call Western and Eastern anthropology, even though the latter surely had its origin in Buddhism’s self-differentiation from the religious environment of the time, in particular, Brahminism, which strongly identified the individual with the great Atman. If there is no self, then, how can there be reception of grace, for who would receive it? If there is no ultimate divine reality how could there be a source of grace? While it might be expected that, as my thesis directs us to that form of Buddhism – properly, Jōdo Shinshū – associated with 12th century Japan and the figure of Shinran, the focus should be on Japanese Buddhism of the Kamakura period (1185-1333), it is, nonetheless, conceptually important to set the broader context and establish the coherence of what we are undertaking within both this context and my problematic. For, this context seems to be at variance with Jōdo Shinshū in a number of ways. First, Jōdo Shinshū seems to contradict the earliest accounts of Buddhism as they have come down to us precisely on the point of a divine, ‘external’ source of grace. Second and building on the latter, the grace-like elements of Jōdo Shinshū seem to be an unwarranted development even within the later Buddhism of Mahāyāna.

To negotiate a way through a vast, detailed and quite ‘other’ Weltanschauung so that we may identify core elements of (early) Buddhism in a way that furthers my argument while avoiding unfaithfulness to that view, this chapter is structured around the core message of the Buddha, viz., the ‘four noble truths’ or cattāri ariyasaccāni (Sanskrit: catvāri āryasatyāmi). These four are: there is suffering (Sanskrit: duhkha; Pāli: dukkha); it has a cause (Sanskrit and Pāli: samudaya) in and ignorance (Sanskrit: avidyā; Pāli: avijjā); there is, however, a solution in its cessation (Sanskrit and Pāli: nirodha); and, that solution has its own liberative praxis (Sanskrit: mārga; Pāli: magga). This framework helps us to negotiate Buddhism’s diverse developments on our way to a treatment of Jōdo Shinshū and its account of Buddhist ‘grace’,

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and in a progression consonant with a fundamentally buddhological approach. From the notion of selfhood as not having a self-subsistent nature we progress to the conditions that give rise to it and, indeed, to all the ‘things’ that we take for real but which ‘really’ derive from our volitional consciousness. The idea that things do not have a permanent nature is expressed in the doctrine of no-self (Sanskrit: anatman; Pāli: anatta). Corresponding to and perhaps the source of this is the doctrine of dependent (co-)origination\(^\text{170}\) (Sanskrit: pratīyā-samutpāda; Pāli: patīcca-samuppāda): if the origin or existence of any given thing depends on various causes how can one claim that this ‘given’ stands, as it were, on its own feet and exists independently, for, one thing conditions another. Likewise, if an attā or ‘self’ is a collection (Sanskrit: skandha; Pāli: khandha) of senses, feelings, recognitions, volitional forces and consciousness, all arising and passing away from moment to moment, then one should not speak of a permanent self.\(^\text{171}\) To understanding how we construct our world and ourselves from our own reserves of ignorance and delusion, and to appreciate how we are ‘poisoned’ by certain elements, will provide us with a key to unlock what holds us in thrall and thereby enable us to awake to knowledge of the true state of things, which is freedom; this is what we take to constitute the core of the Buddha’s teaching. Finally, we look at some of the practices by which the Buddhist frees herself or himself and can attain to the state of perfection or arhathood.

\section*{2.1 World as Dukkha}

India of the millennium before the Common Era lacks a trustworthy history; we are ‘reasonably’ sure of the dates of the Buddha only within the span of a century, and, even at that, we may be wrong. Specific details of life at the time of Buddhism’s rise elude us, and our impressions are dependent on internal evidence from the Buddhist accounts, accounts which were not written down for some centuries following the time of the Buddha. We can be reasonably sure, though, that the period of the Buddha’s teaching was an insecure one on

\(^{170}\) For Richard Gombrich, the Buddha formulated this as an anti-vedic polemic. Both Vedic and Buddhist cosmologies are represented by fire and both describe the conditions for cognition and its nature. For it seems natural that the Buddha is opposing the Vedic in a conscious way. The absolute, Ātman, creates all; oppositionally, then, all is anattā, for the Buddha, see Paul Harrison, ‘Searching for the Origins of the Mahāyāna: What are we looking for?’, in Paul Williams (ed.), Buddhism III: The Origins and the Nature of Mahāyāna: Some Mahāyāna Religious Topics, Routledge: Oxford and New York, 2005 164-180: 170; also, The Eastern Buddhist 28,1 (1995): 48-69

\(^{171}\) Often, it will suit our purposes to stay with the Pāli versions, as most of the texts to which we refer are from the Pāli canon.
two fronts. First, the local petty kingdoms were often at war with one another, invading and counter-invading one another, as some of the scriptures attest; this must have created a sense of the risky precariousness of life itself and caused people to long for something better. Second, if the scriptural accounts can be trusted, they evidence willingness on the part of many to leave their ‘ordinary’ livelihoods to pursue either the severe practices of ascetics or the middle path of the Buddha, whether in response to socio-political factors or otherwise or some combination of diverse elements. However, there may well be another and deeper reason, one dependent on the religious interpretation of reality current at the time. This religious ideology proclaimed a cycle of birth, death and rebirth; people’s religious frame of reference locked them into a system that completely controlled the outcome of their (individual) lives; what is, is what was and what will be again – endlessly. For those who do not know how to escape from this samsāric world as their culture gave them to understand it a feeling of dissatisfaction or unhappiness (Sanskrit: duḥkha; Pāli: dukkha) grew. To be free from the samsāric cycle ignorance (Sanskrit: avidyā; Pāli: avijjā) of the true nature of things must be dispelled. It is this awareness of the truth of things that Buddhists call bodhi (Sanskrit and Pāli); indeed, this bodhi is the origin of ‘buddha’, the awakened one, and therefore of ‘Buddhist’ and ‘Buddhism’. Though bodhi is often translated as ‘enlightenment’, I prefer ‘awakening’, which is also the translation used by Rupert Gethin in his monumental *The Buddhist Path to Awakening.* First, let us see how the world was ordered for Buddhists.

What, then, is the basic understanding of the world? There is an ordered structure in the Buddhist cosmos; within this order, karmic relations are an instance of the causal relations that occur in nature: karma (Sanskrit: karma; Pāli: kamma) normally refers to action, deriving from the Sanskrit kr, to do. The doctrine of karma is fundamentally the law of cause and effect. In Buddhism, though, karma is related precisely to mental causality; in other words, to the volitions or volitional action, the decisions made by the thinking mind which give rise to

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173 This adjective is derived from samsāra (round of rebirth), which is the unresting, ceaseless flow of being born, growing old, suffering, dying, followed by being born, growing old... It connotes being trapped in our defilements, clinging to what is only conventional as if it were absolute truth, being unenlightened or unawakened. What we call a life(-time) is but a miniscule and fleeting moment in this ‘round’. Samsāric contrasts with nirvāṇic; this latter is derived from nirvāṇa, the blowing out of life with its passions, delusions and rebirths, and in this way come to represent ultimate liberation from all delusion or full awakening to the true state of things.

willing to be or exist, be self-subsistent, etc. For the Buddha these volitions or cetanā can trap and ensnare us. However, if we follow the noble eight-fold path (Pāli: ariya atthaṅgiko maggo)\(^ {175}\), we will awake to the true state of affairs. We will return to all these points below, but first we must say something about what may be called mythological elements in Buddhism.

In early Western accounts of Buddhism elements of folk religion or what we would call myths, if dealt with at all, were seen as intrusions into a more pure account of the Buddha’s teaching. However, the world that nurtured the Buddhist mind and system already comprised various mythological elements such as ghosts, demons, gods, and these often became part of the Buddhist mental framework much as many Irish people believed in fairies until the 1950s; even still we rather unscientifcally talk of the sun as rising or setting. Wherever Buddhism established itself – Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Japan, Tibet, etc. – its followers adopted and adapted local beliefs, and practices.\(^ {176}\) Thus, in the sense-world or kāma-dhātu alone there are six divine levels above the human (manussa) and four hells or apāya beneath.\(^ {177}\) The buddhological point is that none of these is conceived as a place of permanent or eternal residence; the Buddha, for instance, is often spoken of as descending from Tusita heaven.\(^ {178}\) The ultimate goal, however, is to be free of this cycle of rebirthing, whether from this world, the highest Tusita heaven or beyond, or the lowest hell.\(^ {179}\) These naturalized references to...

\(^ {175}\) See below.

\(^ {176}\) See Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism: 128f.

\(^ {177}\) Above the human realm, in ascending order are the realms of the gods of the four kings (cātumahārājikadeva), the thirty-three gods (tāvatimsa), the Yama gods (yāma), the contented (tuṣita), those who delight in creation (nimittā-rati), and the masters of others’ creations (paranimmita-vasavatti) see Nāṇamoli in Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga), translated by Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli, Buddhist Publication Society: Kandy, 1991: 774-775n14; below, in descending order, are the hells of the jealous gods (asura), the hungry ghosts (petti-visaya), animals (tiračchānayoni), and hell beings (niraya), see Visuddhimagga: 427; Path of Purification: 422f. See also Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism: 116f.: above the kāma-dhātu is the rūpa- dhātu or form-world with its Brahmā-gods and pure abodes or suddhāvāsa, and above these is the arūpa-dhātu or formless world.


\(^ {179}\) See also Samyutta-Nikāya V: 410; The Connected Discourses: 1835f.; the central importance of this text lies not in its references to the heavens and hells as such but in its understanding that even the brahmā world is ‘impermanent, unstable, included in identity’ and that, were the disciple – here a lay one – to direct his mind to the cessation of identity, then he would be liberated, i.e., be an arhat; this may be the sole reference to a lay follower achieving arhathood in the nikāyas, see 1961n372. Furthermore, the Buddha asserts here that there is no difference between one (way of) liberation and another, i.e., between a lay follower who is liberated in mind
heavens and hells are not to be dismissed on the basis of their being mythological; as constitutive of the Buddhist implicit understanding of the world they have become part and parcel of Buddhist psychology and in this manner, too, have become tied to explications of meditation.

As a consequence of the moral actions we do in this life, as well as bringing karmic elements from past lives to fruition, we determine the ‘fruits of our labours’. Typically, people understood that it was only after great effort and many rebirths to ever higher degrees of perfection that anyone could entertain the idea of ending the cycle of rebirths and attain that perfect state called nirvāṇa (Pāli: nibbāna). The message proclaimed by the Buddha in this context is summed up in the four noble truths and in the eight-fold noble path. First, a word about the Buddha himself.

2.1.1 The Buddha

The story of the Buddha, as the historical founder, is both instructive and illuminative for any account of Buddhist cosmology. When people talk of the Buddha, they are almost inevitably referring to the historical figure of Siddhārtha Gautama (Pāli: Siddhattha Gotama). Gautama came from the Sakya clan; as the sage or muni of this clan he is often referred to as Śākyamuni. After an early life of great ease and bounty, Gautama began a retreat from society similar to that undertaken by Mahāvīra and others, for some years. When almost at the point of death from the deprivations he had subjected himself to, he at last achieved enlightenment; simply put, he discovered ‘a middle way’ between the indulgence of luxury and the austerity of deprivation. Thus, he had awoken to a new understanding of reality. Now awakened (hence the title, ‘Buddha’, enlightened one) to reality, he then proceeded to spend the latter half of his long life preaching this middle way to others, whether

and a bhikkhu ‘who has been liberated in mind for a hundred years’.

180 See below for an explanation.

181 It is by this name that Shinran will often refer to this Buddha.

182 Though not its founder, his name is synonymous with the Jain religion.

183 Around 527 BCE: due to the notorious difficulty of dating persons and events as a consequence of the diversity of contemporary methods of recording, we cannot be sure of the actual dates for Gautama’s life. The Buddha (the enlightened one, the one who woke up) then went to the Deer Park at Isipatana, near Benares and there preached his first sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta, thereby setting in motion the Dhammacakka (Dharmacakra) or wheel of dharma (truth), see Sanyutta-Nikāya V: 421-423; The Connected Discourses: 1843-1846. The symbol for this on the national flag of India is taken from a pillar that King Asoka had built following his conversion to Buddhism; were we to be more certain of the dates of this king we would be better able to locate Gautama historically.
monks, nuns or lay people. Being an awakened one, the Buddha is believed to enjoy certain magic-like, superhuman powers. These super-knowledges or powers comprise five lokiya or mundane knowledges and one supermundane, the lokuttara. First, there is the iddhi-vidha or magical powers; second, dibba-sota or divine ear; third, ceto-pariya-ñāna or knowledge of others' minds; fourth, pubbenivāsānussati or memory of past existences; fifth, dibba-cakkhu or divine eye; and sixth, āsavakkhaya or the destruction of all cankers. Buddhaghosa discusses the other super-knowledges of the divine ear, of other's minds, of past existences, and the divine eye in the Abhinnā-niddesa chapter of the Visuddhimagga.

Before we progress we should remember that people such as Mahāvīra and Gautama were not unusual in the India of their day. Many, almost all of them men, led ascetic and mendicant lifestyles as ‘forest-dwellers’, away from inhabited places. Also, some of them founded communities, or else followers came to them in such numbers that communities naturally sprang up, in order to follow the magga more closely and faithfully. One of the features of the Buddhism that Gautama founded and that distinguished it from the Hinduism of the day was the sangha or community of monks (and later, nuns). From its rules and forms of life we see it combining the human need for conviviality and sociality with structures for pursuing truth and freedom from samsāra. The point is double: a formal network assisted the individual monk in striving for awakening, and the sangha’s very existence evidences a larger social dynamic. Our brief sketch already hints that Buddhism, too, was not immune to patriarchal stratagems and was imbued with presuppositions of female inferiority to male superiority. For instance, the Buddha, personally reluctant to permit the founding of a sangha for nuns, was finally persuaded to allow nuns, but declared that this would in time presage the

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185 Clearly, there was a social distinction between the place of the village, where ‘normal’ life was lived, and the place of the forest to which others withdrew for more distinctly ‘religious’ purposes. This tradition is still preserved, for instance, in Thailand, see John Snelling, The Buddhist Handbook: A Complete Guide to Buddhist Teaching and Practice, Rider: London, Sydney, Auckland and Johannesburg, 1987: 131.
186 The Five Precepts of Buddhism are: do not kill, do not steal, do not have sexual misconduct, do not drink intoxicants, and do not lie. Many more regulations pertain exclusively to monastic life and are to be found in the first of the Tipitaka (‘three baskets’ or collections of Buddhist texts), viz., the Vinaya Pitaka. The remaining ‘baskets’ are the Sutta Pitaka (the Buddha’s sermons) and the Abhidhamma Pitaka (developed philosophical treatises).
187 Lance Cousins, in an overview of Buddhism, in John R. Hinnells (ed.), A New Handbook of Living Religions, Blackwell: Oxford, 1997: 369-444, treats the actual breadth of Buddhism’s spread as itself ‘the Sangha’, considered overarchingly; first he details the Northern development of it, then the Southern, and finally the Eastern.
end of the Saṅgha. Nevertheless and though the sangha is one of the ‘three jewels’ of Buddhism, it is the preached dharma that leads the monk or nun to release from the samsāric round of birth and rebirth. Though the Buddha’s sermons are many, and sometimes repeated in the scriptures, there were also questions as to what meanings should be attributed to them and whether some questions should be answered in the first place. The Buddha’s way of responding to these is highly instructive, too, concerning the actual teaching of the dharma.

2.1.2 Buddhist Cosmology

In looking at early Buddhist cosmology we set a context for at least some of the otherwise extraordinary statements that occur throughout the canons. This is not to argue that, armed with such a background, we will unfailingly comprehend what scriptural texts mean or that believers held – or hold – to ‘naive and vulgar’ myths and legends. Paul Williams cautions that the ‘Buddhist cosmological vision is about as vast as it is possible to conceive.’ Yet, he is in accord with Rupert Gethin, who, in relation to the abhidharmic schematizations of consciousness, remarks, ‘cosmology is essentially a reflection of psychology and vice versa.’ The posited worlds or planes of existence are organized hierarchically, with heavens and brahma-realms above the plane on which humans live and with hells below. In Table 1 below, the vastness and complexity of the cosmology-psychology is schematically presented. To be reborn from one into another either some wholesome consciousness, i.e., karma-producing volition, must raise one to a higher level or some unwholesome consciousness must lower one to a worse level. The Buddha expressed it thus, when asked about ‘becoming’:

188 We will be concerned in the next chapter with the Japanese idea of mappō, a degenerate age, when the dharma is not lived out and in which Buddhists like Shinran felt they were living.

189 The Buddhist scriptures are collected in various canons, e.g., the Pāli, which is most familiar in the West due to the publishing work of the Pali Text Society, the Chinese, the Tibetan, etc.


191 Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism: 121; see also Bodhi, A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: 188: because of the correspondence between existence and consciousness, each ‘provides the key to understanding the other’.

In this way, Ānanda, action [kamma] is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving the moisture. For beings that are hindered by nescience, fettered by craving, consciousness is established in lower worlds [hīnāya dhātuyā, hells]. Thus in the future there is repeated rebirth. In this way there is becoming, Ānanda.¹⁹³

Thus, the thirty-one realms of existence are divided into three planes (tridhātu), namely, ārūpya-dhātu (Pāli: arūpaloka) or formless realm, rūpa-dhātu (Pāli: rūpaloka) or form realm, and kāma-dhātu (Pāli: kāmaloka). Those reborn in the first two realms are usually designated devas or gods, though these are more like superhuman, long-lived, happy beings who ultimately will be reborn into another state. Those of the first realm, the formless, having attained the four formless absorptions (catuh-samāpatti) of the meditation-states, now enjoy the fruits of these meditations; the four meditation-states that correspond to the absorptions are the state of neither perception nor non-perception, the state of emptiness, the state of infinite consciousness and state of infinite space. The second is the form realm and its inhabitants possess physical characteristics, though of a subtle kind and their minds correspond to the four lower dhyāna (Pāli: jhāna); they are further subdivided into 16 or 17 grades. Within the rūpa-dhātu there are special ‘pure abodes’ or suddhāvāsa (Pāli: suddhāvāsa) for the so-called non-returners or anāgāmins whose degree of perfection entails rebirth, not in the sahā world, but in the pure land.

¹⁹³ Anguttara-Nikāya I: 223; Gradual Sayings I: 203.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sphere-planes (4) (bhūmicatuṣkāka)</th>
<th>Realms</th>
<th>Life-span</th>
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<td>Āruṇāvacarabhūmi</td>
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<td>Not perception or non-perception 84,000 GA</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Nothingness 60,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>Infinite consciousness 40,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>Infinite space 20,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>Highest Pure Abode [PA] 16,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>Beautiful PA 4,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>Non-percipient realm 500 &quot;</td>
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<td>Great reward 500 &quot;</td>
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<td>Brahma’s ministers 1/3</td>
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<td>Nimmānarati 8,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>Tusita155 4,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Yāma (devas) 2,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Tāvatimsa156 (33 devas) 1,000 &quot;</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Peta (hungry ghosts) indefinite</td>
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<tr>
<td>GA = great aeon  IA = incalculable aeon  CY = celestial year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fine-material-sphere plane (16)</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rūpāvacarabhūmi</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Highest Pure Abode [PA] 20,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Clear-sighted PA 8,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th jhāna plane154</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Beautiful PA 4,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pure Abodes 23-27)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Serene PA 2,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Durable PA 1,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Non-percipient realm 500 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Great reward 500 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Steady aura 64 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Infinite aura 32 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Minor aura 16 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Radiant lustre 8 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Inferior lustre 4 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Minor lustre 2 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mahā Brahman 1/2 IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Brahma’s ministers 1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brahma’s retinue 1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Paranirmitavasavatti 16,000 CY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nimmānarati 8,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tusita155 4,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yāma (devas) 2,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tāvatimsa156 (33 devas) 1,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cātumahārājika (4 kings) 500 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Human indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asura indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peta (hungry ghosts) indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Animal indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hell indefinite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense-sphere plane (11)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kāmasugatibhūmi</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Paranirmitavasavatti 16,000 CY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nimmānarati 8,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tusita155 4,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yāma (devas) 2,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tāvatimsa156 (33 devas) 1,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cātumahārājika (4 kings) 500 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Human indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asura indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peta (hungry ghosts) indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Animal indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hell indefinite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reflects the abhidhammic listing of the jhānabhūmis as Ācāriya Anuruddha discusses them in relation to wholesome kamma later, see Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*: 216-219; also Appendix II in Bhadantācariya Boddhatissa, *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning (Paramatthajotikā) Part I: Commentary on the Minor Readings [= Minor Reading and Illustrator II]*, translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, Pali Text Society: Oxford, 1997: 341f. It differs from the canonical four (in the *Suttanta*), and from Ācāriya Anuruddha’s own Pali text, which lists and names four, at this point, i.e., 186-193, where the table is discussed. In the *suttas* the fourth jhāna is the 5th jhāna as given here, i.e., great reward, non-percipient realm and the five pure abodes; the third jhāna is the 4th as given here; the second jhāna is the 2nd and 3rd as given here; and, the first jhāna is the same as the 1st given here, see Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*: 14n59: the difference rests on differentiating between jhāna which has vicāra and vitakka and jhāna which has only vicāra; also Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*: 192f.

154 This heaven is the last abode of a bodhisattva before (final) rebirth leading to buddhahood; the 4000 celestial years would equate to some 576 million human years. An aeon or kapla is an incalculably long period of time.

155 The chief deva here is Sakka (Sanskrit: Śakra), often though not always identified with Indra, see Williams with Tribe, *Buddhist Thought*: 76.
Ignorance and Suffering

The first of the Four Noble Truths (Sanskrit: ārya-mārga; Pāli: ariya-sacca), which, as the core of the Buddha’s teaching, form the starting point of reflection for Buddhists, concerns this experience of duhkha or suffering. Dukkha is a word with many connotations and defies one single idea in English. Often translated as ‘suffering’ it also connotes the state of unsatisfactoriness; the world is out of joint, awry, off the true pivot. It is as a consequence of the impermanence of all phenomena, including happiness and pleasure, that we speak of existence as duhkha. Thus, at the heart of the Buddha’s teaching is this first noble truth: there is suffering or duhkha. We find the source of this suffering in our grasping after or craving (Sanskrit: trṣṇā; Pāli: taṇhā, desire, thirst) for the allurements of the world; enmeshed in our cravings we are caught up in selfishness (and rebirth); this is the second truth, concerning the arising of duhkha. The third truth states that one can overcome duhkha; in other words, it is possible to enter a state of liberation from suffering. To be rid of trṣṇā means to see the ego, the self-that-desires, the self that seeks to stand out as self-existing, as truly empty. This emptiness of what we imagine is substantive, self-existent and real is what is the doctrine of no-self (Sanskrit: anātman; Pāli: anattā) affirms: for, there is no ‘ego’ that is self-existing and independent. In order, then, to overcome duhkha there is a path (Sanskrit: mārga; Pāli: magga) that one can follow, and this is the fourth truth and with it begins the laying out of this path, which has eight factors and is, we noted, known as the Noble Eightfold Path. This mārga is often divided into three disciplines (Sanskrit: triṇī śiksā) of śīla, samādhi and prajñā. Thus, by progressing along the path one can, by one’s own efforts, become free of all attachments and defilements and become ‘awakened’.

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197 See Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta (Sanskrit: Dharmacakra-pravartana-sūtra) 1:4; this is taken as the first sermon of the newly awakened Buddha in which he ‘set rolling the wheel of the dharma’, in Samutta-Nikāya V: 420-424; The Connected Discourses: 1843-1847.

198 Unno, for instance, gives an interesting, if uncertain, derivation: duh means bad or poor, and kha means opening, hole, axle-hole, thus suggesting ‘a bad axle hole that makes a harsh, grating noise when the wheel turns’, Taitetsu Unno, Shin Buddhism: Bits of Rubble Turn into Gold, Doubleday: New York, 2002: 160.

199 That is, the cycle of endless birth, suffering and death (samsāra).


201 Namely: right view, right thought (paññā or wisdom); right speech, right bodily action, right livelihood (śīla or morality); and, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration (samādhi or concentration).
consequences, as the focus on trṣṇā indicates. These may be for our good, when our deeds have been wholesome, kusala, or our bad when our deeds have been unwholesome, akusala; sometimes, these consequences are not, so to speak, played out in our current life-cycle, and will only come to fruition in some future life-cycle, though they will assuredly do so. Bad choices producing bad karma are not the only worry. Evil can also be hypostasized as, for instance, in the figure of Māra.

Evil

Perhaps the most vivid expression for evil in the canonical texts is the figure of Māra, the malevolent cosmological power who comes to challenge Śākyamuni at the very moment of enlightenment, and who is only banished when the whole earth gives witness that what the newly awakened one says is truth. In this account Māra is a single figure – as well a Buddha, only one such being is held to be present in any given time-span or kalpa (Pāli: kappa). However, there may also be a plurality of Māras in quite another sense. For, as well as referring to a plurality of māras as devas or gods, the term Māra, which derives from mṛtyu (Pāli: maccu) death, from the root mṛ ‘to die’, is often associated with ‘abstract terms reflecting Buddhist teachings’, e.g., the kleśas (Pāli: kilesa, or defilements), avidyā (ignorance) and āsravas (depravity, passions), and his armies are the external sufferings brought on by hunger and thirst, cold and heat, or the internal ones of samyojana (fetters) and kleśas. Māra is also identified as the skandhas or aggregates (Sanskrit: skandha; Pāli:}

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202 As in the case of Gautama’s own awakening (bodhi or sambodhi) the successful adept can choose to fully enter nibbāna or one can return to the companionship of the unenlightened in order to help them achieve enlightenment or awakening for themselves; this is the bodhisatta ideal. This dimension of ‘one’s own efforts’ will come to the centre of our preoccupations later on.

203 The analysis of trṣṇā lists six kinds of craving, to wit, forms (material shapes), sounds, odours, tastes, tactile objects, and mental phenomena (mental objects), see below.

204 This is not to deny karma which is ‘neutral’, i.e., intentional acts that do not produce karmic consequences.

205 A kapla is an incalculably long period of time, an aeon; two similes offered are: it is longer than the time taken for a rock that is a cubic mile (vojana) to disappear if rubbed by a Kāsian cloth once every hundred years; and it is longer than the time taken for city-walls a cubic mile (vojana) dense with mustard seeds to disappear if one seed is removed every hundred years, see Samyutta-Nikāya II: 181f.; The Connected Discourses: 654.


207 Boyd, ‘Symbols of Evil’: 66f.; Māra may have daughters (tanhā, craving; arati, discontent; rāgā, passion) and armies of types both external (hunger, thirst, cold, heat) and internal (kāmā, desires; arati, discontent or sadness, etc.), see Padhāna-sutta of the Sutta-nipāta: 425-449, especially 436-438, and 835, in Suttanipāta: Pali Text, with translation into English and notes by N.A. Jayawickrama, Post-Graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist
khandha, and the six senses, with their objects, consciousness, and things cognizable.

When the Pali scriptures speak of evil as Mara epitomizes it, they are referring to the endless cycle of birth-death-rebirth and not to a final extinction of life, which latter, somewhat paradoxically for Western ears, is the wished-for nirvana state that marks the end of the samsaric cycle. Thus, their understanding of evil or papa connotes the lowly, undesirable, ill state in which we find ourselves and not the morally bad state of human intentionality directed to bad ends. The samsaric world is where we are ill, but, for the Buddhist, it is also where one may hope to attain nirvana; in this latter sense samsara is not evil or bad. The law that governs and determines samsara is karma.

2.1.3 Karmic Law of Cause and Effect

Karma (Pali: kamma) names the process or action by which what we will will result in certain effects; one’s karma results from the way one acts, and acts themselves must always be volitional. From the karmic fruits one is reborn again (and again), continuing samsaric existence. The ending of this cycle will only come with the uprooting and annihilation of these root conditions, these poisons of lobha, dosa and moha, which cause samsara. In a ‘single’ life-cycle, former characteristics, etc., are passed on in a sort of latent consciousness, which becomes part of the new nāma-rūpa or psycho-physical phenomenon that ‘I’ calls self, attā. From this, the buddhological theory proposes, the six sense-base or saññadatana arise; these comprise the Western understanding of the five senses with consciousness, making six in all. When each of these meets its appropriate sense-object a corresponding type of consciousness arises; e.g., when the eye sees, it sees an object, and the corresponding consciousness is ‘seeing-consciousness’. From their contact or phassa, feelings (vedanā) arise. From feeling comes tanhā (Sanskrit: trṣṇā), craving or desire; and, it takes three forms: craving for sensual pleasures or kāmātanā, for existence or bhavatanā, and for non-
existence or vibhavatānha. In the abhidhammic discussions of these, especially of tanhā, certain other elements act as multipliers, thus each of the three forms of craving is multiplied by each of the six sensory data, each of which in turn may be either subjective or objective, hence thirty-six categories; and, each again may apply to either the past, the present or the future; thus, we arrive at a total of one hundred and eight categories of craving. In order to get a sense of the conceptual thinking involved and to provide an entry point for what follows let us look briefly at one of the kāmatanha.

Kāmupādāna refers to excessive craving for sensual pleasures; but, it can also refer to the seemingly noble striving for higher contemplative states and in this there is also grasping after rūpa or arūpa jhāna. In the moment that one sees, when phassa or contact is made with the object of sight, two things may be said to occur. First, the nāma-rūpa becomes manifest as seeing-consciousness arises. Second, and in accord with this seeing-consciousness, there also arise: sañña, perception of the object; vedanā, feeling towards the object; sankhāra, volition and manasikāra, attention or reflection; if the material qualities or rūpakkhandha are clung to as existent, permanent and pleasing, then the visual consciousness, in virtue of this note of attachment, is called viññāna-upādānakkhandha. By meditating on the given moment and by coming to understand the momentariness of the relentless arising and passing away of the nāma-rūpa, one avoids holding onto that moment as though it were permanent; for, such holding on is what both gives rise to the new becoming or bhava and continues the samsāric process – because of paticcasamuppāda (Sanskrit: pratityasamutpāda) – of ‘the uprising of anguish’. In the story of the Vesali householder named Ugga a justification for kāmupādāna is given. Already a person of exceptional qualities, Ugga wanted to become an arahant (Sanskrit: arhat), i.e., one who has achieved perfection because he has reached the goal of nirvāṇa. Ugga achieved this when he gave both alms and robes he really liked to the Buddha. Usually, though, freedom from rebirth is obtained through increasingly higher states of meditative praxis. To seek freedom from rebirth, we must seek vipassanā, the

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214 See Middle Length Sayings I: 64n1.
216 See Mahāathatipadopama-sutta, in Majjhima-Nikāya I, 190f.: Middle Length Sayings I: 236-238: ‘material shape...feeling...perception...habitual tendencies...consciousness...the coming together of these five groups of grasping’, and ‘whoever sees conditioned genesis [paticcasamuppāda] sees dhamma, whoever sees dhamma sees conditioned genesis.’ See below.
217 As the upādāna of Ugga gained him arahantship, so other acts of the noble ones give rise to dāna, sīla, etc.
insight meditation that enables us to see into the reality of life’s momentariness. In this way, vipassanā may be said to derive from upādāna, though it really seeks to stave off the craving we have for sense-objects. Thus, before leaving this topic, we observe one typology of karma and how tradition deepened it. This is illustrative of buddhological abhidharmic differentiation and, at the same time, of the exigency of understanding the soteriological effect of one’s intentionality in any given life-cycle.

Types of Karma
Though we may think of karma as all of a piece, buddhology has differentiated karma according, as it were, to its potency and the immediacy of its effect, into a number of types. One of the earliest was surely the distinction between actions that are karmically wholesome (Pāli: kusala), bad (Pāli: akusala) or neutral (Pāli: avyākata). As an example let us look at one taxonomy. This will give a small insight into the way abhidharmic buddhologists constructed a highly differentiated account of karma and its operations. This comes from the abhidharma literature of the Pāli canon, viz., the four-fold taxonomy in relation to the ripening or fruition of karma. The four are garuka kamma, which is ‘weighty’, āsanna kamma which is ‘death proximate’, ācinṇaka/bahula, which is ‘habitual’, and kaṭattā kamma, which is ‘stored-up’ kamma.

1. Garuka kamma: this type has great effect, and is usually immediate. The following are named negative garukammas because they effect rebirth in one of the hells; they are the five great evil actions or ānantarika-kammas: killing a father, e.g., the story of King Bimbisāra’s son, Ajātasattu, who killed his father and would in time be killed by his own son; killing a mother; killing an arhal; injuring a Buddha; and causing schism in the Sangha.

2. Bahula kamma: this kamma also bears fruit in an habitual sort of way; it is also known as ācinṇaka kamma. When one has this type of kamma, one needs to do other meritorious things in order to build up counteracting good kamma.

3. Āsanna kamma: this kamma results from one’s final moments of life; this can be of such force that it is more effective than habitual kamma, thus, e.g., in the story of Subrahma Deva, the Buddha’s response to Subrahma links bojjhanga (the seven factors of enlightenment), dhamma (practice), dhutāṅga (ascetic practices), sammappadhāna (right exertion) to end defilements, indriyasamvarasīla (control of senses), and nibbāna (renunciation of all there is).

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218 See below for a fuller account of meditation.
219 This is found in the Vinaya or rules for the community of monks and nuns, the saṅgha, see Vinaya II: 90f.
220 See Bhikkhu Bodhi, A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: V,19; 203f.; see also Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary, s.v. karma.
4. *Katattā kamma*: this is the ‘stored-up’ *kamma*, and, in the absence of one or other of the previous types, is considered to be the *kamma* that explains or is responsible for rebirth. This taxonomy is paralleled by other taxonomies; thus, there are various types of *kamma* classified, for example, by function, time of ripening, and place of ripening; and, for each of these, there are four sub-classifications. With this, however limited, understanding of karma we enter the Buddhist understanding of the whole of the phenomenal world, what makes it the way it appears and what a true understanding of it should be. What the Buddha will make clear is that everything has a cause or set of causes. In particular, he examines the causes of our delusions and ignorance, which themselves cause our *dukkha* or suffering. On the one hand, things are affirmed as caused such that when this arises that arises, one thing conditioning another, and, on the other, as empty. We will examine more closely below the understanding of the world as actually ‘empty’ of real substance, sometimes called soul, self-substance, own-substance, etc.

### 2.1.4 Dependent (Co-)Origination of All

If the doctrine of karma tells us of the ‘moral’ consequences of our volitions, then the doctrine of *patīcasamuppāda* (Sanskrit: *pratītyasamutpāda*) tells of the origination of our *dukkha* or suffering. It analyzes the factors that bind us to our delusions. It shows us how to undo these bonds and so become free. Indeed, the ceasing of the factors is *nibbāna*. The *Mahāniddāna-sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya* offers a famous account of *patīcasamuppāda*.

It begins with an admonishment to Ānanda by the Buddha not to take this doctrine ‘as clear as clear’, for it is ‘profound and appears profound’, and then he details how the monks should teach it; they should begin with the condition for the existence of ageing-and-death, which is birth; the condition of birth is becoming, of that is clinging, of that craving, of that feeling, of that contact, of that mind-and-body, and of that consciousness, and of that mind-and-body. Each of the conditions is further explained as ‘the root, the cause, the origin, the condition’ of the next one as well as of the ‘evil unskilled states’ of craving, seeking, decision-making, lustful desire, attachment, appropriation, avarice, and guarding of possessions that leads to...

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222 To remind us of this I will employ ‘dependent (co-)origination’ as my preferred translation, though ‘dependent origination’ and ‘co-dependent origination’ are some of the many possibilities.

223 *Dīgha-Nikāya*: 55–71; *Thus have I heard*: 223–230. Richard Gombrich cautions us on the difficulties of interpreting this doctrine correctly, see his *What the Buddha Thought*, in Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies Monographs series, Equinox: London and Oakville CT, 2009: 132-143, especially if one reads the chain as requiring the getting rid of consciousness, see 133 and 138.

224 *Dīgha-Nikāya*: 55f.; *Thus have I heard*: 223.
'the taking up of stick and sword, quarrels, disputes, arguments, strife, abuse, lying and other evil unskilled states.' However, the point to be made is that if the condition(s) does not arise then neither can the state: if no birth, then no ageing and death, if no becoming, then no birth, if no clinging, then no becoming, etc. In the nibbāna experience, under the bo tree, what fully ceases is dukkha; it is with the parinibbāna that all the factors will cease, including consciousness. Before continuing with this sutta's discussion of the self we will look at a common presentation of the factors that characterize the chain of dependent (co-)origination. The following table, Table 2, schematizes the twelve-fold factors in the chain of dependent (co-)origination:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Manifested as</th>
<th>Proximate cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ignorance (avijā)</td>
<td>unknowing</td>
<td>to confuse</td>
<td>concealing</td>
<td>cankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formations (sankhārā)</td>
<td>forming</td>
<td>to accumulate</td>
<td>volition</td>
<td>formations /</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>physical-basis-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness (viññāna)</td>
<td>cognizing</td>
<td>to go before</td>
<td>rebirth-linking</td>
<td>cum-object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentality- (nāma-)</td>
<td>bending</td>
<td>to associate</td>
<td>inseparability of</td>
<td>consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>its (3 aggregates)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>components</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materiality (rupa)</td>
<td>being molested</td>
<td>to be dispersed</td>
<td>[morally]</td>
<td>consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>indeterminate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sixfold base (salāyatana (āyatana))</td>
<td>actuating</td>
<td>to see, etc.</td>
<td>as state of</td>
<td>mentality-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>physical basis</td>
<td>materiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and door</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contact (phassa)</td>
<td>touching</td>
<td>impingement</td>
<td>coincidence [of</td>
<td>sixfold base</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>internal and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>external base</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and consciousness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feeling</td>
<td>experiencing</td>
<td>to exploit the</td>
<td>pleasure and</td>
<td>contact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

225 Dīgha-Nikāya: 58f.; Thus have I heard: 224f.
226 Dīgha-Nikāya: 57f. and 61-63; Thus have I heard: 224 and 225f.
228 Most of the following table is based on Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga. Buddhaghosa first outlines the different ways of teaching (in chapter XVII: 27-42), then meaning (in 43-50), before coming to character (in 51); he completes this with a shorter account of singlefold (in 52-6), and defining the factors (in 57), see Visuddhimagga: 523-526; Path of Purification: 532-539; later he will detail these points.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Manifested as</th>
<th>Proximate cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vedanā</td>
<td>stimulus of the objective field</td>
<td>pain</td>
<td></td>
<td>feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craving</td>
<td>being a cause of suffering</td>
<td>to delight</td>
<td>insatiability</td>
<td>craving</td>
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<tr>
<td>tanhā</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clinging</td>
<td>seizing</td>
<td>not to release</td>
<td>strong form of craving and [false] view</td>
<td>craving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upādāna</td>
<td>being kamma and kamma-result</td>
<td>to make become and to become</td>
<td>profitable, unprofitable, indeterminate</td>
<td>clinging</td>
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<tr>
<td>becoming</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>bhava</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birth</td>
<td>first genesis of any becoming</td>
<td>to consign [to a sphere of becoming]</td>
<td>emerging here from a past becoming / the variedness of suffering</td>
<td>(becoming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāti</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sickness, old age, death</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>marana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 12 Factored Chain of Dependent (Co-)Origination

Though this presentation of the chain or nidāna\(^\text{230}\) derives from Buddhaghosa there is, in the Mahātanāthasankhaya-sutta (‘Great Discourse on Destruction of Desire’), a number of repetitions of the chain. In consequence, another theory links one from rebirth to another – the theory of gandhabba\(^\text{231}\) (Sanskrit: gandharva), mythic creatures who preside over childbirth – is placed with the doctrine of dependent (co-)origination.\(^\text{232}\) In this theory a child only results when there is coitus, female fertility and the presence of this kammic mechanism of gandhabba; the child grows up, and, with developed sense-organs, learns games, etc.; various feelings, whether of delight or repugnance, grow too in the child-growing-into-adulthood;

\(^\text{230}\) See Visuddhimagga: 498f.; Path of Purification: 505; true to form, Buddhaghosa makes many distinctions in jāti before he settles on the characteristic of anything that is formed.

\(^\text{231}\) In the Table 2 I give the Pāli terms; the Sanskrit forms are, in the same descending order: avidyā, sanskāra, vijnāna, nāma-rūpa, sad-āyatana, sparśa, vedanā, trṣṇa, upādāna, bhāva, jāti, and mārana. For an account of these which, while stressing those aspects central to Yogācāra, is helpful in general, see Dan Lusthaus, Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun, in The Curzon Critical Studies in Buddhism Series, RoutledgeCurzon: London and New York, 2002: 52-82. See also Samyutta-Nikāya XII: 10; The Connected Discourses: 537-539.

\(^\text{232}\) For conception to occur three things are needed together: coitus of parents, the mother’s season, and the gandhabba, which itself is part of the mechanism of kamma, see Middle Length Sayings I: 321n6. See Commentary on Majjhima-Nikāya II: 310.

\(^\text{251}\) Majjhima-Nikāya I: 256-70, especially 265f.; Middle Length Sayings I: 311-324, especially 320-322.
once the person delights in things then grasping arises, which is followed by becoming, birth and finally old age, suffering and death, the cycle of samsāra. We also see here that dependent (co-)origination is given a fourfold structure: wherever there is delight, as a result of sense-based feelings, there is grasping; this condition leads to becoming, which leads to birth, which leads to ‘old age and dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair… Such is the arising of this entire mass of anguish [duhkha].

Consciousness arises when the ‘appropriate condition’ arises, and this consciousness is typified according to the condition. Thus, there may be visual consciousness because of the eye and material shapes; auditory consciousness because of the ear and sounds; olfactory consciousness because of the nose and smells; gustatory consciousness because of the tongue and tastes; tactile consciousness because of the body and touches; and mental consciousness because of the mind and mental objects.

Having repeated the twelve-link causal chain, the Buddha continues:

It is good, monks. Both you say this, monks, and I too say this: If this is, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises, that is to say: conditioned by ignorance are the karma-formations; conditioned by the karma-formations is consciousness…

Returning to the Mahāniddāna-sutta we note that the discussion immediately moves to the self or attā. First, the Buddha inquires about the way people view the self, and is told, for instance, that it is ‘material and limited’. This he deconstructs so that people can no longer maintain it. Likewise, he deconstructs the idea that it is ‘immaterial and unlimited’. And he deconstructs the idea that the self is not ‘material and limited’, and not ‘immaterial and unlimited’. It is only when a monk no longer regards feeling as the self, or the self as being impercipient, or as being percipient and of a nature to feel, by not so regarding, he clings to nothing in the world; not clinging he is not excited by anything, and not being excited he gains personal liberation, and he knows: ‘Birth is finished, the holy life has been led, done was what had to be done, there is nothing more here.’

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233 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 267; Middle Length Sayings I: 323.
234 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 259; Middle Length Sayings I: 314; this is supported by various similes: stick-fire, chip-fire, grass-fire, etc., result from sticks, chips, grass, etc., respectively, see I: 259f.
235 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 262f.; Middle Length Sayings I: 318f.; this is repeated in I: 264; Middle Length Sayings I: 320f., though negatively: ‘It is good, monks. Both you say this, monks, and I too say this: If this is not, that does not come to be; from the stopping of this, that is stopped, that is to say: from the stopping of ignorance is the stopping of the karma-formations...’
236 Dīgha-Nikāya: 64-68; Thus have I heard: 226-229.
237 Dīgha-Nikāya: 68; Thus have I heard: 227f.
The Mahānidāna-sutta concludes with the section in which a liberated monk has the abhiññā or super-knowledges (see below), and as such is not subject to wrong views; therefore, should anyone ask him if the Tathāgata exists after death, or does not exist, or both exists and not exists, or neither exists nor not exists, he would know that this was ‘a wrong opinion and unfitting’. Furthermore, a liberated monk – this time, freed by paññā-vimutti, that is to say, by wisdom – will have gone through all of the seven ‘stations of consciousness’ and the two spheres of unconscious beings and of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, without being attached to his achievements or taking pleasure in them. At a still deeper level, a monk who achieves both this freedom by wisdom and freedom by heart or mind, ceto-vimutti, is therefore said to be ‘both ways liberated’, of which, says the Buddha, there is no other way ‘more excellent or perfect’. We have here, then, a process of perfectability that entails powers, preparations, and, we will see, many lifetimes such that it seems magical and superhuman. The world-system that supports this process of perfectability is no less superhuman.

Humans in the world-system

The Buddha does not consider that the world has a beginning as such; instead, there is an endless round of rebirth in terms of humans; however, what is his understanding of a world-system as such, given that mention is often made of different aeons, as Table 2 so clearly illustrates? In the Aggañña-sutta of the Dīgha-Nikāya, in conversation with two converts from Brahminism, the Buddha contradicts the Brahmin view of Brahmin superiority, a view based on the four-fold caste system; there are people from all the castes who have dark qualities and there are others who have bright ones, and the wise will blame or praise accordingly. However, Dhamma itself will proclaim supreme anyone who ‘becomes a monk, an Arahant who has destroyed the corruptions, who has lived the life...become emancipated through super-knowledge’. Indeed, if followers of the way of the Buddha are asked who they are they should reply: ‘I am a true son of Blessed Lord, born of his mouth, born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, an heir of Dhamma.’ They should so answer because of the

238 Dīgha-Nikāya: 68; Thus have I heard: 228.
239 Dīgha-Nikāya: 69f.; Thus have I heard: 228f.
240 Dīgha-Nikāya: 71; Thus have I heard: 229f.
241 Dīgha-Nikāya: 80-98; Thus have I heard: 407-415.
242 Dīgha-Nikāya: 82; Thus have I heard: 408; this point will be restated only more emphatically in the closing verses, see Dīgha-Nikāya: 96f.; Thus have I heard: 414f.
From this base he proceeds to give a cosmological account of a world-system. The world that is begins to contract, and beings are reborn in one of the Brahmā-worlds where they are ‘mind-made (manomayā)’. Once the world begins to expand again these beings are reborn there but live like their former divine state ‘for a very long time’. All around was darkness; a sort of savoury skin spread over the waters; once tasted, for it was sweet, craving for it arose; as craving grew, the self-luminosity of these beings disappeared and ‘as a result...the moon and the sun appeared, night and day were distinguished...the world re-evolved.’ Over very long periods greater degrees of coarseness comes over the beings: some are ugly; the savoury earth is replaced by a fungus, and it by creepers, and they by rice; and female and male sex organs develop on the beings so that ‘their bodies burnt with lust.’ The degradation continues: with laziness store houses for food are built, one person steals from another, and lies about it. A meeting is called and a decision taken to appoint a leader; this is the origin of the Khattiyas. Others leave and become meditators, i.e., the Jhayaka class, though some fail, compile books instead and form the Ajjhāyaka class; the Buddha equates the latter with the Brahmins; and still others take on trades (Vessas) or hunting (Suddas), or became ascetics. It is repeatedly stressed that these beings are the very same as all the others (who came from the heavenly abode) ‘no different, and in accordance with the Dhamma, not otherwise.’ As such, whether Khattiya, Brahmin, Vessa or Sudda, if they have attained the requisites of bodhi, then they will ‘attain to Parinibbāna in this very life.’ This is a story, of course, with fantastical elements, much as other religions contain, and it is paralleled by another story, to which we turn now, which details the new arising of humans following the destruction of an aeon.

These stories, in mythopoeic ways, show how everything has its origin in something else, not by chance or happenstance, but causally.

Humans remade

At the destruction of an aeon – an aeon can be destroyed by water, fire and air, though here fire predominates – a cloud heralds the onset; a downpour covers ‘the hundred-million world-

243 Dīgha-Nikāya: 84; Thus have I heard: 409; perhaps this helped give rise to the Mahāyāna notion of dharmakāya, dharma-body.
244 This is not cosmology in an absolute sense, such as the Genesis account is normally taken to be, see Thus have I heard: 603n810.
245 Dīgha-Nikāya: 86; Thus have I heard: 410.
246 Dīgha-Nikāya: 88; Thus have I heard: 411.
247 See Dīgha-Nikāya: 93, 95 (thrice), 96; Thus have I heard: 413f.
248 Dīgha-Nikāya: 97; Thus have I heard: 415.
spheres'; perhaps for many thousands of years no rain falls and many creatures die; strange deities foretell the birth of a new aeon in one hundred thousand years and warn people that they should behave, saying 'develop lovingkindness, good sirs, develop compassion, gladness, equanimity, good sirs. Care for your mothers, care for your fathers, honour the elders of your clans.'249 In following these precepts humans make merit and 'are reborn in the divine world', where they 'eat divine food' and do preliminary meditation; even those who, because they still have kamma that has to come to fruition in a future life, are reborn in a lesser heaven can still meditate and achieve jhāna, eventually being reborn in the Brahmā-world.250 A long time after, a second sun appears in the sky to further burn the land; still longer afterwards, a third sun, and so on until there are seven in all and this world, as well as 'the hundred thousand million world-spheres' are alike vapourized and set on fire; upper and lower space are now one 'in a vast gloomy darkness', until a cloud appears and rain begins to fall; winds blow and help to separate upper and lower worlds again; humus begins to form and beings reborn in the Brahmā-world begin to fall from it 'with the exhaustion of their life span, or when their merit is exhausted' to the humus, which they begin to crave. Seeing the darkness the beings feel fear.

Then in order to remove their fears and give them courage, the sun's disk appears full fifty leagues across. They are delighted to see it, thinking 'We have light', and they say, 'It has appeared in order to allay our fears and give us courage (sūrabhāva), so let it be called "sun" (suriyā).’251 Still, they are frightened by also, and they wonder how good it would be 'if we had another light.' Then, 'as if knowing their thought, the moon's disk appears, forty-nine leagues across.'252 Stars appear, day and night, the month, half month, season, year, mountains of Sineru – like bubbles on cooking millet, spontaneously – and seas and continents. Some beings become ugly, some handsome; creepers replace the humus, and are themselves replaced by rice, which the beings cook in vessels that, along with fire, appear spontaneously.

To release the urine and excrement 'wounds orifices' appear; sex organs appear, too, and sexual intercourse follows after a 'long period of brooding'. The wise censure this and, continuing the tale of degradation, houses are built to hide 'the evil'; stores are built by the

249 Visuddhimagga: 415; Path of Purification: 411.
250 Visuddhimagga: 415f.; Path of Purification: 411f.
251 Visuddhimagga: 417; Path of Purification: 413.
252 Visuddhimagga: 418; Path of Purification: 413; as this light seemed to know their desire (chanda) they called it 'moon' (canda).
lazy and rice no longer grows naturally but has to be harvested. They end by bemoaning their evil life.

Behind this story is a formative discourse of mind-made beings falling in ‘progressive’ stages to the condition of humanity in the present world. Amidst the hyperbolic imagery and in spite of all the miseries that these once self-luminous beings inflict on themselves they always have the opportunity and choice to take the path that leads to the arhat’s noble end, parinibbāna. An effect of the story is an emphasis on the difficulty of attaining the end or goal. Yet, this goal is held up as worth striving for, and this entails also striving against whatever hinders or prevents our following of the arhat’s path.

2.2 Causitive Delusion

In the first place, the mind is deluded and ignorant of the true state of things. Avidyā (Pāli: avijjā), ignorance is one of the mind’s two root defilements, mūla, which condition the moral quality of the volitional state or cetanā, the consciousness, and its associated mental factors, and in this way affect kamma. Avidyā blinds people to the way reality is, and so we cannot see the truth. The second root defilement is trṣnā, craving; it is the ally of avidyā in that it binds us to the illusions that avidyā already presents us with, such as money, power, possessions, family, ‘self’, etc. Because we do not have them we desire to possess them, and in this possessing we become possessed; our sense of lack is fed from ignorance. Instead, our minds are filled with passions and desires that cause us to continue our poisoned existence in renewed cycles of death-birth-death-rebirth; awakening to the true state of things will liberate us from this cycle. The Buddha’s teaching, which aims at awakening, offers an extensive analysis of the factors which lead to a continuing of the cycle of birth-death-rebirth so that ignorance is ended and true knowledge gained.

2.2.1 Factors Leading to Rebirth

There are five factors leading to rebirth and of these, three are considered kilesavaṭṭha, or belonging to the round of defilements or passions (Sanskrit: kleśa; Pāli: kilesa); they are

253 Likewise, the Cakkavattī-Sīhanāda-sutta tells of people who had huge life-spans, e.g., forty thousand years, but whose evil deeds caused such decrease that eventually people only had a ten year life-span; finally, some went off to live an ascetic life – only for seven days – and upon returning realized the benefit of wholesome practices, and their life-spans began to increase again such that spans of eighty thousand years could be hoped for. It is in this latter time that ‘an Arahant fully-enlightened Buddha named Metteyya’ will arise, see Dīgha-Nikāya: 58-79, especially 76; Thus have I heard: 395-405, especially 403.

254 This we have seen above in Loy’s analysis of Western thinking.
ignorance or *avidyā* (Pāli: *avijjā*), craving or *trsnci* (Pāli: *tanha*), and the attachments (Sanskrit and Pāli: *upādāna*) that result from craving, i.e., those things that we cling to and of which we seek to gasp hold. The final two belong to the round of actions or *kammavatta* and they are *sankhāra*, i.e., here, a sort of conscious and active volition, and *kammabhava*, i.e., the karmic process; and another important distinction, or series of distinctions, is made between these latter two. Of them, only *kammabhava*, as its name implies, carries the distinctive *cetanā* or volition that belongs to the very action itself. In effect, this means that the thinking or motivation prior to the performance of, say, an act of *dāna* or almsgiving is considered *sankhāra*, while the state of consciousness, i.e., the volition, *cetanā*, at the very moment of the act, is *kammabhava*. The distinction is further adumbrated in an analysis of, for example, murder, acts that are considered to comprise seven moments. Again, the first six are *sankhāra* while only the final ‘moment’ is *kammabhava* or productive of *kamma*. In the *Visuddhimagga*, which is of a piece with this treatment, *kammabhava* is that *cetanā* that motivated a person’s previous good or bad actions. In these indicative outlines we are reminded that a highly elaborate process of analysis is taking place, one that is typical of abhidharmic scholarship but one that seeks to elaborate the outcomes of the Buddha’s message.

The resulting or *phassa*-produced consciousness is merely a mental phenomenon. It arises in the order of things, simply because there is an eye, an eye-object and an eye-consciousness. When we go on to reify this and make the further deduction that this consciousness is ‘me’ or ‘mine’ we err. The natural process of physical and mental elements arising (and passing away) is, but ‘I’ am not. What good or bad ‘I’ do rolls on, like the wheel of a car, this cause giving rise to this effect, that cause giving rise to that effect. This is karmic process.

Wrong views - *diṭṭhi*

In expounding the four noble truths the Buddha, we saw, also elaborated the ‘eightfold noble path’. However, what we normally experience are not the right views, etc., that he refers to, but the delusional ones that keep us tied to the wheel of saṃsāric rebirth. These wrong views are referred to as *diṭṭhi* (Sanskrit: *dṛṣṭi*) for short. Certain *diṭṭhi* were major causes of concern to the Buddha as a teacher of truth and the right way to attain it. One of the main ‘wrong views’ referred to in canonical writings is *uccheda-diṭṭhi*, i.e., the view that, at death, the self is...

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will be annihilated in an absolute sense.\textsuperscript{256} The danger here is that, not believing in consequences, one will engage in evil action and not do good. Another wrong view is \textit{sassata\textit{d}itthi}, the belief in eternity, i.e., there is a something of the person that exists apart from the five aggregates and will continue after death eternally. This view leads to bad \textit{kamma}; it funds the illusions that the ‘I’ is a permanent self and that this ‘I’ will bear the kammic forces (in future lives). We now turn to a more full discussion of this core buddhological principle, that the substantialist view of selfhood, to which we cling so precariously, is delusional and conducive to unhappiness.

### 2.2.2 An\textit{att\textscript{a}}

The Buddha rejected the Brahmanical view of self that was prevalent in his day, viz., that there is a self. However, as well as arguing against this view, the Buddha also held a distinct view of what reality is. In consequence of a strict avowal of the dependent (co-)originating or conditioning of one thing by another, especially in relation to ignorance and dukkha, and to the elimination of these by eliminating their causes or conditions, the Buddha offered a positive account of reality. The human being is an ever-changing entity, a stream or flux (Pāli: \textit{sota}) of becoming, \textit{bhava-sota}, and is termed a \textit{nāma-rūpa}, a psycho-somatic unit, to which we have already referred above. The process by which there is an interdependence between the physical base, \textit{rūpa}, and the mental phenomenon, \textit{nāma}, is called \textit{aṇḍa-maññapa\textit{c}caya}. \textit{Nāma} has four aspects: \textit{vedanā}, pleasure or hedonic tone, \textit{saññā}, impressions and ideas, \textit{sankhārā}, conative dispositions, and \textit{viññāna}, cognitive and quasi-cognitive acts. The different mental phenomena are in a state of flux and all together constitute a stream of consciousness, \textit{viññāna-sota}.\textsuperscript{257} This continuous flux empties the person of any possible unchanging quality such as an immortal soul or permanent self. On the other hand, ‘person’ can be and is used conventionally to name a given series of processes, though there is no underlying metaphysical \textit{attā}. Theodore Stcherbatsky, for instance, offers a succinct statement of \textit{attā} or \textit{anātman} in relation to the elements or \textit{dhammā} of existence:

> The term \textit{anātman} is usually translated as ‘non-soul’, but in reality \textit{ātman} is here synonymous with a personality, an ego, a self, an individual, a living being, a conscious agent, etc. The underlying idea is that, whatsoever is designated by all these names, is not a real and

\textsuperscript{256} Buddhaghosa glosses this as \textit{ditthupādāna}, i.e., attachment to the view that there is no rebirth or \textit{kamma}, see \textit{Visuddhimagga}: 569; \textit{Path of Purification}: 585f.

\textsuperscript{257} Jayatilleke distinguishes between conscious and unconscious mental phenomena. The former have a physical basis, \textit{rūpa}, \textit{nissāya vattati}, while the latter ‘constitutes a section of the mind containing emotionally charged memories or conative dispositions going back into prior lives’, see Jayatilleke, \textit{Dhamma, Man and Law}: 36.
ultimate fact, it is a mere name for a multitude of interconnected facts, which Buddhist philosophy is attempting to analyse by reducing them to real elements (dharma). 258

Where, asks the Buddhist, in these transitory and momentary compositions is there a basis for an atta, a permanent self or soul? Before we begin this account of no-self, we must, however briefly, introduce two other buddhological notions that repeatedly appear in Buddhist textual discussions of anatta (Sanskrit: anātman). They are anicca (Sanskrit: anitya), which is impermanence, and dukkha (Sanskrit: duḥkha), which I have normally been rendering as suffering. These two, with anatta or no-self, constitute the three so-called marks or characteristics of existence (Pāli: tilakkhana; Sanskrit: trilaksana) and form the basis of what Westerners might call a Buddhist ontology. These three characteristics are examined in the story of Meghiya, from the Udāna. The story relates that the venerable Meghiya comes to discuss the topic of effort with the Buddha.259 Through the ‘three evil, unskilled thoughts’ of sense-desires, ill will and cruelty that arise in Meghiya’s mind as he awaits the time for discussion, the Buddha skilfully instructs him in the ‘five things [which] conduce to full maturity [i.e., liberation of heart]’. The first is a true intimate or friend (Pāli: kalyānamitta; Sanskrit: kalyānamitra), the one who assists in meditating and leading the moral life, and this accompanies each of the others, which are: possessing morality, talk about ultra-effacement, abandoning unskilful states in order to purposefully undertake skilled ones, and insight in order to destroy dukkha. Finally, the Buddha adds four more things that a monk seeking maturity should cultivate:

...the foul is to be cultivated for the abandonment of lust, loving kindness is to be cultivated for the abandonment of ill will, mindfulness of in-and-out breathing is to be cultivated for the interruption of thought, perception of impermanence is to be cultivated for the uprooting of the ‘I am’ conceit.260

Attaining nirvāna lies in fulfilling these. The Buddha has led his hearer away from talk of effort to those things that really lead to freedom from duḥkha to nirvāna. Thus, the anicca of ‘things’ is to be cultivated.261 Usually, anicca is related to the five khandhas that are perceived as the phenomenal ‘self’, and the sense-bases or āyatana that consist of the physical sense-

261 See also Samyutta-Nikāya III: 15; The Connected Discourses: 869.
organs and consciousness with their respective objects. Indeed, it is only nirvāṇa that is generally recognized as non-impermanent or not subject to impermanence. The notion of impermanence will arise in one way or another through the history and sects of Buddhism so that now we should focus on the teaching that the ‘i am’ is to be eliminated.

The doctrine of anatā, no-self, non-ego, impersonality, is a distinguishing feature of the teaching of Gautama. The Brahmanical understanding was built upon a doctrine of self(hood), ego, personality, attā (Sanskrit: ātman). \textit{Anatā}, then, as perhaps the distinctively Buddhist doctrine\textsuperscript{263}, became and continues to be the focus of intense discussion: what did Gautama mean by it? To what notion(s) of attā was he reacting? How may we conceive his problem today? A simple and simplistic understanding of the doctrine of \textit{anatā} is that there is no such thing as the self, either materially or bodily, intentionally or spiritually, conventionally or absolutely understood. But, then, what is this no-self that is extinguished? The doctrine of \textit{anatā} applies to the conceptual definition of the human self, to the attributes that we so readily identify as being \textit{us}. However, there is also a positive usage to be discerned in the Buddha’s discourse. This relates to his notion of the \textit{parinibbuto} or ‘accomplished one’. This special person has the \textit{upādhis}, external attributes, removed; and these \textit{upādhis} include my body-elements, the will that wants these very elements, the mind that brings us into contact with the world through feelings and perceptions. At least, we see that the Buddha does not hold to a sense of absolute non-being in relation to the ‘no-self’; he denies a corollary of his teaching of \textit{anatā} as unwarranted: there is no self affected by the deeds of self.\textsuperscript{264} As regards material shape, feeling, perception, habitual tendencies and consciousness, perfect wisdom leaves no room for such conceits as ‘I am the doer, mine is the doer’; however, they are foolish who go on to argue that each of material shape, feeling, perception, habitual tendencies, and consciousness ‘is not self’. The Buddha emphasizes that the training he gives to monks is to seek ‘conditions \textit{[paticca-vinītā]} now here, now there, in these things and in those.\textsuperscript{265} These conditions are impermanent; and, as such, painful, and ‘liable to change’. While it is wrong to think that there is a soul or permanent element in any or all of the five \textit{khandhas}, or that the latter are ‘owned’ by or located in such a soul, so too it is wrong

\textsuperscript{262} See Table 2 above.

\textsuperscript{263} Thus, Nyanatiloja, \textit{Buddhist Dictionary}: s.v., \textit{anatā}.

\textsuperscript{264} The Buddha rejects annihilationism (Pāli: \textit{uccheda-dīthi}) as surely as he rejects eternalism (Pāli: \textit{sassatadiṭṭhi}).

to think of the individual person apart from the khandhas. The wise monk regards these things as ‘this is not mine, this am I not, this is not my self’, for this is the way to ‘see it thus as it really is’ is by means of perfect wisdom. And seeing the way things ‘really are’ is awakening or bodhi; nevertheless, at this stage, the ideal state of freedom from the wrong views of attā, from the āsavas (Sanskrit: āśrava) or corrupting flows, and the kilesas (Sanskrit: kleśa) or defilements, such as lobha, dosa and moha, which themselves are the root of the defilements, is release into nibbāna (Sanskrit: nirvāṇa). While it would be wrong to imagine that we can bring about this ‘state of nibbāna – for, it arises – the ‘fact’ of the state is evidenced by observing a person in whom āsava and kilesa have been eradicated. In sum, the essential meaning of nibbāna is the extinguishing of the ‘fires’ of ignorance and craving and the freeing of the awakened one from the round of rebirths and dukkha. As the discussion of parinibbuto shows, extinction does not mean absolute annihilation: this may not mean that there is some ‘real self’ that, in freeing itself from desire, hatred and delusion, somehow accedes to the status of an attā. Talk of such a self is surely only conventional; the buddhological point being made is that there are (conventionally understood) persons who achieve true liberation from the poisons, truly awaken to the way things really are; this is not necessarily to affirm attā as such. It is reasonable, however, to postulate that an accomplished one’s attainments did give rise historically to later notions of an excellent ‘nature’ that would become thematized as buddhadhātu or Buddha-nature. Such a nature follows a long process of perfection.

Just as, monks, the Great Ocean progressively slopes, progressively tends, progressively inclines, is no sudden precipice at all, so in that very same way, monks, are in this Dhamma and Discipline progressive trainings, progressive obligations [kiriyā], progressive practices, there being no sudden penetration of supreme knowledge [ānāñña].

Even at the end of his life the Buddha saw that the path to perfection required continual striving. Close to death, the truly perfect one, the Buddha, though still refusing to nominate his successor, gave his followers a last opportunity to question him in case they had any doubts or uncertainty about himself, the Dhamma, the Sangha, or about the path or the practice. Three times he asks, only to be met with silence, which Ānanda takes to mean that

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267 Majjhima-Nikāya III: 20; Middle Length Sayings: 69.

268 Udāna 54; The Udāna: 96.
‘there is not one monk who has doubts or uncertainty’. Then he uttered his last words: ‘Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay – strive on tirelessly.’

2.3 Achieving Release - Liberation

To follow the Buddhist path, then, leads to a sort of extinction, a blowing out, like a candle flame; for fire, both fuel and flame are needed; yet, neither of these is fire. Flame, we say, consumes the fuel, and this, for Śākyamuni Buddha, is a simile for the way we thirst after sense-pleasures and it is these pleasures or desires that are inherently unsatisfiable and impermanent. Insatiable craving defines our willing. Similarly, then, a person’s putative self is like fire: take away the fuel, i.e., the attributes, and the flame dies, and no-thing remains.

What the Buddha teaches is not total extinction or annihilation but rather the path to ‘the imperishable’, that which is beyond space and time and which we call nirvāṇa (Pāli: nībīṇa). Nirvāṇa is the blowing out of the passions and of duḥkha. In the Eka-nipāta of the Anguttara-nikāya the imperishable is proclaimed as the highest goal some twenty-four times. Just as streams and torrents ensure that the great Ocean is not in want, so there does not appear ‘any state of wanting or repleteness thereby for the nirvāṇa-element even if abundant monks attain nirvāṇa by way of that nirvāṇa-element that is without remnant of substrate.

2.3.1 Nirvāṇa

However, just what is it that is extinguished? Is it the psycho-physical mass of khandhas that, in delusion, I think I am? For the Buddha, the nirvāṇic state is an extinction; but, his own

269 Dīgha-Nikāya: 155; Thus have I heard: 270; the Buddha agrees, but says that this is something he as Tathāgata knows but which Ānanda can only say by faith.
270 Dīgha-Nikāya: 156; Thus have I heard: 270.
271 See Majjhima-Nikāya I: 487f.; Middle Length Sayings II: 165f.
272 The Upanisads also have similar conceits. See Deussen, 60 Upanishads; also see Udāna 93; The Udāna: 182.
274 Udāna: 55; The Udāna: 98. The nibbāna-dāthu, where there is no thirst or craving, is the taṇhā-nibbāna, the ‘blowing-out-of-craving’. This latter notion, otherwise translated, raises the question of whether all craving is necessarily bad if there is a ‘craving-for-nibbāna’; surely, it is right and proper to desire nibbāna? The other spheres or elements are the kāma-dāthu (sensual craving), the rūpa-dāthu (pure forms), and the arūpa-dāthu (formless), see Samyutta-Nikāya IV: 19; Connected Sayings: 1143; see also, Lily de Silva, Nibbāna as Living Experience and the Buddha and the Arahant: Two Studies from the Pāli Canon, numbers 407-408 in the Wheel Publications series, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1996:1. Also, see below.
continued existence after he had awoken to the truth of reality alerts us to seek a deeper understanding. As we just saw, what the Buddha alerts us to is the extinguishing of the fires of greed, hate and delusion, especially the idea that we are endowed with a self-subsisting existence. As Sāriputta said in answer to Jambukhaḍaka’s query on nibbāna: ‘[t]he destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this, friend, is called Nibbāna.’ This definition is wholly consonant with the teaching of the Buddha himself. As the teacher of Dhamma, the Buddha also gave other definitions of nibbāna, in particular in the udāna or so-called inspired utterances:

There is, monks, that base (āyatana) wherein there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind, nor that base consisting of endless space, nor that base consisting of endless consciousness, nor that base consisting of nothingness, nor that base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, nor this world, nor the next world, nor both sun and moon. There too, monks, I do not speak either of coming, or going, or remaining, or falling, or arising. This is (quite) without foundation, (quite) without occurrence, quite without object. This alone is the end of dukkha.

Again:

There exists, monks, that which is unborn (ajātam), that which is unbecome (abhūtam), that which is uncreated (akatam), that which is unconditioned (asamkhatam). For if there were not, monks, that which is unborn, that which is unbecome, that which is uncreated, that which is unconditioned, there would not be made known here the escape from that which is born, from that which is become, from that which is created, from that which is conditioned. Yet since there exists, monks, that which is unborn, that which is unbecome, that which is uncreated, that which is unconditioned, there is therefore made known the escape from that which is born, from that which is become, from that which is created, from that which is conditioned.

This definition of nibbāna seems to posit ‘the unconditioned’ as a formal reality. And again:

There is vibration for him with dependence, no vibration for him who is without dependence. When there is no vibration, there is serenity; when

275 Samyutta-Nikāya IV: 251: Connected Sayings: 1294
276 Udāna 80: The Udāna: 165. I omit here the second of the four descriptions offered, because, though it centres on one word, there is a number of textual variants; Masefield opts for anatam ‘uninclined’.
277 Udāna 80f: The Udāna: 166.
278 However, for a more cautious presentation, arguing that nirvāna is ‘not conditioned’ because it is the opposite of samsāra, i.e., that which is conditioned, see Williams with Tribe, Buddhist Thought: 49-52
there is serenity, there is no inclination; when there is no inclination, there is no coming and going; when there is no coming and going, there is no falling and arising; when there is no falling and arising, there is neither here nor there nor in both – this is itself the end of dukkha.\(^{279}\)

At the least, we see in these a consistent contrast with samsāric existence and the dukkha it entails. Nibbāna is the letting go of what ensnares us and, thereby, equates to liberation, deliverance, freedom. The Buddha spent much effort in teaching the true knowledge of things; this is the dhamma.

### 2.3.2 Conducing to Bodhi

However, the Buddha also taught that there are certain things that should not be speculated about and this is on the basis that they do not conduce to bodhi. So, we begin to look at what conduces to bodhi by examining what is not conducive. This concerns the so-called refusal of the Buddha to answer certain questions.\(^{280}\) Each of the speculative views is put in typical fourfold form: positive, negative, both positive and negative, and neither positive nor negative.\(^{281}\) Mālunkyāputta, displeased that the Buddha has never explained to him whether the world is eternal, the life-principle the same as the body, or the Tathāgata lives after death, decides to question the Buddha. In reply, the Buddha calls Mālunkyāputta a ‘foolish man’ and says, in effect, that he, the Buddha, has taught what he has taught and not taught what he has not taught. The Buddha makes it clear that he regards any such ‘speculative view’ as ‘not connected with the goal, is not fundamental to the Brahma-faring, and does not conduce to turning away from, nor to dispassion, stopping, calming, super-knowledge, awakening nor to nibbāna.’\(^{282}\) What he has taught, on the other hand, are the four noble truths; he teaches this because ‘it is connected with the goal, is fundamental to the Brahma-faring, and conduces to turning away from, to dispassion, stopping, calming, super-knowledge, awakening and nibbāna.’\(^{283}\) By way of explicating his point the Buddha tells the parable of the poisoned arrow: who, poisoned with such an arrow, would refuse ‘physician and surgeon’ while he resolved to have every question answered concerning the poisoner, concerning the bow, concerning the bow-string, concerning the arrow-shaft, concerning the feathers used, etc.?\(^{284}\)

\(^{279}\) *Udāna* 81: *The Udāna*: 167


\(^{281}\) This fourfold way of presenting an argument is called the tetralemma; it is associated especially with Nāgārjuna.

\(^{282}\) *Majjhima-Nikāya* I: 431; *Middle Length Sayings* II: 101.

\(^{283}\) *Majjhima-Nikāya* I: 431; *Middle Length Sayings* II: 101.

\(^{284}\) *Majjhima-Nikāya* I: 429f.; *Middle Length Sayings* II: 99f. 84
At issue, if not explicitly here then elsewhere (see below), in the Buddha’s refusal to answer certain questions put to him is the raising of a doubt about the quality of his bodhi: as a buddha he had knowledge of everything, so if he does not answer is this not proof that he is not in fact a buddha? An examination of this issue is instructive not just for the insight we gain into the specific issue of the ‘unthinkables (acinteyya)’, as also of the avyākatāni, the indeterminate points, i.e., those things which are karmically neutral because they are independent of karma or are merely the results of past karma, that the Buddha refuses to foreclose on, but also for an insight into the centrality of virtuous practices (Pāli: sīlā) in the life of disciples.285 The acinteyya are the unthinkable, issues which go beyond human thinking and which, according to the Buddha, do not bring benefit. They are usually given as four:

Of Buddhas, monks, the range [i.e., the range of powers a Buddha develops as a result of becoming a Buddha] is unthinkable, not to be thought of, thinking of which one would be distraught and come to grief. Of one who is musing, monks, the range of his musing is unthinkable, not to be thought of. The fruit of action, monks, is unthinkable, not to be thought of, thinking of which one would be distraught and come to grief. World-speculation, monks, is unthinkable, not to be thought of, thinking of which would make one distraught and would come to grief. These, monks, are the four four unthinkable, thinking of which one would be distraught and come to grief.286

The encounter with ‘the wanderer Potthapāda’, as described in the Potthapāda-sutta, raises many issues that recur in the Canon and later writings.287 At this point we are concerned with those questions that the Buddha refused to answer, in particular the ten avyākatāni. At one stage the Buddha, in the debating hall hitherto filled with unedifying conversation, is asked by Potthapāda whether the world is eternal or not eternal, whether it is infinite or not infinite, whether the soul and the body are two different things, and whether the Tathāgata exists, does

285 One of the suttas, the Avyākata-sutta, is named for them, see Anguttara-Nikāya IV: 67; Gradual Sayings IV: 39f.; the question at issue is whether the Tathāgata continues after death, or does not, or both does and does not, or neither does nor does not.

286 See Anguttara-Nikāya II: 77; Gradual Sayings II: 89f.

287 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 178-203; Thus have I heard: 159-70. For instance, in the Kasibhāradvāja-sutta, the brāhmaṇa Kasibhāradvāja, a master-ploughman, engages the Buddha in a discussion about ploughing; the Buddha explains his message in the language of ploughing; in the end, Kasibhāradvāja asks for and obtains ordination and becomes an arhat, see Sutta-Nipāta: #75-82 in Suttanipāta: 32-38; see also the story of the conversion of the brahmin Navakammika Bhāradvāja, Samyutta-Nikāya I: 179f.; The Connected Discourses: 274f.
not exist, both exists and not exists, and neither exists nor not exists after death. The replies neither confirm nor deny the one nor the other. Potthapāda presses his case: ‘But Lord, why has the Lord not declared these things?’ The answer is given in a treble way. First, the Buddha declares that the answering of such questions ‘is not conducive to the purpose, not conducive to Dhamma, not the way to embark on the holy life, it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to higher knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana.’ Thus, the Buddha makes explicit the practical and moral core of his teaching. Second, he declares what his teaching actually is, and thus he recounts the four noble truths. Finally, he states that his teaching of the four noble truths conduces to the goal, etc. Later on, once the Buddha has quit the hall, the various wanderers review all that has been said, and, clearly, not one of them knew the answers to the questions put to the Buddha. The issue, though, does not rest there. A few days later and accompanied by Citta, the son of the elephant-trainer, Potthapāda finds his way to the Buddha. The latter stresses that there are some things he teaches as certain, but there are other things which are uncertain. Furthermore, those who would claim to know, for instance, what the state of one who has died is are like the man who sets out to find the most beautiful girl in the country, but who neither knows nor sees the one whom he seeks for and desires: all their talk is stupid. Following further clarifications about points made earlier in the sutta, the Buddha, in answer to Citta’s confusion over the gross self, mind-made self, and the formless self, adds a final hermeneutical clarification: ‘But, Citta, these [gross self, etc.] are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world, which the Tathāgata uses without misapprehending them.’ The upshot of the Buddha’s teaching conforms to the stated goal of the Buddha, to lead people to nirvāṇa; Potthapāda seeks refuge in ‘the Lord, the Dhamma and the Sangha’ and is accepted as a lay-follower, while Citta takes the same refuge, seeks and receives ordination, and achieves the ultimate state:

And the newly-ordained Venerable Citta, alone, secluded, unwearying, zealous and resolute, in a short time attained to that for the sake of which young men of good birth go forth from the household life into

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288 On the latter see below, and also Anguttara-Nikāya IV: 66; Gradual Sayings IV: 39, where they are called ‘view-issues’ (ditthigata).
289 This, again, we have seen in the case of the Avyākata-sutta (see above).
290 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 187-89; Thus have I heard: 164f.
291 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 191-4; Thus have I heard: 165ff.
292 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 182; Thus have I heard: 161. Walshe notes that this is ‘[a]n important reference to the two truths referred to in D4 [Dīgha-Nikāyaitiḥkathā] – as ‘conventional speech’ (sammuti-kathā) and ‘ultimately true speech’ (paramatthā-kathā); Thus have I heard, 555-556n224; and see below.
homelessness, that unexcelled culmination of the holy life, having realized it here and now by his own super-knowledge and dwelt therein, knowing: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further here.’ And the Venerable Citta, son of the elephant-trainer, became another of the Arahants.293

The precise issue of inferring from what the Buddha (is reported to have) said to something that he did not say but which seems to be logically entailed in what was said is firmly dealt with, as the story of the nun, bhikkhuni Khemā illustrates.294 King Pasenadi of Kosala desired to find out whether the Buddha, here called the Tathāgata, existed after death or not. He approached Khemā and questioned her. In brief, Khemā reported that the Buddha never said that the Tathāgata exists after death, nor that he does not, nor that he neither exists nor not exists, nor that he both exists and does not exist after death.295 The king wondered at these answers and Khemā responded by questioning him, for instance, whether any of his accountants could count the grains of sand in the Ganges. None could, though all could count, for the water is ‘deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom.’ Likewise, Khemā replied, the Tathāgata, ‘liberated from reckoning in terms of form...is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom like the great ocean.’296 The story goes on to relate that the King eventually met up with the Buddha himself and proceeded to question him as he had Khemā. He marvelled at the Buddha’s response, which was in every respect coincident with that of Khemā. Thus, the story itself, by its doubled telling, emphasizes the care that must be taken in not attributing views to the Buddha that he himself had not elucidated. In this last passage we see the logical outcome of that right perception that was also part of the Buddha’s dialogue with Pōthapāda: proper knowledge is gained. With knowledge comes liberation from the round of rebirth and death. In what way, though, is one to treat knowledge? Is ‘blind faith’ the answer?

Wise Knowing

The Buddha has a ‘high’ notion of true knowing or dharma, for even the things that he himself holds are not simply to be believed by others. Instead, they are to be tested, as all claims to knowledge should be. Let us look at the Kālāma-sutta297 for in this sutta the Buddha advises on how people are to regard himself and his teaching. The Kālāmas of Kesaputta go

293 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 203; Thus have I heard: 170.
295 Samyutta-Nikāya IV:375; The Connected Discourses: 1381; this is another example of tetralemma-argumentation.
296 Samyutta-Nikāya IV:376; The Connected Discourses: 1382.
297 Ariyuttara-Nikāya I: 188-192; The Gradual Sayings I: 170-175.
to Śākyamuni Buddha to seek his adjudication on which of the various doctrines they expounded were true and which false. Wisely, the Buddha begins by praising their doubt and uncertainty:

Yes, Kālāmas, you may well doubt, you may well waver. In a doubtful matter, wavering does arise. Now, look you Kālāmas. Be not misled by report or tradition or hearsay. Be not misled by proficiency in the collections, nor by mere logic or inference, nor after considering reasons, nor after reflection on and approval of some theory, nor because it fits becoming, nor out of respect for a recluse (who holds it). But, Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: these things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the intelligent, these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow – then indeed reject them, Kālāmas.298

In some of the list of what is to be avoided we may be, at first, a little surprised. But, soon we realize that the Buddha is engaged in a refined exercise of reason with awakening or liberation as the end in view. Reasonableness is the hallmark here. None of the three poisons of greed, hatred or delusion will benefit a person. As the Buddha has already set forth the values that he and the Kālāma share, so is he later able to definitively declare them as the logical outcome of the Kālāmas’ agreed analysis concerning what is bad for a person. In the next section, the Buddha adopts a more positive approach and addresses the Kālāmas’ attention to the absence of greed, hatred, and delusion; the logical outcome, again, is shared agreement that the values he espouses are shared by himself and themselves.299 Indeed, it is clear that anyone living in this way will dwell with the thought of amity, of compassion, of gladness and of equanimity.300 Furthermore, if there is a hereafter, one will awaken into a heavenly realm; if there is no hereafter, one will keep one’s ‘nature’; if there is no hereafter and evil befalls one, yet ill-results cannot affect one; and, should evil not befall an evildoer, yet one will be purified.301 In these ways following the teaching of the Buddha is a source of solace. Thus, neither belief in rebirth nor karmic justice is considered either necessary or sufficient reason for practicing good habits of behaviour and relationship with others. The Buddha teaches that virtue consists in subduing these three traditional unwholesome roots of lobha, dosa and moha.302 Critical thought is made integral to prajñā (Pāli: paññā) or wisdom. Insight, the text says, is gained through avoiding what is only hearsay, tradition, rumour, a sacred text, a

298 Anguttara-Nikāya I: 189; The Gradual Sayings I: 171f.
300 Anguttara Nikāya I: 192; Gradual Sayings I: 175.
301 Anguttara Nikāya I: 193; Gradual Sayings I: 175.
302 See below.
surmise, an axiom, specious argument, bias towards the familiar, presumption over another’s ability, and even what the monk says. The truth that wisdom sees is dhamma, and preaching the dhamma is what a Buddha does.

Seeing dhamma seeing Buddha

For, it is the message, the dhamma, and not the messenger, that really counts: sometimes this has to be learnt the hard way. When old, sick and nearing death, Vakkali exchanges messages between himself and the Buddha. At last, he is brought into the presence of the Buddha and there exclaims that he had longed to see the Buddha but was prevented from doing so by ill health. The Buddha issues a curt reply: ‘[e]nough, Vakkali, why do you want to see this foul body [i.e., the Buddha himself]? Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me, and whoever sees me sees the Dhamma.’

Though the story places Vakkali firmly on the road to liberation, i.e., awakening, this passage raises important points. Vakkali is criticized quite sharply for wishing to come to the Buddha, and a message – for the audience no less than for Vekkali himself – is clearly given: seek the dhamma first and foremost; for, in doing that one will see the Buddha. Then, in the larger remit of the story, Vekkali will die by suicide; yet, the words of the Buddha and the confirmatory words of two devatās affirm to him that he will be ‘well liberated’ and his demise will ‘not be a bad one’. In the story’s denouement, the Buddha confirms that Māra the Evil One, though obviously on the prowl for Vekkali, fails to locate him as he has ‘attained final Nibbana.’

The reason the Buddha gives for Vakkali’s liberation is that his consciousness was no longer established (appatiṭṭhita) and so was not subject to rebirth.

Similarly, in answer to a question put by King Milinda on the possibility of knowing that the Buddha is second to none, Nāgasena replies that, as the elder Tissa is known by his writings, so when ‘one sees dhamma [one] sees the lord [Buddha] for dhamma was taught by the lord.’

Milinda asks Nāgasena about nirvāṇa (Pāli: nibbāna). In correcting the king’s views Nāgasena speaks of nibbāna’s ‘peaceful, happy, excellent’ element.

Nibbāna is realized by wisdom and ‘is to be understood as being without adversity, without accident, without fear, as secure, peaceful, happy, joyful, excellent, pure, cool.’ When

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304 Samyutta-Nikāya III: 123; The Connected Discourses: 940.

305 Samyutta-Nikāya III: 124; The Connected Discourses: 941.

306 Yo dhammaṃ passati so bhagavantaṃ passati, dhammo hi mahārāja bhagavatā desito, see Milindapañha 71; Milinda’s Questions I: 97.

Milinda persists and wonders in what place nibbāna is Nāgasena explains by comparison with fire: as fire is not stored in the two sticks, which when rubbed together produce fire, so, though there is nibbāna, there is no store for it. In this essential connection between prajñā and attaining nirvāna and those for whom these two are realized we move from the theoretical, so to speak, to witness borne by adepts such as arhats and bodhisattvas. Who are these special ones for whom bodhi is assured?

Assured of Bodhi

Though we will have more to say on arhats (Pāli: arahant) when we discuss the meditative states and the stages on the way to true awakening I wish to ‘place’ them in relation to the Buddha at this point. Nalinaksha Dutt summarizes what the Theravādins held about arhats: i) they are perfect and cannot fall from arhathood; they possess both ksayajñāna, the knowledge that they have no more klesas (Pāli: kilesa), and anutpādajñāna, the knowledge that there is no more rebirth for them ii) they are beyond merit- and demerit-making, beyond the influence of past karma iii) they practice all four dhyānas, i.e., the states of deep meditation, enjoying their fruits, and iv) they all achieve nirvāna.

Nevertheless and although all arhats are free of rāga and āsava (Sanskrit: āśrava), i.e., contaminated mental events that lead to desire and attachment, a distinction is drawn between those arhats who have that samatha or tranquillity which leads to ‘concentration of thoughts and eradication of attachment’ as well as realization of the eight vimokkas, and those who have ‘vipassanā [that] leads to knowledge and removal of ignorance’ as well as realization of only four ājñānas. A buddha is fully human except that he has attained bodhi, and, though he shows maitri and karunā to other beings he is above these. Also, he is unable to expound all doctrine in a single utterance. The state immediately prior to, because designating one who is intent on, buddhahood is that of bodhisattva (Pāli: bodhisatta). Bodhisattvas, too, are fully human, not divine, even though the form that they have immediately prior to rebirth as

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308 Milindapañha: 327; Milinda’s Questions II: 165f.
309 See Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India: 215f.
310 This is a mis-san Skritization of āsava, see Lusthaus, Buddhist Phenomenology: 127, 154n12; for Lusthaus the āsavas ‘functioned in Buddhism as an evocative emblem for the most fundamental karmic problems’, and, in the Mahāvastu an arhat is defined first as one who has destroyed the āsavas, then successively as those ‘who have kept the observances, whose minds have been liberated by Right Cognition, who have fully destroyed the fetters that bind one to existence, who have attained the goal’, see 126.
311 See Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India: 24.
312 Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India: 215.
bodhisattvas is that of devas in Tuṣita (Pāli: Tusita) heaven. They are subject to kleśas and they are not self-born or upapāduka. Bodhisattva is a term much associated with the Mahāyāna as will see in the next chapter; however, it is in the Pāli canon and it describes those who are buddhas-to-be. The first part of the term ‘bodhisattva’ is bodhi, awakening, enlightenment; the second, sattva, may derive from the Sanskrit for ‘being’, ‘essence’, or ‘courage’; or, from sakta, directed towards, or, from sakta, ‘capable of’. Tibetan Buddhism lists three types of bodhisattva: kingly, boatman-like, shepherd-like. The kingly type aims at immediate enlightenment in order to be a buddha who helps others; the boatman type wishes to bring others to enlightenment at the same time as himself; and, the shepherd type aims to shepherd all others in before himself. Descriptions usually state that a bodhisattva voluntarily decides not to enter the bliss of buddhhood but to make and fulfill a vow not to enter nirvāṇa until all sentient beings are brought to this ‘state’ first; however, this may imply a certain deficiency in a buddha, who abides in the nirvānic state, and it is, perhaps, only with later, Mahāyāna thinking that it is clear that a buddha works for people’s freeing from the poisons and entry into nirvāṇa. A certain degree of hyperbole attends such accounts where a particular bodhisattva sets about fulfilling the vow even as the story relates that this vow entails that other bodhisattvas enter nirvāṇa first. Nevertheless, what marks bodhisattvas is their compassion or karunā for all sentient beings, though it is of a superlative degree. As another of the six higher knowledges not shared by others, mahākarunāsamāpatti-nāna, knowledge of the attainment of great compassion, distinguishes a bodhisattva. The great compassion is the compassion a truly awakened one feels for all those still caught up in samsāra. This compassion leads the new bodhisattva to work for the liberation of these others. In the Vinaya we read of the question that arose in the mind of

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313 Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India: 215.
314 In particular, there is mention of Maitreya (Pāli: Metteya) as the next buddha-to-be; the Buddha already described himself as ‘an unawakened bodhidatta’ prior to his bodhi, see Ariyapariyesana-sutta, Majjhima-Nikāya I: 160-175; Middle Length Sayings I: 203-219; and, those on the way to awakening are called bodhisattvas.
315 See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism: 286n25; though he speculates that bodhisattva may even be a back-formation from bodhisattva, Williams seems to favour either of the two sources in this sentence, though he remains undecided.
316 See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism: 288n34, who notes that these three concern the motivations of bodhisattvas; also, no evidence for this differentiation has been found in Indian sources to date.
317 See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism: 58f.
318 See Endo, Buddha: 89f.
319 The Vinaya Piṭaka is that part of the Pāli canon dealing with the monastic life.
the newly awakened Gautama Buddha as to whether he would preach the *dhārma* for the sake of others or not; of course, the great compassion of the Buddha wins out, and Māra’s request that he enter *parinirvāṇa* soon is denied. Before looking at the elements that comprise the path to *bodhi* let us jump to that point when the Buddha actually does enter *nirvāṇa* ‘without any remainder’, that is, *amūpādi-sesa*.

### 2.3.3 Parinirvāṇa and Aftermath

On the point of death the Buddha instructed his followers to follow the *dhārma* and the rules for the Saṅgha given in the *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, i.e., the collection of disciplines for the Sangha, declaring that minor rules may be abolished ‘if the Sangha so desires’. The issue of how to decide what constituted ‘minor’ rules seems to have divided the First Council, at Rājaigrha, in the year following the cremation of the Buddha’s remains, and was left in abeyance until the Second Council, at Vaiśālī, about a century later. However, at this stage agreement could not be reached and the more conservative party of Elders, Sthaviravādins, held out for the status quo, while the larger party, of local Vaiśālī monks, decided to hold their own meeting, the Mahāsaṅgīti, at which they approved changes to rules and to adaptations of the original teaching; later they established their own sangha, the Mahāsaṅgha, thereby giving rise to the name by which we now know them, the Mahāsaṅghikas. While it is almost impossible to know precisely all the relevant factors concerning this second Council, it does seem likely that doctrinal issues related to the status of arhats were also on the agenda. The so-called five propositions of Mahādeva – that arhats are subject to temptation, may have residue of ignorance as well as doubts on certain matters, gain knowledge through the assistance of others, and use an exclamation, ‘aho’, in attaining the Way – were all contested by the sthaviras or elders, from whom the Theravādins derive their ancestry. The elders argued that arhats are free from all attachments, are rid of all *avijjā* and have dispersed all doubts, and they do not either need others such as instructors or gather merit through good deeds. With the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, the variety of different monks’ teachings, and the absence of authoritative texts, the calling of councils to settle disputes over doctrines, teachings and practices meant that local potentates also sought to exercise influence. Perhaps even from the earliest days elements of syncretism, particularly with Brahmanism and other ‘Hindu’ forms,

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320 This state is the full extinction of the defilements or *kīlesa-parinibbāna* or *sa-upādi-sesa-nibbāna*, see Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, s.v. *nibbāna*.

321 *Dīgha-Nikāya* II: 154; *Thus have I heard*: 269f.


323 Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*: 22-27.
existed. Not everyone, and not always, would be imbued with the character of Gautama and lofty ideals would yield to banalities of daily graft, councils and kings. In time, too, new invasions of the subcontinent would threaten Buddhist existence. Decline inevitably follows the period of a Buddha; we will see in Kamakura Buddhism that the corruption of their time was uppermost in people’s minds, too. Gautama Buddha’s is one among accounts of others who became buddhas in their own eras. The Jātaka tales recount some of them. Though the specifics differ, elements such as state of (human) happiness, having a wife and son, seeing a sick person, an old person, a dead person and a happy recluse or ascetic, etc. are to be found in these too, for all buddhas are truly awakened beings and share in the one dharma. As translations become available we see that there is another form of this type of tale, namely, one set in the future. Typically in these, the Buddha, as in the Anāgatavamsa, is asked what his successor will be like and he proceeds to give a future-oriented mythical account such that the dharma, way-faring and the search for truth firmly remain.  

Truth-searching

In addition to what we have already encountered in the Buddha’s treatment of dharma it is worthwhile to examine his approach to truth-seeking per se, for this is the core of what he is about. A key scripture in this regard is the Mahāśāropama-sutta. The Buddha seeks to portray some of the different ways in which people can mistake what is non-essential for what is truly essential. He details a number of scenarios in which a monk, ‘some young man of family’, goes forth ‘from home into homelessness through faith’. This young monk is in search of ‘the annihilation of the whole mass of anguish’. Thus, he has the goal of the Buddhist path clearly in mind, and in this he is like a person in search of the pith of ‘a great, stable and pithy tree’. The final goal of the Buddhist path, i.e., the pith and culmination, is ‘unshakable’ freedom of mind or vimutti. In the first scene, then, the young monk, like a person ‘walking about aiming at the pith, seeking the pith, looking about for the pith’ unknowingly bypasses it, and indeed, he bypasses even the softwood, the bark, and the shoots; thus, he falls at the first pass. The Buddha relates that the young monk receives ‘gains, honours, fame’ and so he ‘is exultant, is indolent, falls into sloth’ and being indolent he ‘dwells in ill.’ He is like the pith-seeker who cuts down ‘the branches and foliage’

325 The Anāgatavamsa is translated by K.R. Norman as ‘The Chronicle of the Future [Buddha]’ Number 29 of the Mūlapaṇṇasa of the Majjhima-Nikāya, see Majjhima-Nikāya I: 192-197; Middle Length Sayings I: 238-245; perhaps a close Christian parallel to it as a parable is that of the Sower and the Seed (Mark 4:3-20).
326 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 197; Middle Length Sayings I: 244f.
thinking these to be the pith. In the next scene the young monk does not let gain, honour and fame satisfy him; instead he is diligent and in this way he ‘attains success in moral habit.’ However, at this stage, he does succumb to self-satisfaction and so he exults, disparages others and dwells ill. He is like the person who cuts off ‘the young shoots’ of the great tree thinking these to be the pith. In the next scene the young monk is not ensnared either by gains or success in moral habit; instead, he is diligent and progresses to success in concentration. Again, though, his success finally leads him astray and ‘he fails of (full) accomplishment.’ In this he is like the person who mistakes the bark for the essence of the great tree. The monk of the next scene does not let successes in gains, moral habit and concentration mislead him; instead, he is diligent in all and thereby gains ‘knowledge and insight.’ Yet, at this pass he fails as did those at earlier stages; he is like the person who mistakes the softwood for the pith; he goes away but will not get the good he hopes for, ‘the good that could be done by the pith because it is the pith.’ Of course, the young monk who succeeds in all the stages – gain, moral habit, concentration, knowledge and insight – without succumbing to self-exultation, indolence and sloth, but with diligence, will obtain release (vimokkha). And he is like the person who, ‘having cut out the pith itself, might go away taking it with him, knowing it to be the pith.’\footnote{Majjhima-Nikāya I: 196; Middle Length Sayings I: 243. Both \textit{vimutti} and \textit{vimokkha} can be translated as ‘deliverance’, or freedom; I am ignoring the double ending which distinguishes \textit{vimokkha} ‘as to the things of time’ (\textit{samayavimokkha}) and \textit{vimokkha} ‘as to the things that are timeless’ (\textit{asamayavimokkha}); Horner speculates on this distinction, though her discussion seems to focus on distinguishing \textit{vimokkha} from \textit{vimutti}, see \textit{Majjhima-Nikāya I: 196f.; Middle Length Sayings I: 243f.}, and especially 243n1. It seems to me that the issue may have had more to do with the schism created in the saha when Devadatta left, when monk had to be distinguished from monk on a basis (somewhat) other than success in attainments or advantages, see \textit{Majjhima-Nikāya I: 192; Middle Length Sayings I: 238.}} In the end, the vital thing is to know rightly, for in this is a sure way to \textit{bodhi}. The one person credited with right knowing of reality is the Buddha. In the \textit{Anguttara-Nikāya}, we see, which is to say, \textit{hear}, the Buddha affirming that he, the Tathāgata, is an \textit{arahant}, a fully awakened one, one who has realized ‘the fruits of knowledge and release’, who sets Dhamma rolling. The Tathāgata is the...

...one person whose birth into the world is for the welfare of many folk, for the happiness of many folk: who is born out of compassion for the world, for the profit, welfare and happiness of devas and mankind.\footnote{Anguttara Nikāya I: 20; Gradual Sayings I: 14.}
Two truths
Later, in the same text, there is another discussion of the difference between the way things seem to be, their appearance, and the way they really are. Thus, that ‘all phenomena are impermanent’ is presented as a level of truth surpassing that of appearance; for instance, whether a Tathāgata appears in the world or not, the truth concerning impermanence (anicca) remains; hence, we know a Tathāgata because he is the one who reveals, shows forth, opens up, explains and makes it clear. Similarly, with respect to two other central doctrines: first, there is the law of duḥkha and the reality that ‘all phenomena are misery’; second, that ‘all the phenomena are not the self (anattā)’.

In such an account as this lie the roots of the distinction between conventional reality or saṁmuutsacca (Sanskrit: saṃvṛtisatya) and ultimate reality or truth or paramatthasacca (Sanskrit: paramārtha-satya). This is a distinction that will come almost to define a buddhological assessment of ‘the way things are’. In our daily discourse we need to use conventional terminology but we should not remain blind to the way our minds and desires delude us. Hence, on the path to bodhi there are practices that we can undertake which help remove the fetters, dispel illusions, rid us of the poisons, etc. The Buddha, in what he taught and did, shows, out of compassion, a way for us to achieve awakening to the truth, which is to say, the ultimate truth of the way things truly are.

2.4 Way to Awakening - Meditation

Thus, in the praxis of the Buddha is the means by which the ‘noble disciple’ enters upon the ariya atthangiko maggo, the noble eight-factored way, brings it to perfection and attains arhathood. In relation to his own personal teaching the Buddha, by way of correcting the comments of Nigrodha, declares that if ‘an intelligent man...who is sincere, honest, and straightforward’ is taught by him and if that person ‘practices what he is taught’ then he will attain arhathood within seven years; indeed, such a person may be able to ‘attain this unequalled holy life and goal’ within six years, five...seven months, six months...in seven days’. The monk, at least, is expected to meditate, as the Buddha taught; and, in meditating the monk enters on the path to awakening. The Cūlahatthipadopama-sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya, which legend holds was the sermon first preached by Mahinda when he arrived in Sri Lanka, says that practising the dhāmma is the way to see the Buddha. As an elephant takes one step after another and does not complete its journey until all the necessary steps have

330 Dīgha-Nikāya III: 54f.; Thus have I heard: 393; see also Dīgha-Nikāya II: 314f.; Thus have I heard: 350.
been taken, so the monk, aspirant buddha, progresses along the road to dhamma until ‘the ariyan disciple comes to fulfilment’. At this last stage the disciple is able to realize the dhamma that the Buddha has taught. Practice in wisdom (Sanskrit: prajñā; Pāli: paññā) is what leads to the goal, not sīla or ascetic practices by themselves. Also, there are different ways of meditating. We begin with the ‘absorptions’ (Sanskrit: dhyāna; Pāli: jhāna) or meditative states, after which the two main modes of meditation are examined, and we conclude with the stages that normally, though not always, lead the aspirant from entry to perfecting to perfection.

2.4.1 Dhyānas

The Buddhist understanding of the practice of meditation in order to achieve awakening or liberation is highly involved and is dealt with in different ways in different parts of the canon. The word jhāna (Sanskrit: dhyāna) means ‘absorption’ and refers to the state(s) that comes about in meditation, of which there is a variety of types. Even the more mythological elements of the Pāli canon, though, often deal with the jhānas and the four brahmavihāras, key elements of meditation practice. The jhānas are sometimes enumerated as nine, sometimes eight. From Table 1 we can see that the jhānas are in three groups. There are four in the form-field, i.e., the rūpajhāna; four in the formless field, i.e., the arūpajhāna; finally, there is the ‘complete cessation of perception and feeling’ (saññāvedayitanirodha). At this point, we need only note that the jhānas of themselves do not bring one ‘into’ nirvāna; though not the goal themselves they are a means to it. It is possible to attain nirvāna at any one of the jhānic states.

On the night that the Buddha was to die, that is, achieve parinibbāna, Subhadda took the opportunity to question him about ‘realizing the truth’ and achieving bodhi; naming others, presumably non-Buddhists, Subhadda wondered if they, or some of them, had succeeded in

331 Majjhima-Nikāya 181-184; Middle Length Sayings I: 227-230.

332 Most likely, the stages here are a form of the eightfold jhānas.

333 For a discussion of what the Buddha might have said seriously or humorously, or of what was attributed to him as mythic, see Rupert Gethin, ‘Mythology as Meditation: From the Mahāsudassana Sutta to the Sukhāvatiyūha Sūtra’, in Journal of the Pali Text Society XXVIII (2006): 63-103: 63-68.

334 Anguttara Nikāya IV: 438-449; Gradual Sayings IV: 294f. (the translation leaves out repeated phrasings); the context is an explanation by the Buddha of his own meditation practice and entry into the jhānas, ‘both forwards and backwards’, until he ‘realized completely the full perfect awakening unsurpassed’, which happened when he had passed ‘wholly beyond the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception; at this point panñā enabled him to see that ‘the cankers were completely destroyed.’. Sometimes, upekkhā, the fourth jhāna, is ‘elided’ and the fourth stage becomes the fifth one, as in Table 1 (above), and see below.
awakening. The Buddha’s answer was unequivocal: the acid test was whether those ascetics had the noble eight-fold path, irrespective of which stage along the path to buddhahood they were.\textsuperscript{335} Buddhist meditation practices are not only for those already well advanced on the road to enlightenment, those who are adepts, and any presumptive perfectability concerning spiritual mastery is undermined, for instance, in the canonical accounts by the stories of the laywoman Mātikamātā and Culapanna therā.\textsuperscript{336} Mātikamātā advanced to anāgāmi, the third stage on the brahma-cariya, and that ahead of bhikkhus who were her teachers in meditation. It is said of her that she did not know much of the abhidharma commentarial work nor, indeed, of the core doctrine of patīccasamuppāda. Another whose personal limitations might seem to preclude his spiritual advancement was Culapanna; his memory was so poor that even the few gāthās he had spent months trying to learn failed him; yet, under the personal guidance of the Buddha, and after a few hours of meditation he achieved arhathood. Nevertheless, it is to fellow monks that the Buddha most often addresses his talks. In many stories he is seen to counsel them in making progress along the noble path to understanding and awakening. For instance, in the Čūlatanahāsankhaya-sutta, the Buddha gives a short statement of a properly meditating monk:

When he is abiding viewing impermanence, when he is abiding viewing dispassion, when he is abiding viewing stopping, when he is abiding viewing renunciation in regard to these feelings, he grasps after nothing in the world; not grasping he is not troubled; being untroubled he himself is individually attained to nibbāna...\textsuperscript{337}

The monk is the one who has the power to put the words of the Buddha into effect:

Here, a monk, by the destruction of the corruptions [āsavā], enters into and abides in that corruptionless liberation of heart and liberation by wisdom which he has attained, in this very life, by his own superknowledge and realisation. This is power for a monk.\textsuperscript{338}

What is then achieved are the jhānas, meditative states that progressively free one from attachment to the things of sense, and of cognition itself. They are crucially connected to the practice of meditation, and hence to the very understanding of Buddhism; they are a process leading to the experience of awakening, bodhi, and an awareness of the ‘markers’ along the way, which guide the initiate, whether doctrinally or practically. These are types of

\textsuperscript{335} Dīgha-Nikāya II: 148-153; Thus have I heard: 267-269.


\textsuperscript{337} Čūlatanahāsankhaya-sutta in Majjhima-Nikāya I: 251;Middle Length Sayings I: 306f.

\textsuperscript{338} Dīgha-Nikāya III: 78; Thus have I heard: 405.
knowledge-states that arise in deepening meditation. Thus, we turn to one of the core accounts of jhāna in some detail, in order to gain some insight into these immediate or intuitive knowledges which define the bodhi state. The states of consciousness are examined in the *Potthapāda-sutta*. In answer to Potthapāda’s question concerning ‘the higher extinction of consciousness’, the Buddha gives a long, well-rehearsed reply, which leads to the crucial discussion of the jhānas. The first jhāna concerns ‘delight and happiness arising from detachment’.

Having reached the first jhāna, he [the monk who is perfected in sīla] remains in it. And whatever sensations of lust that he previously had disappear. At that time there is present a true but subtle perception of delight (piṭṭi) and happiness (sukha), born of detachment, and he becomes one who is conscious of this delight and happiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.

In this first jhāna, one is free of the five hindrances, while at the same time filled with the factors of absorption, viz., thought-conception, discursive thinking, delight, happiness and concentration. It is this state that the Buddha, on the night of his bodhi, entered. Yet, in discussing stream-entry, attainment of jhāna is not a requirement. The second jhāna concerns ‘inner tranquillity and unity of mind’.

Again, a monk, with subsiding of thinking and pondering, by gaining inner tranquillity and unity of mind, reaches and remains in the second jhāna, which is free from thinking and pondering, born of concentration (samādhi), filled with delight and happiness. His former true but subtle perception of delight and happiness born of detachment vanishes. At

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339 Number IX in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* I: 178-203; *Thus have I heard*: 159-70.

340 Many of the passages detailing sīla, being perfected in it, and training, have already been given in the *Sūmaññaphala-sutta*, number 2 in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* I: 63-69; *Thus have I heard*: 99-102. Note that vv. 63-69 are themselves repetitions of 1.8-1.28 of the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, which is number 1 in the *Dīgha-Nikāya*; *Thus have I heard*: 68-73.

341 *Dīgha-Nikāya* I: 182; *Thus have I heard*: 161.


343 The one who acquires knowledge of the goal and of dhamma; and, with these, delight, which gives birth to rapture, resulting in an impassible body, leads to joy because ‘the mind is (well) concentrated’, see *Majjhima-Nikāya* I: 37.; *Middle Length Sayings* I: 47: ‘Because, sir, sense-desires are impermanent, painful and subject to change, and from their change and transformation there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and distress.’ The first jhāna implies one is free of these, see also *Majjhima-Nikāya* I: 73; *Middle Length Sayings*, where this is made explicit.

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that time there arises a true but subtle perception of delight and happiness born of concentration, and he becomes one who is conscious of this delight and happiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.344

In this second jhāna, delight, happiness and concentration are present. At this point both ‘initial and discursive’, i.e., thinking and pondering, have subsided.345 The third jhāna concerns ‘equanimity and mindfulness’.

Again, after the fading away of delight he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly aware, and he experiences in his body that pleasant feeling of which the Noble Ones say: ‘Happy dwells the man of equanimity and mindfulness’, and he reaches and remains in the third jhāna. His former true but subtle sense of delight and happiness born of concentration vanishes, and there arises at that time a true and subtle sense of equanimity and happiness, and he becomes one who is conscious of this true but subtle sense of equanimity and happiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.346

In this third jhāna, happiness and concentration remain. The fourth jhāna concerns ‘purification by equanimity’.

Again, with the abandonment of pleasure and pain, and with the disappearance of previous joy and grief, he reaches and remains in the fourth jhāna, a state beyond pleasure and pain, purified by equanimity (upekkhā) and mindfulness. His former true but subtle sense of equanimity and happiness vanishes, and there arises a true but subtle sense of neither happiness nor unhappiness, and he becomes one who is conscious of this true but subtle sense of neither happiness nor unhappiness. In this way some perceptions arise through training, and some pass away through training.347

In this fourth jhāna, equanimity and concentration remain. This is the state that the Buddha entered just prior to his parinirvāna, i.e., as he finally entered ‘nirvāṇa without remainder’ and died.348 Of course, entering nirvāṇa, even parinirvāṇa, is not synonymous with death, for

344 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 182f; Thus have I heard: 161; see also, Majjhima-Nikāya III: 136; Middle Length Sayings III: 182.

345 Majjhima-Nikāya III: 136; Middle Length Sayings III: 182.

346 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 183; Thus have I heard: 161f.; see the brief reference in Majjhima-Nikāya III: 136; Middle Length Sayings III: 182. See also Majjhima-Nikāya I: 346-348; Middle Length Sayings II: 11-14.

347 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 183; Thus have I heard: 162.

348 See Majjhima-Nikāya I: 270; Middle Length Sayings I: 324. This is because no mental or physical conditions remain; in Buddha’s earlier bodhi experience of nirvāṇa, there was a remainder. Perhaps this very distinction assisted the rise of later, Mahāyāna notions, see the next chapter.
unless one has attained nirvāṇa death brings rebirth, suffering, etc. We discern here a process of continual refinement: each jhāna refines the characteristics of the previous one. Though eight jhānas are mentioned in the texts (see below for the rest), discussion of the jhānas often centres on these first four, especially the first one. Beyond the observation that long and diligent practice is needed in developing the conditions for entry into a jhānic state, we do not intend to enter the polemics of the jhānas. Nevertheless, the very idea of diligent practice shows that the jhānas, at least the first four of them, indicate a growth into a more refined and deep meditative state. As regards diligent practice, the Buddha has elsewhere given his view: a monk who has become perfected, with cankers or hindrances fully destroyed, etc., does not have to be diligent in practice, though this is only because he has already been so. Thus, and even though insight-techniques, vipassanā meditation (see below), are praised there is no denigration of jhāna-practice. After the four jhānas, the sutta goes on to refer to reaching and remaining in the sphere of boundless space (ākāśānācaññāyatana), then that of boundless consciousness (viṁśaṁānaññāyatana), then that of no-thingness or emptiness (aṅkaññāyatana) before entering the final one, neither-perception-nor-non-perception (neva-saṅgaṁaññasaṅña-yātana). It is with this ‘controlled perception’ that the monk who follows the path to enlightenment or true awakening reaches the limit of perception; at this point he forms the realization that ‘lack of mental activity’ is the better course and so he ceases to think or imagine:

And then, in him, just these perceptions arise, but other, coarser perceptions do not arise. He attains cessation. And that, Poṭṭhapāda, is the way in which the cessation of perception is brought about by successive steps.

However and in spite of the Buddha’s clarifications, Poṭṭhapāda continues to question him on the relation of perception to knowledge and to the self. With respect to the former, the Buddha replies that perception precedes knowledge; with respect to the self, at each stage of Poṭṭhapāda’s questioning, the Buddha causes the questioner to retract his former position: thus, the identification of perception with a gross self, with a mind-made self and with a formless self is successively and implicitly denied. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, there

549 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 477; Middle Length Sayings II: 150ff. This would seem to indicate that the monk has already developed the jhānas.

530 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 184; Thus have I heard: 162ff.

531 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 185ff.; Thus have I heard: 163f. Perhaps the Buddha is hinting to him that, as he, Poṭṭhapāda, is seeking knowledge, it will elude him as long as he fails to perceive aright; see also the next response of the Buddha.
seems to be an edgy irony in the Buddha’s response to Poṭṭhapāda’s question as to whether perception is one thing and self something quite other: ‘Poṭṭhapāda, it is difficult for one of different views, a different faith, under different influences, with different pursuits and a different training to know whether these are two different things or not.’ That there can be a state of consciousness in which there are no perceptions seems a contradiction in terms; certainly, we are not able to unravel it.

2.4.2 Two Types of Meditation

For meditation to bear fruit the meditator needs to be clearly directed toward the goal of awakening. There are three stages, viz., virtue-practice (Sanskrit: śīla), meditation proper (Sanskrit: samādhi), and insight (Sanskrit: prajñā), that we discern in the ariya atthangike maggo. Here we see the three disciplines already referred to; now we observe them in cooperation towards the goal of bodhi. While all three may be said to be necessary, it is really only prajñā that is both necessary and sufficient for bodhi. By śīla the meditator both extirpates those things that prevent wisdom, including the cankers or taints, and block awakening and practices the Pañcasīla, the five precepts enjoined on all Buddhists. Good as these practices are in themselves, it is the intentionality of the meditator that is vital for virtue and for awakening. In early Buddhism, two main types of meditation are identified: sati or mindfulness and samādhi or concentration. Satī appears to derive solely from the Buddha’s teaching, while samādhi already had a history in pre-Buddhist India. That the Buddha also taught samādhi indicates either the attention already given to the type, or the internal worth of this form of meditating, or, perhaps better, both. Certainly both ways can be taught together, and both can be used jointly. Another name for sati is vipassanā or ‘insight-meditation’ as insight is what sati aims at. Also, one can speak of paññāvimutti

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352 Dīgha-Nikāya I: 187; Thus have I heard: 164.


354 For the sake of clarity in the forthcoming distinction between two types of meditation, sati and samādhi, I use the Pāli forms.

355 Samyutta-Nikāya II: 54; The Connected Discourses: 570.

356 Other precepts, such as those associated with the monastery or nunnery, would also be involved here.

357 For instance, to be happy but with intentness on ‘a joy that is low...not connected to the goal’ leads to ‘anguish, annoyance, trouble and fret’, and, on the other hand, to have intentness on self-mortification is also ‘sorrowful, unariyan, not connected with the goal’; only the middle way ‘awakened to by the Tathāgata, making for vision, making for knowledge, conducive to calm, super-knowledge, self-awakening and nibbāna, this is...the right way’, see Majjhima-Nikāya III: 235f.; Middle Length Sayings III: 282f.

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(free-in-wisdom), which indicates another link with gaining the nirvāṇic state. In the *Satipatthāna-sutta*\(^{359}\) one concentrates on what is happening within and without: if I feel pain I concentrate on this feeling, not trying to control it in any way, such as yogic practices might do. The purpose is to attain awareness of the impermanence of all. *Samādhi*, then, is to be identified with *jhānas* as the ‘absorptions’, with their orderly progression, is more typical of what one understands by a meditative process and the progressive production of calm.\(^{360}\) So, having paid some attention to the jhānic states we now examine the different types of persons who mark defined stages of progress along the road to true awakening or *bodhi*. It is reductive though not unfair to add that, in the soteriological thinking of many Buddhists, ‘merely’ being established on the first of these stages would be an almost unimaginable attainment.

### 2.4.3 Stages towards Awakening

At different times in the Buddha’s discourses different terms are used to indicate different degrees of progress along the road that eventually leads to one becoming a Buddha. Impossibly long periods of perfect practices over many lifetimes or rebirths are usually considered necessary, though, as in the dialogue with Nigrodha, seven days may well suffice. However, the basic imagery is based on the common analogy that the Buddha gives for his way: crossing a stream. Only the truly skilful may safely cross the stream, i.e., those who have attained the requisite degree of perfection. Of course, once one has successfully crossed, even the means that one used to get there are no longer necessary and they may be cast aside. This later became interpreted to mean that the important meditational practices by which one hopes to free the mind of its cankers, afflictions, desires, delusional state, can themselves be set aside by a successful Buddha. The terms for the four stages to buddhahood are:

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\(^{359}\) *Dīgha-Nīkāya* II: 71; *Thus have I heard*: 229f.; at the end, a monk who meditates like this, and successfully, is called ‘both-ways-liberated’; note also that here the eightfold version of the *jhānas* is applied. Also, *Anguttara Nīkāya* II: 157; *Gradual Sayings* II: 164; also *Majjhima-Nīkāya* III: 135f.; *Middle Length Sayings* III: 180f., where one begins with ascetic-like practices and ends in mindfulness meditation; and, *Majjhima-Nīkāya* I: 435-437; *Middle Length Sayings* II: 104-107.

\(^{360}\) Another term is *cetovimutti* (free-in-mind).
As to the other, earlier stages, we see that the ‘stream-entrant’ is one who has set out on the path that leads directly to bodhi, though there is no guarantee that one will be successful in this present birth, no more than a novice swimmer might be assured of making it across the Mississippi. Much practice and many rebirths will be needed before the successful end, which is, though, assured. On the stream-entry path all views are destroyed; sammā-dītthi is a type of wisdom devoid of all attachment, for all wrong-views are destroyed, and sammā-dītthi is equated with paññā.361 A once-to-be-reborn refers to the person who has such attainments already that success is guaranteed in the very next attempt or rebirth. The ‘nonreturner’ is one who at the end of the present life-cycle will successfully attain the blessed state, the full extinction of all samsāric action, and nirvāṇa. The arhat is someone who achieves the ending of karmic action.362 While still alive, the arhat has, so to speak, the five khandhas, etc., but is no longer under their sway, having swept delusion and the hindrances away. The highest goal that a follower of dharma seeks is ‘final nibbāna (parinibbāna) without any attachment (remaining)’.363 Free from attachment at the moment of death one does not ‘reconnect’, i.e., be reborn; it is because one has defilements that one reconnects.364 The person who achieves arthathood is able to say, ‘birth is finished, and the holy life has been led, done was what had to be done, there is nothing more here.’365 This person who is not reborn is marked by attentive consideration, wisdom, and skilled mental states.366

| Stages towards Awakening |  
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1st | stream entrant | shrota-āpanna |
| 2nd | once-to-be-reborn | sakridāgāmin |
| 3rd | non-returner | ānāgāmin |
| 4th | fully enlightened | arhat |

Table 3 4 Stages to Arhathood


362 Buddhaghosa puns on the name: ‘The spokes (ara) of rebirth’s wheel have been / Destroyed (hata) with wisdom’s weapon keen / By him, the helper of the world [Buddha], / And so ‘accomplished’ (arahanta) he is called, see Visuddhimagga: 198-201: 201; Path of Purification: 192-195: 195.

363 See Majjhima-Nikāya I: 148; see Middle Length Sayings I: 190. Also, Samyutta-Nikāya IV: 48; The Connected Discourses: 1159; and V: 29; The Connected Discourses: 1543.

364 See Milindapañha: 31f.; Milinda’s Questions I: 42f.


366 The latter are adumbrated by Nāgasena in Milinda’s Questions I: 45 as: moral habit, faith, energy, mindfulness and concentration, see also Samyutta-Nikāya V: 197-199; The Connected Discourses: 1671-1673.
There are other features, too, that mark those on the way to buddhahood. In the
Indriyasamyutta of the Samyutta-Nikāya, the ‘five spiritual faculties’ are related to the
different stages on the way to buddhahood. The stream-enterer is one who ‘understands as
they really are the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of the five faculties’
and is defined as: ‘no longer bound to the nether world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment
as his destination.’ The arhat understands ‘as they really are (the origin and the passing
away), the gratification, the danger, and the escape’ also and is defined as: ‘one whose taints
are destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden,
reached his own goal, utterly destroyed the fetters of existence, one completely liberated
through final knowledge.’ Finally, the ascetics and Brahmins are ‘venerable ones, by
realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge in this very life, enter and dwell in the goal
of asceticism and the goal of brahminhood.’ Interestingly, though, the Buddha did make
certain distinctions concerning the practice of alms-giving by those on the way to bodhi. In
answer to the questions of the rajah’s daughter, Sumana, concerning the rebirths of worthy
disciples who are alike in all things – depth of faith, virtue, insight – except that ‘one was an
alms-giver and the other was not’, the Buddha responds that the alms-giving disciple will
have advantages when reborn that the other will not. However, when pushed as to what will
happen when both disciples have so advanced that they are arhats, the Buddha declares that
then ‘there is no difference whatsoever, that is to say, comparing emancipation and
emancipation.’

However, not all who attain the goal would seem worthy of it. The story of Angulimāla reveals another aspect of arhathood; this time the incredible swiftness of its attainment in the
face of a long-lasting evil lifestyle gives us immediate pause. Angulimāla, a robber and
murderer who wore a garland of fingers from his victims, had been causing much trouble for
the king, Pasenadi of Kosala. Planning to attack the Buddha as he walked along, Angulimāla
is suddenly converted from his evil life; as he himself says later of it: ‘O see my going for
refuge, becoming’s cord [bhavanetti] removed.’ He is thereupon accepted by the Buddha

367 See Samyutta-Nikāya V:193-196; The Connected Discourses: 1668-1670, see also 1928n187. The faculties
are: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

368 Samyutta-Nikāya V:193f.; The Connected Discourses: 1668f.; this may also include ‘the origin and the
passing away’ before ‘the gratification’.

369 Samyutta-Nikāya V:194; The Connected Discourses: 1669.


372 Angulimāla-sutta, in Majjhima-Nikāya II: 97-105; Middle Length Sayings II: 284-292.

373 Majjhima-Nikāya II: 105; Middle Length Sayings II: 291.
as a monk, and a fearful king learns to accept the new monk and honour him. After we are
told that 'having soon realised here and now by his own super-knowledge that matchless goal
of the Brahma-faring for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home
into homelessness, entering on it, abiding in it...so the venerable Angulimāla was one of the
perfected ones.' Later, he is assaulted and bloodied, and upon his return the Buddha says:
'You are experiencing here and now the ripening of that kamma through the ripening of which
you would (otherwise) boil in Niraya Hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many
thousands of years.'

Here, then, is a canonical account of someone who becomes an arhat at the same time as his
past kamma ripens. The problem it raises is in virtue of the evil acts of his present life, which
has been a litany of murders and robberies. Perhaps there is here, more than in many places, a
hint of the graciousness of the Buddha in accepting this person into the saṅgha and noting his
arhathood, and that on the basis of knowledge impossible for anyone but a Buddha to know.
To inquire into the knowledge that a Buddha has is to speak of a very special type of
knowledge indeed. As already seen above, some of the key elements identified with
attainment of nirvāṇa, are wisdom (Sanskrit: prajñā; Pāli: pāññā) and the perfections
(Sanskrit pāramitā; Pāli: pārami or pāramitā), and to these we now turn.

Prajñā and the Pāramitā

Certain qualities indicate that one is on the way to awakening (bodhi). Ten of these qualities
are summed up in the doctrine of the pāramitā, i.e., the 'perfections' which entail crossing
from the near shore of (the cycle of) birth and death to the far shore that is nirvāṇa. They
are found in the Jātaka tales, the Buddhavamsa and the Cariyapitaka. In the
Visuddhimagga the list is given as follows: dāna (giving), sīla (morality or virtue),

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374 Majjhima-Nikāya II: 103f.; Middle Length Sayings II: 289.
375 Majjhima-Nikāya II: 104; Middle Length Sayings II: 289f.
376 The origin of these words is parama, supreme; see Pali-English Dictionary, edited by T.W. Rhys Davids, and
William Stede, Pali Text Society: Oxford, 1992 [1921-1925]: s.v., parama, as 'highest, most excellent, superior,
best'.
377 This is a commentary on one of the last books of the Khuddaka-Nikāya, the Cariyāpiṭaka [Basket of
Conduct], see The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon part III: Chronicle of Buddhas (Buddhavamsa) and
discussion of this genre of Buddhist literature, see Peter Skilling, 'Jātaka and Pahfiasa-jātaka in South-East Asia',
that the Buddha’s ‘great compassion and skilful means (upāyakosallāṇa) is in accordance with his resolve; there
the skilful means (upāyakosallāṁ) is wisdom (pāññā) which is the causative factor for collecting things [needed]
for awakening, such as giving (dānādiṁa)'.

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nekkhamma (renunciation), paññā (wisdom), viriya (energy), khanti (patience), sacca (truthfulness), aditthāna (resolve), mettā (kindness), and upekkhā (equanimity). Furthermore, as Buddhaghosa shows, each of these can be further classified as medium (or ordinary), superior, and inferior, yielding a total of thirty categories. In later, Mahāyāna lists the number is reduced to six pāramitās, though some lists have ten. The six are: dāna, charity; śīla, moral conduct or virtue; kṣānti (Pāli: khanti), patience; viriya (Pāli: viriya), devotion or energy; dhyāna, contemplation or meditation; and prajñā (Pāli: paññā), wisdom. For the ten pāramitās the following are added to the previous list: upāya-kauśala, expedient means; pranidhāna, vow of bodhi and helpfulness; bala, strength; and jñāna, intelligence. A number of the elements that we have discussed come together in the story of Vessantara. This story shows that the prince is a bodhisattva whose distinguishing virtue is dāna, charitable giving; Vessantara embodies dāna pāramitā and the eponymous tale is well-known in the Theravāda world and beyond. The degree of his dāna causes great hardship and suffering...in the eye of the reader. Vessantara first gives away the white elephant whose magical powers bring life-giving rain. With his wife and two young children he leaves his parents and kingdom, and before long all the fine belongings they brought along are gone, given to one requester after another. After a short idyll in the forest where they had come to live, and while Maddī, his wife, was away searching for wood, Jūjaka, the type of a selfish, deceitful brahmin, came and demanded that Vessantara give Jāli and Kanhajinā, his own children, to him as servants; Jūjaka had been put up to this by his wife, who herself is a foil to Maddī. Maddī comes to accept that her husband did the right thing; later, she will also accept when she herself is given away to Sakka, the king of the gods, who is disguised as a brahmin. The tale ends with Vessantara’s virtue being rewarded: Sakka restores to him his wife, children, possessions, including the white elephant, and kingdom. Vessantara will be a righteous ruler, still giving to all who ask. Within this story, in various vignettes, Vessantara is presented as the perfect child, the perfect husband, the perfect father, the perfect king-to-be.

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378 Visuddhimagga: 325; Path of Purification: 318.
379 See Visuddhimagga: 13; Path of Purification: 17.
380 See the Mahāyāna text Samantabhādra-caryā-pranidhāna, which has the 10 as well as entry to the Pure Land, downloaded from http://bodhiheartsangha.org/docs/KingofPrayers.pdf.
with enough riches to satisfy the requests of all-comers. The message is that perfection in all these aspects of his life is subservient to willingness to give without a calculative mentality; furthermore, this giving is for one reason, namely, supreme knowledge, ‘the jewel of omniscient knowledge’, i.e., enlightenment, Dhamma. This special knowledge is prajñā.

We have adumbrated prajñā already when discussing vipassanā. It breaks through our delusions and sees things as they really are. Prajñā is a type of understanding that arises in connection with realization and practice. It surpasses ‘ordinary’ knowledge or nāna and is a sort of deconstruction that establishes a new knowing, this time without constructions, unsaid meanings, or false views.

2.4.4 Buddhist Grace

Finally, we carry forward this discussion of prajñā by looking at the work of a modern Theravāda scholar who has addressed the question of whether there is a notion of grace in Theravāda. Mahinda Palihawadana in his article, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’, calls on a distinction in paññā that Buddhaghosa made. In this paper Palihawadana examines the notion of magga or ‘seeing the path (magga-dassana)’ to observe if it is comparable with grace; he begins by noting the change that occurs in a person seeking release from suffering (I), then relates it to grace (II), before expounding magga in relation to the will, meditation and nibbāna (III), and finally he arrives at a definition of magga (IV).

Although he swiftly denies comparability between magga and grace, he feels that ‘behind both notions there seem to lie some nonsectarian truths – something that deserves our attention as a basic human issue, which both Buddhists and Christians have approached from their respective specific standpoints.’ Though the responses are different, the issues both religions address are, for him, comparable, and in the end, he writes,

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383 For instance, the white elephant that could produce rain for the land was a gift to accompany Vessantara’s birth. The white elephant, like the dove in a Christian worldview, is an auspicious sign in the Indian worldview of the time; the motif recurs frequently in tales of bodhisattvas and buddhas.

384 Milindapañña: 117; Milinda’s Questions 1: 163f.

385 In the Sangīti-sutta, in which the Buddha, endeavouring to counter examples of discord in others, instructs the monks in chanting together; this they do, concerning those things they all hold as part of dhamma, in various sets, first in ones, then in twos, then in threes. In the latter are included ‘three kinds of wisdom: of the learner, of the non-learner, of the one who is neither; three more kinds of wisdom: based on thoughts, on learning [hearing], on mental development’, Dīgha-Nikāya III: 219; Thus have I heard: 485f.

386 Though, this word can also be a synonym for pannā, see Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary, s.v., nāna.

387 As published in Dialogue NS IX,1-3 (January-December 1982): 91-103; Palihawadana recounts how he originally wrote on the idea in 1973.

it is possible to see the elements of a common religious conviction: The redeeming change in a person takes place not ultimately by exercising the will, but at its cessation, which is the indispensable factor for contact with supreme reality; it is this contact that truly renews and transforms the person.\textsuperscript{389}

We are familiar with the idea of \textit{magga} from the \textit{ariya atthaṅgiko maggo} that leads to \textit{bodhi} and which, here, Palihawadana takes for the transformation from delusion to wisdom – ‘how the defiled could ever become undefiled’ – that Buddhist religious life entails.\textsuperscript{390} It would be at this point that Palihawadana could have discussed conversion and the energies involved in human transformation, yet, he continued, humans are burdened by defilements and fetters and are absorbed in self-centredness; this is the Theravādin view of the ‘common state of human beings’\textsuperscript{391} which Christians view as ‘being in sin or in a state of corrupted nature’.\textsuperscript{392} Stronger even than this, though, is the Mahāyāna view of people trapped in \textit{mappo}; there they are not seen as in any way capable of salvation by self-effort (Japanese: \textit{jiroiki}). From his viewpoint, Palihawadana takes the issue of how to move from delusion/sin to freedom (\textit{vimutti}) or redemption as one that faces both Buddhist and Christian; this, then, is his justification for his concentration on \textit{magga}. On the one hand, Christians take a theistic approach: it is God who saves. On the other, Buddhists take a ‘nontheistic, impersonalist approach’, so, if the conditions for ‘spiritual states’ exist, then the latter ‘flow in’, naturally.\textsuperscript{393} He quotes from the \textit{Anguttara-Nikāya}:

Monks, for a person who is virtuous, well-endowed with virtue, there is no need of the effort of will \textit{[na cetanāya karanīyam]}: ‘Let freedom from remorse arise in me.’ It is a matter of nature \textit{[dhammatā esā]} that freedom from remorse arises in such a person.\textsuperscript{394}

In meditation, then, and consonant with what Suwanbubbha said already, Palihawadana views the meditator as initiating a process that allows those circumstances to develop ‘in which the right natural change “flows in.”’\textsuperscript{395} Not engaging with mythological elements in the scriptures, Palihawadana later takes up discussion of this process that is the path of purity

\textsuperscript{390} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 91f.
\textsuperscript{391} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 91.
\textsuperscript{392} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 92.
\textsuperscript{393} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 93.
\textsuperscript{395} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 94.
again: it has two parts to it, viz., the field of possible action, in which human effort is both involved and effective, and another part which is to be distinguished from the field of possible human action, for it 'would not be applicable', that is, a supermundane or lokuttara part. In a way that reprises Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* as well as statements from the Buddha’s sermons, Palihawadana first identifies *sīla* (moral conduct) and *samādhi* (integration of mind, i.e., concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom), which we have seen are the essential core of the *ariya atthaṅgiko maggo*. However, at this juncture he adverts to Buddhaghosa’s distinction between lokiya and lokuttara *paññā*. This distinction within *paññā*, constitutes a fourth aspect, in addition to *sīla*, *samādhi* and lokiya *paññā*, which together are the ‘realm of possible action’ for practitioners. The fourth aspect of *lokuttara paññā* is beyond the mundane; as such, then, it is not within the sphere of human action that he has designated under morality, concentration and mundane wisdom. Indeed, from morality there is a ten-fold elaboration of the states that naturally arise: from ‘freedom from remorse’ joy arises, from it rapture, from it physical relaxation, from it happiness, from it integration of mind (*samādhi*), from it seeing and knowing things as they are, [from it revulsion and fading of interest], from it wisdom-vision. The *sankharas* as the ‘ground-elements of the psyche’ are constantly in flux; though they are not controllable by acts of will it is their ‘proclivity’ for arising and vanishing that makes them the ground of ‘similar new processes’. Having outlined these conditions that ‘naturally’ lead to such states, Palihawadana concludes: ‘[i]n this way, spiritual states themselves (*dhamma*) make spiritual states to flow in.’ We note that Palihawadana translates the root *dhamma* by ‘natural’ in one context and ‘spiritual’ in another in a way that may skew how we interpret the overall argument. Nevertheless, we agree with him that, though the virtuous person seeking wisdom does have a participatory role, it is not one that ‘dictates’ the process; for, change occurs when the conditions are right. In the end, Palihawadana defines *magga* as

> the natural occurrence of a mental event, at a moment of total relaxation of the usual psychical activities, which, (1) discards vitiating psychic

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399 Palihawadana does not list all ten; I have supplied the others within square brackets according to the order of the *Anguttara-Nikāya*, which with Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*, is Palihawadana’s textual base here.

400 In the original this is: ‘iti kho, bhikkhave, dhammā dhamme abhisandenti’, *Anguttara-Nikāya* V: 2.

characteristics; (2) provides first-hand acquaintance with transcendent reality; and (3) gives profound understanding of truth.\(^\text{402}\)

**Conclusion**

From a vast range of possibilities we have chosen a few details to illustrate for the theologian a little of the richness that Buddhism and its buddhologies offer. Limiting ourselves to the Pāli canon, which is recognized by all Buddhists as authentic irrespective of whether or not it is the foundational literature for their sect or nikāya, we saw dimensions of Buddhism and buddhology that are at once fantastic and resolutely rational, all cohering in one system that defies reduction or simplification. Buddhists share in and create cosmologies in which there are many levels and degrees of what we might call happiness and pain. We pass through these worlds in consequence of our actions or karma; Table 1 (above) is testimony to the richness of the Buddhist tradition in combining cosmology and psychology. Likewise, helped by Table 2, we noted the development of the twelve-factored chain of dependent (co-)origination, however it may first have been conceptualized, as an explanation for one thing being caused by others, including the freeing of sentient beings from samsāra. The chain attests to all things having a cause; ultimately, this is extended from the ‘inner’ realm of desires, ignorance and suffering to the structure of the world itself. More importantly, in the developing of what is perhaps best termed the Buddhist imaginaire, it also demonstrates that there is a way out of ignorance, an awakening from delusion and an ending of suffering. Conceptualizing what we pass through as a, a round of birth-death-rebirth, that arises from avijja or ignorance, that is subject to anicca or impermanence, and that creates a pervasive sense of uneasy and things being awry, which is dukkha, the follower of the Buddha’s ‘middle way (majjhima-patipadā)’ seeks release from this unhappy world. This release or freedom or awakening is attaining the unconceivable bliss of the ‘deathless (amata)’; in other words, the fires of hatred, greed and delusion, which otherwise are life’s most destructive toxins, are snuffed out and nibbāna is attained; one awakes from delusion and is thereby freed from the sāṃsāric chains of rebirth. Nibbāna is the one permanent reality not conditioned in any way. Integral to this process of attaining the deathless is the doctrine of dependent (co-)origination, by which the Buddha taught that things are conditioned and caused by others, a doctrine that will in later buddhological developments be broadened to mean the interconnectedness of

\(^{402}\)Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 100; referring to Visuddhimagga XXII: 92 (= Visuddhimagga: 689f.; Path of Purification: 716f.), he lists the four ‘functions’ of magga as comprehension of truths (parināmā), discarding of defilements (pahāna), encountering nibbāna (sacchikiriyā), and deepening of that encounter (bhāvanā), see 103n25.
everything; yet, the roots of this interconnectedness are present in the Pāli texts. More deeply, though, the Buddha takes this doctrine as entailing the understanding of truth itself:

This was said by the Buddha, ‘Whoever sees dependent origination sees dhamma, whoever sees dhamma sees dependent origination.’

Furthermore, in the doctrine of anattā or no-self, the Buddha taught the causal or conditioned structuring of what underpins our greatest delusion, viz., that each ‘I’ thinks of itself as self-subsistent, as if aloof from originating dependently. If intentionality is at the heart of self-determination, yet there is no true self, no attā, that exists in its own right as self-subsistent. Buddhism radically deconstructs the notion of selfhood as the delusion that arises from avijjā. To do this involves following the dhamma as taught by a Buddha. To achieve the understanding of the way things really are, their yathābhūtatā, which will later take full flowering in the notion of tathatā or suchness, the follower conforms her or his view, thoughts, speech, actions, way of life, efforts, mindfulness and meditative concentration to the ‘right’ ones that the Buddha taught as his way or magga to awakening or bodhi; these are summed up in being virtuous, practicing meditation and achieving wisdom, i.e., sīla, samādhi and paññā. For, the or a Buddha does not simply diagnose our ill state and illusory constructs but also offers a means to annihilating dukkha and gaining nibbāna. In the four ‘noble truths (ariya-sacca)’, then, are diagnosis, pathology, prognosis of cure, and the medicine necessary to awaken to dhamma. What theologians learn from this is that the sense of there being something completely awry, wrong or ‘unskilful’ at the root of our living is shared with others who have no notion of ‘original sin’ and salvation from it, who consider ‘creation’ and ‘God’ unnecessary distractions in the all-important task of realizing the truth of the way things are and the truth that underlies all our mental constructions, and who do have practices designed to lead to bodhi. Though it is not my primary concern to develop in the theologian an attraction for some, at least, of the teachings of Buddhism, I am concerned to recognize that there are elements of a Buddhological system that, if judiciously appropriated, contribute to theologizing per se. The conjunction of ‘personal’ virtue with a praxis of deep meditation does, I believe, fit with central practices of the Christian way of life. The deconstruction of a delusional self can be theologically appropriated in light of a Pauline ‘putting on’ of Christ. For now, though, I draw attention to two themes that we have observed, namely, paññā and upāya. In the former (Sanskrit: prajñā), our thinking is moved beyond quotidian, sensual, reflective or conventional understandings to a level that seems otherwise inexplicable in

403 'Vuttaṃ kho panetaṃ bhagavātā ‘yo paṭiccasamuppādanā paissati so dhammaṃ passati yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭiccasamuppādanā paissatirī', Majjhima-Nikāya 190f.; Middle Length Sayings I: 236f.
human terms. The wisdom of prajña is conceptualized as attained only after aeons of increasingly perfected practices, both moral and intellectual, and over many life-cycles. In this sense, the causal process of attaining to the perfect, nibbānic state is so extended that it is beyond the world of conventional reality to comprehend; still, its promise and its (remote) possibility of attainment, especially when assisted by the teaching of a fully enlightened or awakened one, a Buddha, seem to us more like a gift in light of the aeons-long practices and teachings that have to be undergone.

At another, and very different level, one intimately on the plane of conventional reality, is upāya, which is to say skilful upāya. In upāya buddhology formed a useful tool that allowed the distinction between ultimate and conventional to be used – conventionally, as all language – even as it upheld and marked the distinction itself. This tool may also become distinctive in theology. With its high view of both revelation and the God-given mandate for (human) understanding of the divine, theology has often failed to distinguish the kernel of truth from the husk of its propositions; a self-satisfied theology too easily identifies theological proposition and divine reality. With upāya consciously built into our theological methodology, however, theology could more easily avoid too simple identifications between what we otherwise know are the epistemologically distinct levels of the divine and the human. This brings us already into terrain more closely looked at in the next chapter. If we have taken jumps in a vast conceptual terrain in this chapter, in order to say something of buddhology while recognizing the impossibility of saying all, the next demands greater leaps. Initially, I categorize its starting position in terms of a confluence of reformatory impulses that generally go under the umbrella of the Mahāyāna, though this is more a heuristic device than a historical judgement for we cannot treat of the remote origins of many later buddhological doctrines and developments. Finally, in the next chapter, we will examine one distinct Buddhist nikāya that developed a grace-like conceptuality of dharma and soteriology.
Furthermore, a Bodhisattva enters into the trances. Unlimited, and formless attainments, but he does not relish them, is not captivated by them, is not reborn on account of them. This, Sariputra, is of a Bodhisattva, a great being, the perfection of wisdom which is associated with skill in means. 

Perfection of Wisdom in 18,000 Lines\textsuperscript{404} 

Strange sensation. Almost as if I’m close to death. Any desire, ambitions, hopes I may have had have either been fulfilled or spontaneously dissipated. I’m totally content. Of course, I want to get deeper, see clearer, but even if I could only have this paltry, shallow awakening, I’d be quite satisfied. Facing into a long, cold winter is not only fine, but I know I’ll enjoy it. Everything seems wonderful. Even undesirable, painful conditions have a poignant beauty and exaltation. So in a sense I have died; for myself there is nothing else to strive after, nothing more to make my life worthwhile or to justify it. At 26, a living corpse and such a life!\textsuperscript{405} 

Maura ‘Soshin’ O’Halloran 

Introduction 
This chapter continues the task begun in the last one. On the one hand, the last chapter provided the theologian with a selective overview of core elements of early Buddhism, in particular, the teaching of no-self and the dependent (co)origination of everything. This focus presents, on the one hand, a non-Christian, indeed non-theistic, account of the world; for, there is in Buddhism an other(-than-Christian) imaginative construction of the world and of the relations it contains. That chapter also, on the other hand, confronted the theologian with 

\textsuperscript{404} See The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālākāra, translated by Edward Conze, University of California: Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1984 [1975]: 131 [I,7g]; see also 533f., 621-627. 

a fundamental if implicit or tacit question, namely, how does a worldview constructed on a premiss of divine intervention respond to another worldview that systematically eschews such a premiss? This question drives forward the thesis underlying the present work. In attempting to answer the question the theologian’s stock of christologically or pneumatologically framed constructions proves somewhat defective once the challenge of dialogue with religious others brings into relief the meta-challenge of accounting for the significance of these religious others in a determinately theological way. In other words, if grace is God at work in us, what happens to our understanding of grace once this ‘us’ is newly configured to include those who are, till now, ‘not us’, who, indeed, in terms of giving space to a divine-human relationship may be quite alien to us? Before such a discussion begins there are some other elements of Buddhism that require our attention. In particular, we will look at a distinctly buddhological account of the relationship between a buddha and an ‘ordinary person’ that has been interpreted as correlating with the God-human relationship. I refer to Jōdoshinshū, which is a version of Buddhism that, falling within the wider parameters of Mahāyāna Buddhism, bears remarkable similarities with the Christian ‘justification by faith’ theology of the Reformed traditions which derive from the religious controversies of the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe. When these remarkable developments, one in Kamakura Japan and the other in Western Europe, the former in the 12th-13th centuries and the latter some 400 years later, are taken to have no interaction with each other, we ask: what dynamic of human religiosity helps explain such autonomous developments? The notion of grace, of unmerited and unmeritable salvific giftedness, is used in the conceptual analysis of both developments. Thus, on a historical and human basis, the Buddhist development is germane to our exploration of grace that seeks to establish a broader basis than the usual christological one for an understanding of divine working in the world. Furthermore, on the basis of whatever it is that grace is, that is, on an understanding of grace qua grace, a study of Jōdoshinshū may prove revelatory, even intrinsically necessary, for reflection on how theology constructs its own major conceptualities. As Jōdoshinshū is usually considered to be the largest Buddhist sect in present-day Japan, the specifics of this sect’s history, its 

406 I am using ‘sect’ here in a relatively neutral way, much in the tradition of Troeltsch, whom we have seen used both ‘sect’ and ‘church’ for naturally arising dynamics within religious movements; while ‘church’ both can be and has been used of Jōdoshinshū I do not think it helpful to use it here.

407 This is a tentative estimate; see Hajime Nakamura, A Comparative History of Ideas, Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1992 [1986]: 390; in the Statistical Survey of Japan (2005), out of a population of 127.77 million, 91.26 million registered as Buddhist, yet, there were some 211.02 million registered as religious adherents; thus, many
distinction from, yet continuity with, other Buddhist schools and its present-day relevance as putatively the largest Buddhist sect in Japan also argue for its specific prominence here. Nevertheless and theoretically central as Jodoshinshū is, there are other dimensions of Māhāyana that antedate Jodoshinshū and also contribute to the development of the theology of grace by reason of their buddhological construals of what buddhahood is—and which will bear fruit for a new imaginaire of grace—and, therefore, it is to these we turn first.

3.1 HYPOSTASIZING THE BUDDHA: SOME KEY DOCTRINES

There are buddhological developments, besides the ‘pure land’ of Jōdoshinshū, such as the śūnyatā (Pāli: suññatā), tathāgathagarbha, buddhadhātu, and debates on whether awakening is sudden or gradual and what is original enlightenment (Japanese: hongaku), that show Buddhists in the Far East constructing a variety of responses to the message of the Buddha as they took it to be in light of their own socio-political and cultural worlds. At times along the way elements less emphasized in the ‘original’ scriptural accounts or traditions became so central as to be hypostatized. It is not surprising that, after the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, a cult of his person arose; it is less surprising still, that this should occur in places far removed from the Buddha’s birthplace. In the words of Gadjin Nagao:

Buddha came to be super-humanized and was made divine, until...the theories of the twofold and threefold body of the Buddha were gradually systematized, and even a highly theistic conception materialized.408

Different aspects of the charismatic figure became institutionalized and new buddhological complexes were developed to explain, expand and make accommodation for earlier constructs that eventually jarred with one another. Given the spread of Buddhism through Asia and the Far East we should also not be surprised at the disagreements, conflicts and divisions to which

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Japanese accept that they are ‘dual belongers’, i.e., members of more than one religion. Does the religious adherence figure reflect membership of more than one sect within Buddhism? We do not know, see Statistical Survey of Japan (2005), Cultural Affairs Department, Agency for Cultural Affairs, downloaded from http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/kokusei/2005/poj/mokuji.htm. Jérôme Ducor says that Jōdoshinshū has some 21000 temples, 39000 clerics and 12.8 million believers, see his Shinran: Un Reformateur Bouddhiste dans le Japon Médiéval, Infolio éditions: Gollion, 2008: 201; Ducor also says that religious belonging itself is ‘en effet assez floue’, see 48.

these complexes themselves gave rise. The global term of this complex set of developments is ‘Mahāyāna’ or ‘the Great Vehicle’.

Mahāyāna background

I take Mahāyāna to be a reformulation of Buddhism that, taking different forms and spreading widely, became powerful in China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. In our observing of Buddhism, it nourished the rise of an explicit form of grace-like other-power that wrought the salvation of those unable to achieve it by their own efforts. First, though, an understanding of the impulse(s) that led to the Mahāyāna is important, for it seems to reformulate basic buddhological positions. There are, however, many difficulties in trying to ascertain where, when and how Mahāyāna Buddhism arose first. Was it a largely lay movement that originally developed around stūpa devotions? Was it a sectarian movement? Or, was it a reform movement that sought to recover something of the fervour of the early Buddhist forest-dwellers? Gethin reminds us of another possibility, namely, that it may have developed from ‘a growing cult of the book’. Of the many scriptures that came to be written, the Mahāyāna ones, in their claims to be ‘the great tradition’ that supersedes ‘the lesser one’ and to be the very words of the Buddha (but disseminated now as the earlier times were not appropriate), reflect a conscious concern with text reproduction. This in turn argues for a construction of lineages as followers fought, sometimes literally, for the preservation of the traditions handed down to them by a revered holy personage or saint. Given that Mahāyānists often lived in monasteries with followers of other, if earlier, Buddhist traditions and given the seriousness of causing division in the sangha, it is unlikely that Mahāyānists acted as or were perceived to be fundamentally sectarian. It is also unlikely, given both that monasteries and nunneries were built throughout the regions where Mahāyāna developed and that an elite monkhood developed as it had within Theravāda, that the founding impulse was lay-inspired. Perhaps, though, there is something to the reform-thesis that Paul Harrison proposes, especially as

409 Paul Williams takes ‘mahā’ in the name to indicate ‘the Great’, that is, the Buddha, which would effectively make ‘Mahāyāna’ mean ‘vehicle leading to buddhahood’, see Paul Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations, in Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices, Routledge: London and New York, 2009: 267n1.


411 This is not to say that there were no sectarian issues, see Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism: 6; rather, I want to suggest the ‘big picture’ lest it be lost in variety of detail.

this would have the virtue of accommodating the wide diversity that marks Mahāyāna, for, as
Paul Williams suggests, Mahāyāna is a ‘family term’ and its very diversity displays a lack of
that unity we associate with a single school.\textsuperscript{413}

3.1.1 Hypostases

At a relatively early stage of development, then, c.100\textsuperscript{BCE} to 100\textsuperscript{CE}, as tensions within
Buddhism between older, more conservative attitudes and different, newer ones, were perhaps
growing more open, a point was reached when a second ‘turning of the wheel of dharma’ was
acclaimed; such a turning is, of course, a tacit critique of the ‘first turning’.\textsuperscript{414} In a real sense,
then, Mahāyāna becomes a reform within Buddhism at the same time as it formulates a
fracturing of the ‘original’. In the later development of Vajrayāna additional complexity is
added, though this is outside the scope of the present dissertation beyond a comment on the
concept of \textit{bodhicitta} (mind-towards-awakening), a distinctive and important Mahāyāna
notion as we will see in both Hōnen and Shinran. Originally, \textit{bodhicitta} was ‘a mental stage
of a bodhisattva’s career in Mahāyāna’; it later became ‘the goal of striving and the final stage
of spiritual life in Vajrayāna.’\textsuperscript{415} In the \textit{Guhyasamāja-tantra}, an influential text of Buddhist
tantras, \textit{bodhicitta} is defined as ‘the unity of voidness and compassion; it is beginningless and
endless, quiescent and bereft of the notion of being and non-being.’\textsuperscript{416} That compassion and
loving-kindness, \textit{karunā} and \textit{maitrī}, ‘should be the fundamental principle of Mahāyāna
Buddhism’ is asserted in the teaching of \textit{Huayan} (Sanskrit: \textit{Buddhavatamsaka-sūtra}), which
stressed the ‘interconnection between one individual and the whole universe’.\textsuperscript{417} This sūtra
also spells out the importance of \textit{bodhicitta} and of having ‘good friends’ to help one on the
road to awakening. These themes recur constantly in the scriptures and traditions.

Within these large-scale tradition-formations, with their own conceptualities, certain key
phases may be highlighted on our way to the grace of Amida Buddha and the buddhology of

\textsuperscript{413}Williams, \textit{Buddhist Thought}: 103.

\textsuperscript{414}It will, in turn, be subject to critique when a ‘third turning’, the Yogācāra, is proclaimed, see the

\textsuperscript{415}See Hajime Nakamura, \textit{Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes}, in Buddhist Tradition Series,
Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1987 [1980]: 323; the \textit{Treatise on the Formless Enlightenment-Mind} (Taishō 32:
541f.), putatively by Nāgārjuna, explains \textit{bodhicitta} ‘based on the standpoint of Voidness [śūnyatā]’, see 243.

\textsuperscript{416}\textit{Guhyasamāja-tantra} #18,37, as cited in Namakura, \textit{Indian Buddhism}: 333; Nakamura considered this ‘a
remarkable definition’.

\textsuperscript{417}See Nakamura, \textit{Indian Buddhism}: 199; this sūtra is central to the Huayan (Japanese: Kegon) school of
Chinese Buddhism; one of its chapters is separately known as ‘Sūtra of the Ten Bhūmis [Sanskrit:
\textit{Daśabhūmika-sūtra}].
These phases point both to very influential developments within Buddhism and to our growing understanding of (some of) the ways in which Buddhists construct their world. There is perhaps no more important or distinguishing mark of the Mahāyāna than the notion that all things are truly empty, and this includes the notion of emptiness or śūnyatā (Pāli: suññatā) itself, a doctrine intimately associated with Nāgārjuna (?mid-2nd to 3rd century CE).

Śūnyatā (emptiness) as truth

The doctrine of śūnyatā first arose neither with Nāgārjuna nor with the school of which he is the putative founder, viz., Mādhyamika, though it is his treatment of it, in terms of it being the essential truth that the Buddha taught, that has attained almost canonical status. Before looking at śūnyatā in general I would like to reprise what was said in the last chapter concerning the two truths, for it is, again, Nāgārjuna who is credited with offering the most succinct account of them. Because the Buddha teaches ‘out of compassion’ he has to do so in light of people’s inability to comprehend ultimate truth (Sanskrit: paramārtha-satya), which he named śūnyatā. Teaching has to be in terms of conventional truth (Sanskrit: loka-samvṛt-satya) and from this people are led to understand ultimate truth. This approach is tied to the notion of upāya, or the application of ‘skillful means’ in order to bring people from ignorance, delusion and conceptual argumentations (Sanskrit: prapañca) to a meditative experience of emptiness. Being ‘empty’, a term used also for an empty room or a riderless horse, was already present in the ‘perfection of wisdom (Sanskrit: prajñā-pāramitā)’ tradition, and even before that the germ of the doctrine is present in early Buddhism. As a teaching it

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418 Amida is referred to in more than 200 Mahāyāna sūtras, see Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota, Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought, with Selections from the Shin Buddhism Translation Series, Hongwanju International Centre: Kyoto, 1989: 105.


420 The use of upāya, which is to say, upāyakausalya (wholesome or worthy means), finds classical expression in the Saddharmapundarika-sūtra or Lotus Sutra, in the story of a father who, caught in a burning house with his vast family within; instead of telling the truth, i.e., the house is on fire so we should all leave (through the only door), resorts to skillful means to tempt his children with promises of fantastic toys that he has for them on the outside, see The Lotus Sutra, translated by Burton Watson, volume 202 in Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica Series, Sri Satguru Publications: Delhi, 1993: 56-58; the story is prepared for by the whole of chapter two, on upāya. The point of the story is that the Buddha is like such a father, full of compassion for his children and searching for the best way of saving them from disaster; the best gift that the Buddha has in mind is, of course, the dharma. Also, see below.

seems to be a reprise of the anātman (Pāli: anatta) teaching of Śākyamuni. After counselling King Milinda – on adopting the two qualities of a carpenter – Nāgasena first lists what not to think of before being more directive: the carpenter-yogin ‘should seize on (the thought that) ultimate emptiness is the own-nature of the sankhāras [formations], and that absolute emptiness is without impulse and without a living principle.’

Śānyatā is, in substance-language, the true substance of the formations we choose to make; our constructions, as it were, are shown to be so, and not self-subsistent entities. Also, to help us to ‘empty’ our reified notions, various images are used in the Pāli canon. Thus, before a description of the five khandhas (aggregates), ‘material shape’, i.e., the body/person, is equated to a ‘dwelling’, which is really an empty space defined in terms of other (empty) things:

Your reverences, just as a space that is enclosed by stakes and creepers and grass and clay is known as a dwelling, so a space that is enclosed by bones and sinews and flesh and skin is known as a material shape.

How can we explain the unending flux of all psycho-physical phenomena and render an account of the conditionality of ‘reality’? We saw that the mind generates various consciousnesses and that, if we are to be freed from the illusions that the mind creates we have to end their conditions of arising. On the one hand, those things, including the ego/self, which we take to be substantial are not so in truth; when we analyse them and look at their constituent parts (and then the constituents of these, and so on) we are led to see the true insubstantiality or emptiness of any given thing; in time, this notion developed into the doctrine that everything, including nirvāṇa, is conditioned. On the other hand, beginning with the same phenomena at hand and thinking synthetically we arrive at a view of how each and everything does not – again – stand apart from anything and everything else; rather each and all are caught, web-like, in a matrix of mutual conditionality, i.e., paticcasamuppāda.

Nonetheless, the new way of thinking goes beyond that early teaching. From the ‘perfection of wisdom’ (prajñāpāramitā) tradition – via the early Astasdhasrikā, ‘The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines’ – to traditions associated with the Lotus Sūtra (Saddharmapundarikā-

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42 Milindapañha: 413; Milinda’s Questions II: 295f.; the first quality of the carpenter-yogin is sawing through the defilements. The sankhārā are very difficult to conceptualize, due to a variety of usages, see I.B. Horner’s caveats in ‘Translator’s Introduction’ to The Collection of The Middle Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya), volume I: The First Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaṇṇāsa), Pali Text Society: Oxford, 1993: xxiv-xxvi; they can be ‘habitual tendencies’, ‘karma-formations’, ‘activities’, ‘all constructions’, ‘properties’; she recognizes that there may be ‘some inner bond of reference that has so far escaped interpreters of Buddhist thought’.

43 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 190; Middle Length Sayings I: 236.
sūtra) there is a growing attention to šūnyatā. Though not, as we will see, at its core, the doctrine of šūnyatā is mentioned in the Lotus Sūtra. As part of its agenda the Lotus Sūtra disparages the earlier Buddhist tradition in order to stress its own view that what the Buddha really teaches is the ‘great way’ (mahā-yāna), i.e., the ‘one vehicle (ekayāna)’ by means of which all who have heard the dharma ‘might finally obtain perfect knowledge’, in which all are children (‘sons’) of the Buddha if they but recognized it. Yet, in a parable, of the lost son who is found and skilfully restored to his father’s bounty, certain senior monks preach the boundless mercy of the Buddha who leads even the inferior śrāvakas to ‘perfect enlightenment’. The monks say:

We, for long,
Neither coveted nor were attached
To the Buddha-wisdom,
Nor had we any will or wish [for it].
But we, in regard to the Law,
Considered we had reached finality.
We, for a long time
Practicing the Law of the Void,
Obtained release from the triple world’s
Distressing troubles,
Dwelling in the final bodily state
Of nirvana [in which form still] remains;
Being instructed by the Buddha, [we thought]
We had, without a doubt, attained the Way

424 Though emptiness (‘the Void’, below) is not stressed in the Lotus Sūtra its very mention in this highly influential Sūtra probably also helped to reinforce its legitimacy, if not its centrality, in some Mahāyāna schools. The version of the Lotus Sūtra used here is from The Threefold Lotus Sūtra: Innumerable Meanings, The Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law, and Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue, translated by Bunno Katō, Yoshirō Tamura, and Kōjirō Miyasaka, with revisions by W.E. Soothill, Wilhelm Schiffer, and Pier P. del Campana, Kōsei Publishing: Tokyo, and John Weatherhill: New York and Tokyo, 1975: 29-344; in referencing the text I give the chapter first, then the page of the (translated) text, thus, #2; 51 refers to chapter 2, on skilful means, page 51 in The Threefold Sutra.

425 See Lotus Sūtra: #2; 63, where they are called the ‘dull who delight in petty rules’ or hīnayāna.

426 Lotus Sūtra: #2; 60.

427 See Lotus Sūtra: #4; 115f.

428 Lotus Sūtra: #4; 111.
And that we had therefore
Repaid the Buddha’s grace.

In fact, the monks now find joy in the unexpected knowledge that those who followed other, i.e., inferior, practices will ‘enter the Buddha-way’. Those ‘who hear the dharma’ cannot fail to become buddhas for, the Buddha continues, ‘the original vow of the buddhas’ is:

By the Buddha-way which I walk
I desire universally to cause all creatures
To attain the same Way along with me. 429

The text goes on immediately and with an apparent shift of meaning to affirm that ‘nothing has an independent existence’, which, in the Mahāyāna generally accords with denial of any real essence to things in themselves, and which forms the basis of the doctrine of śūnyavāda. Alongside and supportive of this is the teaching of the tathāgatagarbha (womb/embryo of the Tathāgata). Indeed, the Lotus Sūtra verse complementing the affirmation of dependent existence states: ‘buddha-seeds spring from a cause’. 430 However, before moving to this doctrine we should observe that, in the Lotus Sūtra as we have briefly looked at it, there are some comments that point beyond notions of dependent (co-)origination and perhaps even buddhadhatu. Returning to chapter 4 of this sūtra we note that the monks are critical of their views as stated. When they had held these views they had not felt or sought for joy. The Buddha saw this and, like the loving father slowly – over many years – leading a wayward, impoverished son back to the boundless ‘wealth’ of his father, used skilful means (upāyakausālaya) to instruct them ‘in the greater wisdom’. Where before the monks followed ‘the Buddha’s pure commands’ now ‘today for the first time’ they obtain the fruit and reward and this makes them ‘really arhats’. 431 The Buddha has compassion, instructs and benefits ‘us’ and so they wonder, ‘[w]ho could repay him?’:

Service by hands and feet
Homage with the head
All kinds of offerings
Are all unable to repay him...
Through kalpas as the sands of the Ganges,

429 Lotus Sūtra: #2; 70.
430 Lotus Sūtra: #2; 70; the full statement is: ‘Know that nothing has an independent existence / And that buddha-seeds spring from a cause, / So they reveal the One-vehicle.’
431 Lotus Sūtra: #4; 122-125.
Yet one would be unable to repay.432 These comments indicate a dimension that goes beyond the given; here the monks are recognizing that there is a certain giftedness about the insight they have been give. Here upāya is intimately tied to the idea of a Buddha gifting people with knowledge that will lead to ultimate bliss, *nirvāṇa*; in order to achieve the latter end a Buddha has to preach in accordance with the lights, however dim they be, of his hearers until at last they are enabled to hear; this exceeds the powers of sentient beings to attain the goal by their own efforts.

**Tathāgatagarbha**

The key texts in the development of these doctrines are *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*433 (‘The Sūtra on the Tathāgatagarbha’), the *Lāṅkāvatāra-sūtra*434 (‘The Sūtra on Arrival in [Sri] Lāṅkā’), the *Śrīmālādevi-simhanāda-sūtra* (‘The Sūtra on the Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā’), and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (‘The [Mahāyāna] Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra’). The teaching of *tathāgatagarbha*435 involves the belief that everyone has within whatever is necessary to attaining full buddhahood. The problem that faces this notion is that it seems to reify an *atmān* or self. We have seen *tathāgata*, the ‘thus come/gone’, used as a title for the Buddha. The difficult word here is *garbha* for it can refer to ‘womb’ or matrix, or to the ‘seed’ or embryo within the womb, or to ‘interior’. In one sense, then, this teaching indicates that everyone is a womb of the Buddha; and, in another, that the Buddha is in each person as a

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432 *Lotus Sūtra*: #4; 124f.


434 David Kalupahana takes this sūtra to be ‘a handbook for Saṅghamitra’, the Mahāyāna monk who undertook to convert Sri Lanka and who had the Mahāvihāra destroyed. See David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities*, University of Hawaii: Honolulu, 1992: 245.

435 Lusthaus argues that this doctrine is the extreme of a tendency to reify ‘or even substantialize the positive side of attaining cessation’: its equating of non-empty and emptiness and its declaring the goal to be ‘eternal, self, pure, and enjoyment’ are positions usually thought of as perversions, see Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’ang Wei-shih lun*, in the Curzon Critical Studies in Buddhism Series, RoutledgeCurzon: London and New York, 2002: 127.
Paul Williams takes *tathāgatagarbha* to mean 'containing a Tathāgata' and goes on to speculate that it 'appears to suggest that sentient beings are in reality in some sense deep down already, even now, fully-enlightened Buddhas, or intimately associated with such a state of enlightenment.' A distinction between a Tathāgata and an arhat is discussed in the *Śrīmālādevī-simhanāda-sūtra*, perhaps originally a 3rd century CE text of the Mahāsāṅghikas. This text was soon revered in Mahāyāna generally, and particularly in Japan after Prince Shōtoku Taishi (574-622) wrote a commentary on it. It influenced the *Lāṅkāvatāra-sūtra* and has a layperson, the eponymous Queen, at its centre. This wise queen clarifies that there is a difference between being a Tathāgata and being an arhat or pratyekabuddha; though the latter seek *nirvāṇa* they are far from it because they lack certain merits, have merits that are measurable and conceivable and have a remainder of faults. A Tathāgata, on the other hand, has reached the buddha state and is, in fact, the three refuges, as it were, rolled into one. The domain of a Tathāgata is then referred to as the *tathāgatagarbha* and just as the *tathāgatagarbha* is averse to *duḥkha* and aspires to *nirvāṇa*, so

...the Tathāgatagarbha is neither self nor sentient being, nor soul, nor personality. The Tathāgatagarbha is not the domain of beings who fall into the belief in a real personality, who adhere to wayward views, whose thoughts are distracted by voidness. Lord, this Tathāgatagarbha is the embryo of the Illustrious Dharmadhātu, the embryo of the Dharmakāya, the embryo of supramundane *dharma*, the embryo of the intrinsically pure *dharma*. 

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436 In Japan, the bodhisattva Jizo (Sanskrit: *Kṣitigarbha*, ‘earth-store’, ‘earth-womb’) is revered because he has vowed never to enter *nirvāṇa* so long as even one person still has the afflictions, i.e., is in one of the hells; statues of him are popular beside graves. Nakamura believe the origins of the cult lie in ‘the old belief in Mother Goddess of Earth’ see his *Indian Buddhism*: 217.

437 Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*: 104.


440 *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*: 80: ‘the refuge [the Buddha] does not seek a refuge’, unlike arhats and pratyekabuddhas who both have fear and take refuge in Tathāgatahood.

441 The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā: 96.

442 *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*: 106 (emphasis original). In her final summation before the Buddha, Queen Śrīmālā states that there are three kinds of good offspring of those who are pure regarding the dharma, generate much merit and have ‘entered the [one] path of the Great Vehicle [Mahāyāna]’, namely, any offspring who has ‘profound Doctrine through introspection’, ‘who has the knowledge in the precincts of the Dharma’,
This sutra also refers to the distinction between *nirvāṇa* as cessation of suffering and as buddha-nature or *dharmadātātu*; the former is now unconditioned *nirvāṇa*, and the latter conditioned *nirvāṇa*; likewise, the distinction between suffering and the defilement-stores becomes unconditioned *samsāra* and conditioned *samsāra*. These themes also resonate in what is one of the most influential texts in Mahāyāna, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, and we turn our attention to that sutra now.

**Buddhadhātu**

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* purports to be the final sermon of the Buddha before his *parinirvāṇa*, i.e., death and final release. In it the Buddha gives his secret teaching about the ‘great ṛtu’, a teaching, though, that contradicts that of *anātman*. The Buddha, the sutra proclaims, is actually a ‘cosmic body’ and eternal; as such he is known as *buddhakāya* or *dharmakāya*. This is a Buddha’s real body (svābhāvikakāya, ‘essence-body’) and, therefore, identical with *buddhadhātu* or buddha-nature. It is, in scholastic thinking, to this body that all buddhas identically relate. So, when the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* said that all humans possess this *kāya* as an inherent quality the seeds of its fame were sown. Distinguished from this *kāya* is the *sambhogakāya* (sāmbhogikakāya, ‘enjoyment-body’, ‘the body of communal enjoyment’), which is the means by which *dharmakāya* is differentiated into the buddhas we know as Tathāgata-Buddha, Maitreya, Amitābha, etc. These buddhas have their own *buddhaksetra* or buddha-field of activity and are celestial beings, enjoying eternal bliss; in...
earlier Buddhism it was held that, in any given world-system, there could only be one Buddha at a time; this Buddha would have to die, pass away and his teaching be forgotten before a new Buddha could be expected to arise.\textsuperscript{449} The roots of this distinction between individual Buddha and hypostasized universal Buddha, dharmakāya, lie much earlier, to wit, when the Buddha said that to see him was to see the dharma and to see the dharma was to see him.\textsuperscript{450}

In time a third kāya was developed, with which the theory of trikāya, or ‘three bodies’ was developed. This is the nirmānakāya (nairnānikakāya, ‘transformation-body’, ‘body of magical transformation’). This type of body is a manifestation of buddhas who enter the round of suffering in order to help others, e.g., Gautama Śākyamuni. Though each is different to each, yet all follow a more or less identical way of life, share similar adventures, and teach the same dharma. Also, both the sambhogakāya and the nirmānakāya share such characteristics as wisdom, meditation and compassion.\textsuperscript{451} Various terms are used to describe these ‘bodies’.\textsuperscript{452} Even though sūtras recount the Buddha as preaching to both disciples and bodhisattvas, there is a stereotype of the nirmānakāya or physical Buddha preaching to the śrāvakas and of the sambhogikakāya or heavenly Buddha preaching to bodhisattvas, in this way setting the Mahāyāna above the earlier tradition(s).\textsuperscript{453} Nagao cautiously sums up the complicated buddhakāya theory: first, the trikāya has been ‘generally accepted, studied and developed’; second, it is basically a two-body system, reflecting the relative-absolute contrast, and this probably succedeed in strongly religious situations; and, third, there even seems to be a one-body theory centred ‘on the absolute dharma-body solely.’\textsuperscript{454} Nagao is also of the view that if the Buddha ‘would simply be a transcendental, isolated character, something unrelated to human beings’ then the ‘search for enlightenment by common beings or their deliverance by the Buddha would become impossible or meaningless.’\textsuperscript{455} Quite apart from this issue the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra also addresses those who declared that they would not be saved, and this became another reason for the fame of the sūtra. These are the icchantikas, who willingly refuse the chance of nirvāna. Knowing that even these icchantikas will be saved is

\textsuperscript{449} Of course, there may be a bodhisattva during this time; Maitreya is named in various texts as the next Buddha, see Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism: 218-221.

\textsuperscript{450} See Samyutta-Nikāya III: 120; The Connected Discourses: 939.

\textsuperscript{451} See King, Buddha Nature: 73f.

\textsuperscript{452} Nagao also lists a) dharma-body, reward-body and assumed-body, and b) dharma-body, assumed-body and apparitional-body, see his Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: 249n6; for his full discussion see 103-122.

\textsuperscript{453} See Nagao, Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: 251n12.

\textsuperscript{454} Nagao, Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: 122.

\textsuperscript{455} Nagao, Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: 122.
a hopeful message for all. It is due to their possession of the buddhadhātu that the icchantikas will, nonetheless, enter nirvāṇa.\(^{450}\)

Another development in Yogācāra, was the three-nature theory or trisvabhāva. It was developed to explain how all that appears real and substantial is actually unreal and śūnya, empty. In short, it states that there are three ways of looking at all things; these ways are ‘natures’ or svabhāvā, and all things possess them, i.e., each represents a way of looking at any given ‘thing’. They are: imagined-nature (parikalpita-svabhāva), other-dependent-nature (paratantra-svabhāva), and consummated-nature (parinīspanna-svabhāva). If the imagined is the wholly unreal, then the consummated is the true or absolute as perfected by the meditator-practitioner. Between these opposites lies the other-dependent, which is to say, a nature that is contingent on something else.\(^{457}\) Because we are unawakened we imagine the world falsely, and thereby contaminate it and make it impure. Yet, this same world is also pure, also uncontaminated, at the very same time, for it has in it some who are awakened; therefore it is nirvāṇa. At this point, we can appreciate the middle position, the other-dependent-nature; we see that it is precisely this that provides the basis for the other two, for they depend on it. In this sense, it is like the pratītyasamutpāda, the dependent (co-)origination of everything, as taught by the Buddha. It is the condition of possibility for the other two natures; only here is it possible for a person to convert from the contaminated nature and attain ‘the pure’, for the contaminated could not bridge the abyss to the consummated, nor could the latter, for whom converting no longer exists.\(^{458}\) The nature of conversion is at the heart of the dispute over whether bodhi is sudden or gradual.

3.1.2 Awakening – Sudden or Gradual?

Though there is widespread debate on the issue of whether bodhi is sudden or gradual, i.e., whether it comes and, as it were, strikes the person, or whether it is the outcome of long meditative and ethical practices over huge spans of time (kalpas), our concern is more with the formation of the debate. In The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā true awakening, which it called ‘the incomparable rightly completed enlightenment’, was identified with nirvāṇa.\(^{459}\) In discussing the moment of awakening, perhaps particularly when it is accompanied by a vivid

\(^{450}\) The Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra states that the icchantika forsakes the possibility of entering nirvāṇa. Nevertheless, it goes on to use the buddha-nature doctrine to explain how even the icchantika comes ultimately to nirvāṇa.

\(^{457}\) See Nagao, Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: 61-74.

\(^{458}\) Nagao uses ‘controvertibility’ to name this relationship between the three natures, see his Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: 65-67, 123-153.

\(^{459}\) See The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā: 92; also, ‘the tastes of wisdom and liberation are identical.’
and deeply felt experience of conversion, the question of the nature of that change and the problematic of whether the change occurs suddenly, as in that moment, or is the outcome of a long process come to the fore. Is awakening without a lead-in or is it the result of long preparations? This issue has perplexed, sometimes convulsed, many strands of Buddhism. How may we conceptualize the basic distinction between the two? The question of whether one becomes enlightened 'all in a flash' or as the outcome of long and persistent practice is one that has continued to divide many, especially Japanese, Buddhists for centuries. The debate finds its archetypal form in the development of two very different schools of thought on the nature of the enlightenment experience out of the one monastery of Tung-shan in Huang Mei. The head of the monastery was Hongren (Hung-jen, 601-74), whom we know as the Fifth Patriarch of Chan (Ch’an; Japanese: Zen), in succession to Bodhidharma (Chinese: Putidamo (P’u-t‘i-ta-mo), 5th century CE); 'chan' is a sinitization of the original Sanskrit for meditation, dhyāna (Pāli: jhāna). The schools formed under two disciples of Hongren: Shenxiu (Shen-hsiu, 600-706) of the Northern or Gradual Attainment School, and Huineng (Hui-neng, 638-713) of the Southern or Sudden Enlightenment School. It was a Southern School disciple, Shenhui (Shen-hui, 670-762), who contested Shenxiu’s own claim on the patriarchate, arguing that Huineng was the true 6th patriarch. The story of the split is itself instructive and also adds to our understanding of the polemics underpinning various views of Shinran and others. Furthermore, it points to an issue of central importance for what a Buddhist way of thinking seeks to grasp by the symbol ‘awakening’. In sum, the ‘victor’ of the sudden-gradual argument, Huineng, taught that own- or self-nature, which is the seed or kernel of enlightenment [bodhi], is pure by

Gethin refers to a late 8th century dispute over the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet that centred on this question of gradual or sudden awakening: the Indian faction held for gradual awakening while the Chinese for sudden, see Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism: 266.

The usual form that I adopt for the writing of Chinese names follow pinyin; however, in quotes and after first use by myself I give the Wade-Giles variant.

Bodhidharma is said to have come to China from India about 520 CE. Chan traces its origin to his transmission of the Lankāvatāra-sūtra. In reality, it is likely that Chan as a meditation practice had long since come to China as the interest of Daoan (Tao-an, 312-385), Huiyuan (Hui-yüan, 334-416) and Daosheng (Tao-sheng, 360-434) in meditation attests, see Gethin, The Foundations of Buddhism: 261.

Important as this is in itself, its particular relevance for us lies in the way it becomes an analogue for a different, but functionally structurally similar, debate with the Christian symbol of grace.

Wong Mou-lam translates this as ‘essence of mind’.
nature’, and in its use alone ‘we can reach Buddhahood directly.’ His own account tells of the straitened circumstances of his youth, with his father dead, his mother in poverty and he making a living selling firewood. Having made a delivery of such wood to a customer one day he heard a sūtra – as it transpired, from the Diamond Sūtra – being chanted: immediately he became enlightened. This led him on a journey that eventually took him to seek Buddhahood under the guidance of Hongren. There he spent his time in splitting wood and pounding rice, until Hongren decided to see who should succeed himself and become the Sixth Patriarch. A competition was announced ‘to all the disciples’, even though Huineng’s account makes clear that he, a pounder of rice, had not heard of it. In this competition a gāthā, stanza, should be composed that would reflect the self-nature of the worthy candidate. The tutor of the monks, Shenhui, was expected to be the victor, and his gāthā, as an insight into the state of his prajñā wisdom, was well-received:

Our body is the bodhi tree,
And our mind a mirror bright.
Carefully we wipe them hour by hour,
And let no dust alight.

Hongren’s verdict on its author was that Shenhui had reached the ‘door of enlightenment’. Yet, to reach the door is not to have entered: he had not yet realized his self-nature, so he had not (yet) succeeded in entering the enlightened state. The rhetoric of the account, by showing Shenhui’s hesitancy and changes of mind, has already convinced the reader or hearer of the sūtra that Shēn-hsiu could not have attained the enlightenment he sought. In a mirror-image of his first hearing of the Diamond Sūtra, Huineng now hears a boy reciting Shenhui’s

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466 Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 67f.
467 Hui-neng records only two items about his conversation with the person reciting the Diamond Sūtra: that he had attended lectures on this sūtra that were given by Hongren, and that Hongren taught both laity and monks that they might realise their own self-nature ‘and thereby reach Buddhahood directly.’ We note that Huineng’s interlocutor is described, not as a monk, but as simply a man.
468 This would be symbolised by the passing on of both the patriarchal robe, handed down from Bodhidharma, and the dharma, which latter Wong Mu-lam glosses as ‘the esoteric teaching of the Dhyāna school’, see Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 69.
469 Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 69 and 72.
470 Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 71.
gāthā. Huineng, though he had never been to the hall nor enjoyed formal teaching, recounts: ‘[a]s soon as I heard it, I knew at once that the composer of it had not yet realized the essence of mind [self-nature]. For although I had not been taught about it at that time, I already had a general idea of it.’ One Chang Tih-yung read the gāthā for Huineng; at his request, Chang wrote down Huineng’s gāthā, which ran:

There is no bodhi tree,
Nor stand of a mirror bright.
Since all is void,
Where can the dust alight?

Hongren, as others too, immediately recognized that this gāthā, in its harmony with śūnyatā, displayed a deeper understanding; and so, that night, Hongren secretly transmitted the dharma to Huineng. This, perhaps legendary, account established Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch.

Original Awakening
Another scholar who a similar notion to that of buddhadhātu is Saichō (767-822 CE). He had a profound influence on the development of Buddhism in Japan, in particular, through his establishment of the bodhisattva precepts of the Fan wang ching, which effected the displacement of traditional, gusokukai precepts. If one’s mind is inherently pure then one should follow the Fan wang precepts, which themselves are identified with the Buddha-nature. That Saichō himself understood the Fan wang precepts to be based on the notion of the inherent enlightenment of all beings is one of the key insights of Shūrato Waka. Shirato

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471 He even claims to be illiterate, see Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 72.
472 Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 72.
473 Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 72.
474 It seems that Hongren feared for the safety of Huineng and, not for the first time in his dealing with him, avoided drawing the attention of others to Huineng, see Hui-neng, ‘Sūtra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch’: 73f., also 68.
475 The precepts are found in the tenth chuan of the Fan wang ching. Saichō established Tiantai Buddhism in Japan. From 1181 to 1201 Shinran was a monk at Enryakuji, part of the Mt Hiei complex of monasteries; Enryakuji began as Saichō’s hermitage in 786.
476 See Shūrato Waka, ‘Inherent Enlightenment (hongaku shiso) and Saichō’s Acceptance of the Bodhisattva Precepts’, in Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 14,2-3 (1987): 113-27. On 122, he summarizes: ‘Saichō considered the essence of the Fan wang precepts to be precepts based on the idea that human nature is “pure in itself,” that the essence of these precepts are innately present in sentient beings, and that if sentient beings follow the precepts that are rooted in their basic foundational nature, then they can realize and make manifest their
shows that the usage of Saichō evidences a notion of awakening that is closer to inherent than to actualized awakening (as found in the *Awakening of Faith*, putatively by Asvaghosha). The relationship between practice for awakening and its actual achievement has been examined by Jacqueline Stone. In her discussion of ‘original enlightenment’, and having looked at three typical, yet key, texts of the Tendai tradition, Stone identifies ‘a more contextualized and nuanced understanding of the relationship between practice and original enlightenment in medieval Tendai thought’. She writes:

*Hongaku* discourse may in one sense be seen as a rhetorical stance grounded in a philosophical commitment to collapsing any sort of distance between ultimate reality and the quotidian world, or between the Buddha and ordinary worldlings. How closely this ideal of ‘absolute’ nonduality is approached becomes the standard for its own claim to superiority over other doctrinal positions. Medieval Tendai *hongaku* discourse shared with the larger Mahāyāna tradition a denial of any ontological distinction between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, or between conventional and ultimate truth, but presented itself as more fully representing this nondual reality than any other tradition and therefore more profound.

How do we understand the development of thinking about *hongaku*? Tamura Yoshirō has been recognized as one of the major interpreters of Kamakura Buddhism, especially in explicating how Shinran, with Dōgen and Nichiren, developed their thinking out of Tendai medieval *hongaku* thought. Tamura’s own understanding of *hongaku* is of absolute nonduality or absolute monism, in which the principle ‘*samsāra* is *nirvāṇa*’ expresses absolute truth.

Before turning to the Pure Land tradition let us fulfil two other tasks: to say something about a text just mentioned, the *Awakening of Faith*, and to look briefly at the thinking of Daosheng (Tao-sheng, fl.397-c.432 CE) who became one of Shinran’s main sources and links a number of already enlightened nature which is within them but as yet unmanifested. This is the position of “inherent enlightenment.”


our themes. The *Awakening of Faith* has a reconstructed Sanskrit title, namely, *Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra*, though no such text is extant. Presumably of Chinese origin, then, its importance is still secure. In it, suchness (tathatā) is equated with the *tathāgatagarbha* and with the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata; suchness is ‘of eternity, bliss, Self, and purity’ and lacks nothing; it is ‘solely one’.

The essential nature of mind is ‘free from any partial perceiving’ and motionless. It is only through avidyā that differentiation comes about, though even then the world’s variety is but a manifestation of the *dharmakāya*. In this sense, it is possible to affirm reality as both śūnya and aśūnya, empty and not-empty. A similar distinction is made in relation to original enlightenment: it is the essence of mind and as such is also to be distinguished from mind ‘in the process of actualization of enlightenment’. To advance toward the Buddhist wisdom one must be ‘able to perceive that which is beyond thoughts’. While those who ‘reverently believe in’ the sutra will be rewarded ‘a man who slanders and does not believe in this treatise, for an incalculable number of aeons he will undergo immense suffering for his fault.’

Turning to Daosheng we see that his importance derives from his historical position at the confluence of Indian and Chinese Buddhism, being one of the collaborators of Kumārajīva in the latter’s task of translating key Mahāyāna texts into Chinese, 406-409. For us he is especially important in that his advocacy of sudden enlightenment entailed a certain denial of *upāya*. Daosheng distinguished two types of understanding, *chien-chieh* understanding through seeing, i.e., a direct insight into one’s own Buddha-nature, and *wen-chieh* understanding through hearing or instruction (*chiao*), i.e., what is built up through endless acts of learning. As the former is sudden and stage-less, so the latter is gradual and never-ending. Understanding through hearing depends on believing in the bits one learns; thus, one approaches it through *xing*

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488 Further, he is important as a founder of Chan Buddhism.

Thus, Daosheng establishes a correlation between enlightenment and understanding through seeing, on the one hand, and skilful means and understanding through hearing, on the other. In the realm of practice, this equates to the difference between extinguishing one's attachments to the world and the lesser reduction of such attachments. For Daosheng upāya is indicative of merely a provisional truth or ch‘uan-chiao, in contradistinction to the position of the Lotus Sūtra. For him each human has the Buddha-nature and it is this reality that counts; that all beings have buddhahātu is one of his distinctive doctrines. And for him the rational takes precedence over the magical and celestial; hence, in relation to the Pure Land, he held that there is no actual land. Also, his difficulty with sudden enlightenment as Zhidun (Chih-tun) understood it lay in the latter’s use of the ten stages to explain it; for Daosheng these stages were themselves indications of a gradualist understanding of enlightenment. Nevertheless and ironically, Daosheng’s own advocacy of reliance on scriptural passages that have been so understood that the Chinese sangha would develop its own understanding of Buddhism instead of pursuing a pattern of slavish translation of Indian scriptures, shows upāya at work against him.

3.2 Pure Land Path of Salvation

Though the period in which Buddhism first became established in Japan is the Asuka (c.500 CE-710 CE), we agree with the general view that the decisive history of Buddhism in Japan began with Prince Shōtoku Taishi (573-621), when, in 594, he formulated his seventeen-
article constitution (604 CE) for a new Japanese order. Shōtoku’s constitution is seen to endorse Buddhism as the state religion. In spite of his and other imperial efforts to establish a centralized empire, Japanese emperors were often institutionally weak; they did claim divine sonship, which gave a certain authority, of course, but they did not hold to the Chinese system of tian-ming (t'ien-ming) or ‘Mandate of Heaven’; in fact, powerful families often not only exercised but held the real power and the fortunes of Buddhism might rise or fall with these families as they supported, or not, one school over another. Thus, power and influence waxed and waned between the imperial house and oligarchies such as the Fujiwara and Taira, through the Nara (710-781) and Heian (794-1190) periods. Following the upheavals of the Heian a new period of uncertainty and risk dawned, the Kamakura period (1185-1333). During this period those who controlled the administrative system, i.e., the Bakufu, were the shōguns or feudal overlords; in effect, they ruled Japan; they were often at war with one another for supremacy and, during 1180-1185, one such, Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), defeated the Taira and established his rule from Kamakura. It is in this period, in which ‘the political order and the social fabric were disintegrating’ and a new social order was coming to birth, that there was a parallel religious ferment: various religious activists arose and played a part in this process, e.g., Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran Shōnin (1173-1262), Nichiren (1222-1282), Eisai (1141-1215), and Dōgen (1200-1253), and they reacted against such monastic establishments as Mt Hiei, which was long a religious, institutional, social and political force in Japan. Hōnen, Shinran and others felt that their time was mappō, i.e., the last age after the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, an age of decadence in which the dharma is not practiced and people are unable to be enlightened by the teachings of the Buddha. Though Prince Shōtoku was prince regent for the Empress Suiko; though he favoured Buddhism he also respected Confucianism and Shinto; also, Buddhism appealed to him in his efforts to control the power of the clans while establishing a central bureaucracy, see Joseph M. Kitagawa, Religion in Japanese History, number 7 in Lectures on the History of Religions series, Columbia University Press: New York, 1990 [1966]: 24-26. His constitution may have been a later composition but attributed to him as he was personally attracted to Buddhism. See S.N. Eisenstadt, Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1996: 256 for a more Confucian interpretation of the constitution. Heian was later known as Kyoto.

Kitagawa, Religion in Japanese History: 139; note the comparison with the later experience of the Kirishitan (Roman Catholics), in the latter half of the 16th century.

Kitagawa, Religion in Japanese History: 139; note the comparison with the later experience of the Kirishitan (Roman Catholics), in the latter half of the 16th century.

See Beasley, The Japanese Experience: 78-89. The elites of Japan, imperial and oligarchical – in Ruth Benedict’s phrase, chrysanthemum and sword – were locked in struggle and change; however, there were other changes going on in the middle and lower social strata that saw feudal structures and a Japanese sensibility develop widely, see Kitagawa, Religion in Japanese History: 86-95.

See Williams, who calls it ‘the era of total spiritual decline’, in his Mahāyāna Buddhism: 163.
the followers of each of these religious adepts institutionalized their teachings it seems that neither Hōnen nor Shinran set out to establish religious, institutionalized lineages. This, then, is the context for the reforming type of religiosity that is taken to characterize the Kamakura period and central to much of this religiosity is belief in Amida Buddha.

3.2.1 Amida Buddha

Though we do not have certainty about the rise of devotion to Amida Buddha, who is referred to as Amitābha (infinite light) or Amitāyus (immeasurable life), it is surely connected to devotion to the relics of the Buddha in various stūpas and to ‘the recollection of his qualities (buddhānusmrti / buddhānussati), and perhaps also visualization.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^2\) Probably datable to the beginning of the common era, this devotion is seen in many references to Amida and the ‘pure land’ in Sanskrit texts; yet, there is little or no evidence of ‘a Pure Land commentarial tradition’ in Indian Buddhism.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^3\) In China and Japan, though, certain Pure Land texts come to the fore. It is surely unsurprising that in times of great distress, social upheaval and economic and, perhaps, moral, dislocation the notion of a better place, of light and bliss, should suggest itself as a form of solace. Over time the idea of ‘pure lands’ or lands of bliss took a greater role in the religious practice and theorizing of Buddhists; final death-prayers expressed this hope for a happy rebirth; the strength of the prayer grew in tandem with awareness that one’s last thoughts before expiring would bear exceptional karmic worth. In contrast with the ‘pure land’ of sukhatvati that is hoped for, the world in which the Buddha teaches is called the sahā\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^4\) world; it is not a happy place.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^5\) In this sahā world, as the Buddha had foretold, the truth is not known.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^6\) We saw above that in Japan mappō was the term used for the age when the dharma was in decline, following on from the previous two ages of semblance dharma and right dharma.\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^7\) The situation was felt to be so degenerate that people could not reasonably hope to achieve emancipation by their own efforts (Japanese: jiriki, self-power). People were locked into blind passions (Japanese: bonnō); indeed, to be awakened meant the realization

\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^2\) Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*: 263.

\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^3\) This is the view of Kenneth Tanaka, which Williams takes as ‘important’, see Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*: 239.

\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^4\) This is the original Sanskrit word, from sahā lokadhātu, which is the defiled Buddha-field or land to which Śākyamuni came so that he might purify it; thus, sahā indicates that world in which we endure suffering: *Shaba sekai* in Japanese, also *edo*, the defiled world. See Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*: 215-217.

\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^5\) The *Lotus Sūtra*, for instance, makes much of this contrast, see *Lotus Sūtra*: #16; 254-256.

\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^6\) See Stone, *Original Enlightenment*: 383n139.

\(^5\)\(^0\)\(^7\) Though sahā-world and mappō derive from different conceptualities they map, for unawakened beings, virtually the same conceptual range.

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that one’s ‘self’ and everything else was bonnō. In such a corrupt age, it is only by the power of a Buddha – (Japanese: tariki, other-power) – that one can attain spiritual awakening; this awakening is gained when we completely and wholeheartedly entrust ourselves in faith to Amida’s tariki. This power to save is unassailable in that Amida has fulfilled his vow to save all. This vow is the hongan, i.e., Original or Primal Vow,508 that a bodhisattva takes before becoming fully awakened as a buddha; it encapsulates all the vows that Amida had made while still a buddha-to-be or bodhisattva. The buddha-to-be who made this vow and is now known as Amida Buddha was Dharmākara (Japanese: Hōzō Biku). Dharmākara acts out of ‘great compassion’509 for sentient beings, to effect their liberation in a way that does not set up oppositions between those who can be saved and those who are doomed to saṃsāric existence.510 In this way, his compassion is the upāya or means (Japanese: hōben) by which liberation or awakening occurs in the age of mappō. Whatever about his undoubted symbolic significance, however, there is little of historical certainty that can be said of Dharmākara, yet the story is of profound importance in Japanese Buddhism.

The story of Amida Buddha, as related in the Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra511, begins with a buddha named Lokeśvararāja who is preaching the Dharma to the local king. The sūtra states: ‘[a]t that time there was a king, who, having heard the Buddha’s exposition of the Dharma...
renounced his kingdom and the throne, and became a monk named Dharmākara. This monk, Dharmākara, out of compassion for others took a momentous decision in relation to his own path from bodhisattva to buddhahood: he chose not to become a buddha until he had helped all others to achieve buddhahood. Thus, he took 48 Vows, vows constructed as conditions he set himself to fulfil before he, as a bodhisattva is entitled to do, would consider entering into nirvāṇa as a fully awakened one. Thereby, Dharmākara became the one who is quintessentially compassionate, unwilling to enter bliss until as many as possible could be brought in with — indeed, before — him. Appeal to Amida, as Dharmākara who has fulfilled his vows, for help involved different types of devotion collectively known as nembutsu. It took such forms as ‘thinking on the Buddha’ and ‘uttering praise to Amida Buddha; the form that became classical comprised the six Chinese characters for ‘na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu’. And, it is this latter form that is most associated with Hōnen.

3.2.2 Pure Land Way (Jōdoshū) and Hōnen

Hōnen Shōnin (1133-1212), also known by the Buddhist name Genkū, was always regarded by Shinran as the latter’s true teacher of Shin Buddhism (Japanese: Jōdo). Hōnen was a monk on Mt Hiei, itself the largest Tendai monastic centre of the time. He viewed the world of his time very negatively, and was very concerned for the majority for whom the rigours of monastic life were either too arduous or simply impracticable and who seemed outside all hope of salvation. Thus, in contrast to the rigors of the paths to awakening that various monks had elaborated, Hōnen came to formulate the ‘easy path’ of nembutsu. He does not deny that bodhicitta, ‘thought for or aspiration after awakening’, is necessary for becoming a

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513 Larger Sūtra: 267c-269b; Inagaki, Three Pure Land Sutras: 32-39. Different versions of the Pure Land scriptures and other texts have differing sets of vows, see Hōnen’s Shenchakushō: 192.
514 It is known in Chinese as nianfo (ni-en-fo); originally, more a ‘thinking of’ the Buddha, it became a meditation proper from the time of the Kuan wu-liang-shou ching, see Hōnen’s Shenchakushō: 189.
515 See, for instance, Honen the Buddhist Saint: 43, and below.
516 Though we regard Shinran as the founder of an important school, we can be sure that he himself would have looked, not to himself, but to Hōnen as the founder.
518 This is not a denial of bodhicitta (Chinese: putixin (p’u-t’i-hsin); Japanese: bodaishin), a charge laid against Hōnen (see below), for the very reason that the present mappō means that no one without the external aid can attain bodhi.
buddha; however, 'it is out of the question for them [ordinary people] by their own power either to make vows or to practice the disciplines necessary to Buddhahood'; instead, they must rely on the other-power of the buddha Amida, who in fulfilling his vow, 'is at this very moment present and alive in the world' and has 'power to come forth to welcome to His land those oppressed by the very worst karma, and you ought to believe that by simply calling upon His name you will be born there, quite irrespective of whether you have merit inherited from former lives or not, and no matter whether your sins be light or heavy.'

Taking his cue from the distinction of Daochuo (Tao-ch’o; Japanese: Dōshaku, 562-645) between the 'holy path' and 'birth in the Pure Land (ójō)', Hōnen argues that 'the Gateway of the Holy Path', whether in its vinaya, which is to say early Buddhist, or its Mahāyāna forms is 'the way of difficult practice'; in contrast, birth in the Pure Land is 'the way of easy practice'.

To strengthen this argument he cites Tanluan: the 'way of difficult practice is a way of trying to reach the stage of nonretrogression in an age of the five defilements, when no Buddha dwells in the world', and the 'way of easy practice is to desire birth in the Pure Land only my means of faith in the Buddha...[i.e.,] being carried along by the power of the Buddha’s vows'. It is this latter that Shinran would modify and make the corner-stone of his faith. For Hōnen himself, though, the way of ójō is summed up thus:

There are various kinds of Nembutsu, but the one which I advocate – repeating the six mystical characters – may be said to include all the other religious disciplines. The only thing is to put one’s heartfelt trust in the Original Vow, repeat the sacred name with one’s lips, and tell the rosary with one’s fingers. It is the keeping of one’s mind continually fixed thereon which constitutes the karma resulting in certain Ójō. Seeing the practice may be carried on, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying, whenever or wheresoever one may be, quite irrespective of whether one is impure in himself or in his speech, the Nembutsu is called an easy practice. Only remember that the first thing of all is to do it with a pure heart, and thus to exhort others to do it. You will then find that by degrees your heart will become purer and purer.

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519 Hōnen the Buddhist Saint: 44-46.
520 Hōnen also uses ‘Hinayāna’ in this context, too, though I do not detect any negative overtones such as often accompany its use.
521 Hōnen’s Shenchakushō: 56 Dharmākara -62; Daochuo is cited on 56f.; in support, Tanluan is cited on 60f.
522 Hōnen’s Shenchakushō: 60; Tanluan is revered as the third patriarch of Shin and the first major figure of Pure Land in China.
523 Hōnen the Buddhist Saint: 48; the nembutsu is of ‘universal application’, see 66.
In time such an exclusive view of the nembutsu ran contrary to the interests of others who promoted different practices; indeed, in 1207, Hōnen and Shinran would be sent into exile. It is from Hōnen, too, that the designation of the Larger and Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtras, and the Meditation Sūtra, and the Jōdo Ronchū of Tanluan, as the principal scriptures of Jōdo derives. The pattern of quoting from past masters, so strong a feature of Shinran’s major work, was set by Hōnen himself, especially in his Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū.\footnote{Shinran revered this text, called in Chinese 王聖論鈔, and treating Tanluan as a bodhisattva, see Bandō Shōjun, ‘Shinran’s Indebtedness to T’an-luan’, in Alfred Bloom (ed.), Living in Amida’s Universal Vow: Essays in Shin Buddhism, with a Foreword by Taitetsu Unno, in the Perennial Philosophy Series, World Wisdom: Bloomington IN, 2004: 217-229: 220f.}

Hōnen, we see, states that the practice of nembutsu is the only one necessary to secure birth in the Pure Land.\footnote{Both the Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū and the Kyōgyōshinshō conform to Chinese Sung dynasty monrui form of collected passages, wherein the citations establish the scriptural evidence for, and, by extension, counter the charge of arbitrariness of the compiler’s position, see the Sangyō ōjō monrui (‘A Collection of Passages on the Types of Birth in the Three Pure Land Sutras’) in Shinran, Collected Works of Shinran I: 637-652; note also the full title of Shinran’s Kyōgyōshinshō, namely, Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui (see below). For Hōnen’s Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū see Hōnen’s Senchakushū: Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow (Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū), translated and edited with an Introduction by Senchakushū English Translation Project, in Classics in East Asian Buddhism (series), Kuroda Institute with University of Hawai’i: Honolulu and Sōgō Bukkyō Kenkyūjo (Taisho University): Tokyo, 1998. This text emphasizes the centrality of the 18th Vow, the Original or Primal Vow, in Hōnen’s religious thinking.} However, he was vigorously attacked by Myōe Shōnin (1173-1232). Myōe was a scholar and visionary, well-respected for his zeal and attention to tradition.\footnote{See his Ichimaikishōmon, also Hōnen’s Shenchakushō: 189; reciting the nembutsu is equated with following the 18th Vow of the Larger Sūtra.}

Myōe argued, in his Zaitjarin (‘Smashing a Heterodox Dharma Wheel’), that saying the nembutsu was not faithful to the notion of bodhicitta (aspiration for enlightenment).\footnote{He once wrote: ‘Like the mind, so also the Buddha; / Like the Buddha, all sentient beings. / The mind, the Buddha, and all sentient beings, / There is no difference among these three’, cited in Mark T. Unno, ‘The Body of Time and the Discourse of Precepts’, in Richard K. Payne and Taigen Dan Leighton (eds.), Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism, Routledge: Abingdon and New York, 2006: 126-147: 143; he also cut off one of his ears in his zeal to suffer like the Buddha of jātakas.}

Without bodhicitta, in the Mahāyāna view, there can be no bodhisattva; thus, the argument runs, Hōnen is not truly Buddhist.\footnote{Bandō, ‘Shinran’s Indebtedness to T’an-luan’: 217f.}

It may be that Shinran’s Kyōgyōshinshō was or, at least, began...
as a formal reply to Myōe, as well as a defence of his master, Hōnen. In time, Shinran would develop his own buddhology of how Amida acts to save those who, in a time of waning faith and political and social turmoil, cannot save themselves. For Shinran, faith directly relates to the power of Amida Buddha; thus, faith in Amida is tariki ekō, ‘according to other power’, i.e., the power of Amida Buddha; this is in contrast to jiriki or one’s own power. It is to this construction of a salvific schema beyond all human capacity, and to its formulation, that we now turn.

3.2.3 True Pure Land Way (Jōdoshinshū) and Shinran

For long Gotuku Shinran\(^{530}\) (1173-1263) was considered more a mythological than a historical figure, despite the existence of works attributed to his authorship, the witness of other writers, and the existence of the Jōdoshinshū tradition. The fortuitous discovery, in the Nishi-Honganji headquarters\(^{531}\) in Kyoto, in 1921, of ten letters written by Eshinni, Shinran’s wife, to their daughter, Kakushinni, dispelled all such doubts.\(^{532}\) This self-styled ‘disciple of Sākyamuni’ emerges as one of the world’s great religious geniuses. Shinran, like his teacher, Hōnen, had been a monk\(^{533}\) on Mt Hiei; he was a monk for twenty years there. In 1201, as he reached the ninety-fifth day of a hundred day retreat, he had a vision that prompted him to go to Hōnen and join him in the latter’s retreat; here he made a commitment to follow the nembutsu, which is the recitation of a statement of faith in the power of Amida Buddha. Shinran became Hōnen’s disciple and, though the latter remained a monk, left the religious

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\(^{530}\) He was also known as Hannen, Shakku, and Zenshin, and today most commonly perhaps as Shinran Shōnin. Hōnen, too, called himself Gotuku, i.e., ‘stubble-headed’.

\(^{531}\) That is ‘Honganji of the West’, one of the two great headquarters of Jōdoshinshū in Japan; the other is Higashi-Honganji, ‘Honganji of the East’, and it follows the Ōtani branch. Before the enforced separation into two branches the original sect was under the Hompa-Honganji.

\(^{532}\) See Yoshiko Ohtani, The Life of Eshinni: Wife of Shinran Shōnin, translated by Taitetsu Unno, [publication details only in Japanese], 1990: especially 72; see also Unno’s own account in Taitetsu Unno, Shin Buddhism: Bits of Rubble Turn into Gold, Doubleday: New York, 2002: 213-21. We note how the finding of these texts undermines the general argument that we have seen used to cast doubt on the (early) existence of Mahāyāna, namely, the argument that the putatively historical is to be doubted unless there is a basis of non-scriptural attestation.

\(^{533}\) Eshinni tells us he was a dōsō, a lower rank monk, see Ohtani, The Life of Eshinni: 93, from Letter 3.
life and married Eshinni. Later, husband and wife separated\textsuperscript{534} and their daughter, Kakushinni, took care of the ageing Shinran.

Conversion

It was his visionary experience that prompted Shinran’s conversion experience; this conversion had, as its context, his religious practice (Japanese: \textit{gyō}), which had a distinctly compassionate form.\textsuperscript{534} Shinran’s concern for the uneducated and poor is evident not just from the late writings; already as a younger and troubled religious person he had seen the misery of ordinary people at close quarters, and so, towards the end of his period of exile, he resolved to recite the three sūtras that form the Pure Land scriptures a thousand times out of compassion for them, such a practice being a regular form of merit-making. Eshinni takes up the story; she quotes her husband from the year 1231, when he is about fifty years old:

Then I remembered an incident which occurred seventeen or eighteen years ago, when I began reading the Triple Pure Land Sūtras faithfully a thousand times for the benefit of sentient beings. I suddenly realized the grave mistake I was making, for while I truly felt that the repayment of the Buddha’s blessing is to believe, as in the saying, ‘To believe the teaching oneself and make others believe this is the most difficult of all difficulties,’ yet I attempted to read the sūtra as if to complement the saying on nembutsu which should have been sufficient by itself. Thus, I stopped reading the sūtra.\textsuperscript{536}

On this occasion, Shinran had an insight into what he was doing that would shape the rest of his thinking and teaching and, ultimately, the course of Jōdo shinshū. He realized – or, awoke to reality – that his practice of reciting the sūtras undermined the efficacy of the nembutsu itself, for he had been seeking to effect something, a good, that was actually beyond his ability. The true worker of good for others, he came to realize, is Amida. Thus, for the person who truly believes in the merit of the nembutsu the only essential (though this is ‘the most difficult of all difficulties’) is acceptance of what Amida gives; to engage in religious practices, however worthwhile, is to seek, by one’s own efforts, to out-do the gift already

\textsuperscript{534} This would have been about 1254, when Eshinni was 72 or 73, and Shinran 81 or 82. We do not know why she left, though her letters make clear that she was in charge of the household at Echigo. The evidence for what little we do know of Shinran the person comes almost exclusively from these letters of Eshinni to their daughter, Kakushinni, who had stayed close to her father, in Kyoto, after Eshinni herself had decided to return to her own native place, Echigo.

\textsuperscript{535} We see this in particular when Shinran, as one of Hōnen’s disciples, was exiled due to a scandal involving other disciples of Hōnen.

\textsuperscript{536} Ohtani, \textit{The Life of Eshinni}: 95f., from Letter 5.
given. In order to confirm his own teaching on the value of the nembutsu Shinran attests to his own rejection of the ‘path of the sages’, i.e., the path which had been followed traditionally and which consisted of various practices and human endeavours.537 This is in line with his exposition of Vasubandhu (Chinese: Dianqin (Tien-ch’in); Japanese: Tenjin, 4th century CE) and Shandao (Shan-tao; Japanese: Zendō, 613-681):

Now, I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, having respectfully accepted the exposition of the master of discourse [Vasubandhu] and the exhortation of the master of this school [Shandao], left forever the temporary gate of the thousands of practices and various good acts and departed from the teaching for the Birth beneath the Twin Shala Trees. Having converted to the True Gate of cultivating the roots of good and the roots of virtue, I whole-heartedly awakened the aspiration for Incomprehensible Birth. However, I have now finally left the provisional True Gate and turned into the sea of the Best-selected Vow.538

Shinran, as does Hōnen before him, pays much attention to the contrast between the ‘holy path’ or the ‘path of the sages’ and the ‘Pure Land path’.539 Though it is his purpose to expound the latter, he does not deny that both offer salvation; however, the former relies on the efforts or capacity of the practitioner. Because we are in the mappō era and no longer in the Right Dharma540 era, people no longer enjoy the capacity to achieve salvation through reliance on their own practice. As ‘we are in the fourth five-hundred-year period after the Buddha’s passing’541, when the Dharma is almost hidden, it is no longer possible for us to rely on ourselves. In this way, Shinran prepares us to accept the only other alternative, that is, the Pure Land path. In this he is following his master, Hōnen. In order to ‘practice the path’, that is, to follow the difficult way of religious practices carried out over ‘ten thousand kalpas’ both time and wisdom are needed, something that is illustrated effectively in the image of setting a fire: on the one hand, one does not rub green wood, which needs time for it to become

537 The distinction between the Path of the Sages and that of the Pure Land is also the distinction between practices and faith, or between self-power and other power. Shinran had the Chinese Daochuo (Tao-ch’o) to thank for this formulation. See Unno, Shin Buddhism: 74.
538 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 6.68; Collected Works of Shinran I: 240.
539 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 6.35; Collected Works of Shinran I: 222f; also Shinran, Tannishō chapter IV in Collected Works of Shinran I: 659-680: 663.
540 That is, the 500 years following the parinirvāṇa of the Buddha.
541 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 6.75; Collected Works of Shinran I: 243. Later, he will cite Daochuo, from the Great Collection Sūtra: ‘During the age of the Decadent Dharma, billions of sentient beings will practice the Way, but not even one will attain it’, Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 6.77; Collected Works of Shinran I: 244.
combustible, and, on the other, one does not merely break pieces of dry wood; the former indicates that the time has to be ripe, and the latter that there must be no lack of wisdom. Thus, 'the only path that affords passage [to realization]’ is the Pure Land way. The impulse or élan of this path is compassion for those who are of themselves unable to attain bodhi, as least in their current birth. Before we turn to his account of compassion, however, a word must be said about Shinran’s distinctive way of expounding his views and persuading his audience of the veracity of what he teaches.

Shinran’s *modus explicandi*

From what we have already observed, Shinran was a disciple and follower of a religious way of life. He put the Pure Land scriptures at the centre of his life and he described himself as a disciple of Hōnen. He taught with authority: though he cites many of the patriarchs of *Jōdoshinshū* he is not afraid to reinterpret them, including Tanluan, Shandao and Hōnen himself. For many of his followers and interpreters it is texts such as the *Shōshinge* and the *Tannishō* that reveal the heart of the teaching of Shinran. While not denying the accessibility of such writings as these I would claim that the true genius of Shinran is to be found in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. First, it is from the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that some of the finest of his short works, such as the *Shōshinge*, derive. Second, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* offers the more ample interpretation of Shinran’s positions; it is a doctrinal work, with closely argued points and much citation of scriptural passages: the power of the argument derives from the skillfulness with which Shinran weaves together these quotations into a synthetic harmony, making the words his own. Third, and more importantly, it is the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that displays the true depth of faith that inspired the religious and buddhological thinking of Shinran. Though one might assume that the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is but a collection of quotations from others, in traditional *monrui* form, a closer reading discloses not simply a collection of ‘proof


543 This work is not by Shinran, though regarded as authentically his teaching, see below.

544 Probably, Shinran began to compose it while he lived and taught in the Kanto region, 1213-1235. The date 1234 is recorded for its completion; however, he worked on it throughout the rest of his life, correcting and bettering it, ‘spécialement entre soixante-quinze et quatre-vingt-cinq ans’, in Gira’s opinion, see his *Le Sens de la Conversion dans l’Enseignement de Shinran*: 605. It has some 376 citations from 63 varied sources, see Ducor, *Shinran*: 91. For Keel, the whole corpus of Shinran, including ‘his most systematic work, the *Kyōgyōshinshō*...ring with the voice of a man in deep existential anguish over his own state of “sinking in an immense ocean of desires and attachments”’, see Hee-Sung Keel, *Understanding Shinran: A Dialogical Approach*, number 6 in Nanzan Studies in Asian Religions, Asian Humanities Press: Fremont CA, 1996: 30.
texts’ but a distinctly religious construction\textsuperscript{545} of salvation by a genius who is formulating his own complex argument using the full panoply of points made by previous Buddhists. In collecting, collating and collimating his sources in the manner that he does, Shinran expounds his own buddhology of Amida’s acting not only in favour of humans but in their stead when they are unable to follow the dharma along the ‘difficult path’ laid down long before. His study and life experiences have made clear to Shinran that Amida offers an ‘easy path’, in virtue of the fact that Amida has already trodden the difficult path and has achieved such a store of merit that he can gift all others with that merit necessary for their entry into the pure land; Amida achieves in them what they cannot achieve, no matter what their efforts or motivations, of themselves. The consequence of these reflections is Shinran’s distillation of all Pure Land teachings into a buddhology of Amida’s salvific efficacy by means of the \textit{nembutsu} practice, which is to say Shinran’s own explication, itself different from those of his predecessors, including Hōnen’s.\textsuperscript{546}

Compassion

Shinran shows that it is not just the pure and worthy who will enter into the Pure Land; those who are otherwise wholly unworthy can, and will, through faith in the power of Amida enter into the awakened state. Even those ‘who commit the five gravest offenses, abusers of the Dharma and those without any potential for goodness’ can be saved; the Buddha seeks their delivery from suffering ‘especially’. In is in the shorter and more famous \textit{Tannisho}\textsuperscript{547} that Shinran expresses this teaching concerning salvation in its strongest form. There he says:

Thus, even the good person attains birth, how much more so the evil person!\textsuperscript{548}

Though this is a profound message of hope for people sunk in ‘karmic evil’, yet, few have taken it up. Further and not unexpectedly, such a view could, and would, give rise to a certain antinomianism: this is \textit{zoaku-muge} or the heresy of licensed evil, such that it could be held that not being sinful itself displayed a lack of faith in Amida’s power to save. Of course, this

\textsuperscript{545} Ducor calls it ‘une création propre’, the originality of which is revealed through ‘l’habile enchaînement des citations, que Shinran s’approprie en les ponctuant de ses commentaires personnels’, Ducor, \textit{Shinran}: 91.

\textsuperscript{546} See below.

\textsuperscript{547} After Shinran’s death, Yui-en compiled the text known as the \textit{Tannishō or A Record in Lament of Divergences}, which is written to counter certain erroneous views that were being attributed to Shinran. While the first part records various quotations from Shinran (chapters 1-10), the rest (chapters 11-18) is written by Yui-en himself, who is solely concerned to ‘disperse the doubts of fellow practicers’, see Yui-en’s Preface, \textit{Tannishō}, in \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 661.

\textsuperscript{548} Shinran, \textit{Tannishō}: chapter III; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 663.
notion has no part in the actual teaching of Shinran, and he explicitly condemns such sentiments.\textsuperscript{549} Because it was already stated in the tradition that anyone who abused the Dharma would go to hell there is, then, in the possibility of salvation for the sinner a problem for Shinran’s inclusive salvation. In response, Shinran’s strategy is to adopt Shandao’s formulation of the problem in the latter’s \textit{Commentary on the Non-meditative Practice}:

According to the Forty-eight Vows, only those who commit the five gravest offenses and those who abuse the right Dharma are excluded from attainment of birth. Here, in the passage of the \textit{Contemplation Sutra} on the lowest grade of the lowest class it is disclosed that those who abuse the Dharma are rejected but those who commit the five gravest offenses are saved.\textsuperscript{550}

To commit these evils is, indeed, to fall into Avīci hell. However, Shandao, in building his re-interpretation, continues:

Fearing that we would commit these two kinds of offenses, the Tathāgata, through skillful means, forbids us to commit them, saying that offenders will not attain birth. \textit{This does not mean that they are not really saved and embraced.}\textsuperscript{551}

The presumption here is that the five gravest offences have been committed; in consequence, this state of affairs becomes the catalyst for ensuring that the offenders will not fall further. Since, then, abuse of the Dharma has not yet occurred, the warning is given of the dire consequences that would follow if such abuse occurred. As regards these offences, there is a variety of traditions as to what constitutes the five grave offences, though all contain references to killing of a parent or an arhat, shedding a Buddha’s blood, destroying the harmony of the Saṅgha.\textsuperscript{552} The central point is that they result in ‘uninterrupted pain’ in Avīci hell, i.e., in one of the worst situations imaginable. On the other hand, there is good news: those who abuse the Dharma will attain spiritual oneness, like river-water that runs into the sea and becomes one with it once they ‘encounter the Primal Vow’.\textsuperscript{553} Though Shinran describes those without any potential for good as abandoning the ‘the seed of Buddhahood’\textsuperscript{554}

\textsuperscript{549} See Shinran’s letter dated 19\textsuperscript{th} day, 8\textsuperscript{th} month in 1252, as quoted in Unno, \textit{Shin Buddhism}: 125. Also, see Shinran, \textit{Tannishō}: chapter XIII; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 670-672.

\textsuperscript{550} Shinran, \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} 3.121; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 148.

\textsuperscript{551} Shinran, \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} 3.121; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 148 (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{552} See Shinran, \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} 3.123; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 149f., where Shinran details the accounts from the Abhidharmakosa, the \textit{Sutra Taught to Nigranthas}, the Ten Wheel Sutra of Ksitigarbha.

\textsuperscript{553} See Shinran, \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} 2.102; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 72f., from Shinran’s own ‘Hymn of True Faith and the Nembutsu’, see 69-74.

\textsuperscript{554} Shinran, \textit{Kyōgyōshinshō} 3.122; \textit{Collected Works of Shinran} I: 149.
he allows that they too can attain birth ‘if they turn about at heart’, i.e., convert. Clearly, Shinran thinks of himself as an icchanta, one of ‘those who lack the seed of Buddhahood’, for whom nembutso practice is essential if he, too, it to be reborn into Amida’s buddha-land.555

Nembutso Practice

The practice that brings about both compassion and conversion is recitation of the nembutso, i.e., to say the namo-amida-butsu in honour of Amida Buddha.556 This is the core expression of Jōdoshinshū as for Jōdōshū Buddhism, for in it the believer affirms faith in Dharmakara-Amida’s vow that he would bring his fellow humans into oneness with himself, i.e., that they would be reborn into ‘the land of bliss’, the Pure Land. Hōnen recited the nembutso many thousands of times daily. Shinran, too, recited the name (Japanese: myōgō) of Amida Buddha incessantly: it is the sole religious practice suitable for decadent times. Yet, there is a difference between Hōnen and Shinran. For Hōnen the nembutso is a ‘taking refuge’, in which the name of Amida is a sign of salvation. This type of practice was derived by both Hōnen and Shinran from the teaching of Shandao. In reciting the formula, Namu Amida Butsu, believers express their faith in the compassionate power of Amida Buddha to fill their minds and hearts with Amida’s alone. However, with Shinran, we see a subtle if decisive shift in meaning: for him, the myōgō itself is salvation. The believer does not turn to Amida for ‘refuge’, instead, Amida comes to the believer as refuge. Though we speak of reciting the nembutso it is, we now realize, more correct to speak of ‘hearing’ the nembutso, in that it is Amida who truly utters it: the true believer manifests it. The very experience of faith in the nembutso – shinjin – is this hearing (Japanese: mon) which awakens one to the true (Buddha) home. No longer is one lost in ignorance or mumyō.557 Now one is transformed by wisdom, prajñā. This practice is to be distinguished from all others such that any easy identification of Shinran’s nembutso practice with other religious practices, such as those now left aside by both himself and Hōnen before him, must be rigorously avoided. The problem that Shinran identifies with religious practices is that they necessarily entail the idea that, in faithful following of them, one can effect one’s own emancipation or salvation. Any idea that Shinran has really only simplified the practices into a single all-sufficient one thus fails to grasp the radicality of his actual proposal. He strengthens his position by examining what it is that bodhisattvas do.

556 We have seen that this term can otherwise mean meditating on a particular Buddha-image or focusing one’s thought on the Buddha.
557 In Sanskrit, avidyā.
When Shinran examines the practices of bodhisattvas on their way to bodhi he is led to the conclusion that this is, in reality, 'non-practicing', for the 'true essence of all existence' is tathatā or suchness. Thus, all is oneness. Nevertheless, he takes Tanluan's distinction between essence and function: '[t]he essence is simply oneness, but its function is divided into four.' Tanluan then examines these four, thus:

First, without moving bodily from one Buddha-land, the bodhisattvas go through the ten quarters assuming various transformed bodies and practicing in accord with reality and thus constantly performing the Buddha's work...Second, their accommodated and transformed bodies, at every moment, neither before nor after, radiate in one thought and one moment a great light that reaches everywhere throughout the worlds of the ten quarters, and they reach and guide sentient beings. They perform practices and acts with a variety of skillful means and eradicate the pain of all sentient beings...Third, in all worlds without exception, they illumine the assemblies of the Buddhas and the members of the great assemblies, all without exception, vastly and incalculably; and they make offerings and pay homage to and praise the virtues of the Buddha-tathagatas...Fourth, in places throughout the worlds of the ten quarters where the three treasures do not exist, they sustain and adorn the great ocean of virtue of the treasures of the Buddha, dharma, and sangha, and manifesting them everywhere, they lead beings to realization of practice in accord with reality.

This power of Buddha-dharma benefits in a variety of ways, and, as Shandao says, the people should 'undertake practice in accord with your opportunities and conditions and seek emancipation.' He clarifies:

What I desire is the practice corresponding to my conditions; that is not what you seek. What you desire is the practice corresponding to your conditions; that is not what I seek. Each person's performance of practices in accord with his aspirations unfailingly leads to rapid emancipation.

In Japanese, shinnyo; another Japanese word is hosshō, which is more literally 'thing-ness' and thus dharmatā in Sanskrit, see Collected Works of Shinran II: 208f. See also Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 162: this practicing (gyō), which is non-practice, is really 'practicing in accord with reality.'

These functions are taken from Tanluan's commentary, the Jōdo Ronchū, on Vasubandhu's Jōdo Ron (Treatise on the Pure Land), which itself is based largely on the Larger Sutra, see Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.15-17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 158f., and Collected Works of Shinran II: 276, 292.

See Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 162-164.

See Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 3.13; Collected Works of Shinran I: 89 (emphases are original). At this point Shinran includes the Parable of the White Path, 3.13; Collected Works of Shinran I: 89-91.
For instance, if one follows the *nembutsu* in accord with Amida’s fulfilled vow to save all then one will achieve buddhahood ahead of the next proclaimed Buddha, namely, Maitreya, and Maitreya, who will assuredly become a buddha, will not do so for another 5,670,000,000 years! For those who ‘always sincerely perform the exclusive practice of the Nembutsu’ it is irrelevant whether it be done in forest or village, in the day or night, sitting or lying down. In short, ‘the significance of the Name [of Amida]’ is identified with the dharma. The core of what Shinran expounds and of what the *nembutsu* entails is succinctly stated at the beginning of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Here, in the Preface, he uses terminology that would be familiar to adherents of the Pāli Canon – *samsāra*, *prajñā* or wisdom, and *avidyā* or ignorance – and he places, even before his discussion of the Primal Vow (i.e., the 18th), ‘the inconceivable universal Vow’, (i.e., the 17th) to the forefront:

> When I humbly contemplate matters, I realize that the inconceivable universal Vow is the great ship that carries us across the sea of *samsāra* which is difficult to cross and that the unhindered Light is the sun of wisdom which breaks the darkness of ignorance.

This Vow concerns the ‘Vow of Great Compassion’ and from it derives the practice of calling on ‘the Name of the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light’ in this vow Dharmākara-Amida vows not to attain perfect enlightenment unless all the Buddhas praise the Name. The buddhological issue that Shinran is establishing here is the applicability of the principle that what one Buddha preaches is preached by all buddhas, and what all buddhas preach is preached by this Buddha.

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563 See Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō* 3.92; *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 118, where Shinran is quoting from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.
564 See Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō* 3.9; *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 82f.
565 Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō* 2.1; *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 13. The heart of Shinran’s thinking is in faith in the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha, the subject of his third chapter. That, in chapter two, he treats of practice before faith is not, however, a flaw in Shinran’s thinking. He repeatedly returns to the idea of practice. On the one hand, the various acts humans practice to win salvation are not equal to the task: human capacities fail in these decadent times. On the other hand, there is one practice, namely, the *nembutsu*, which, when undertaken in faith, assures that Amida will take the practitioner into the Pure Land. What this practice entails is then treated in chapter three.
566 See Larger Sūtra: #7
567 Shinran has expressed this more poetically in his ‘Hymn of the Two Gateways of Entrance and Emergence’: Śākyamuni and all the other Buddhas / Are truly our compassionate father and mother. Śākyamuni and Amida are our father and our mother, / Full of love and compassion for us; / Guiding us through the various skillful means, / They bring us to awaken the supreme shinjin’. see Shinran, *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*: 74;
What one Buddha teaches is what all Buddhas teach.

What all Buddhas teach, one Buddha teaches.  

For Shinran one moves from the realm of the 19th Vow to the 20th and from there to that of the 18th. It is only in the latter movement that Shinran talks of transformation (tenzu), when he terms the movement ‘transforming and entering (ten-nyū)’. This moment of transformation, in which ‘the realization of shinjin’ as entrusting oneself to the Primal Vow takes place, is what the tradition called the stage of non-retrogression. The signal difference is that, with Shinran, this stage is reached in the present life. Having examined, then, the positive qualities of the Vow in the light of selected texts from the tradition Shinran will return again to accounts of certain personages mentioned in the earliest traditions in order to show how they – long since – reflect the new view of Buddhism that he now propounds. Already in his opening Preface Shinran has called our attention to Devadatta, Ajātashatru and Vaidehi: their stories will illustrate the supreme potency of faith in the Buddha. In that Preface he writes:

> When the opportunity to reveal the Pure Land Way became ripe, Devadatta incited Ajatashatru to commit grave offenses; and when a person to be saved by the Pure Land practice appeared, Shakyamuni led Vaidehi to choose her birth in the Land of Peace and Provision. All this shows that human incarnations of sages equally sought to deliver multitudes from suffering and that the World Hero, out of pity, especially wished to save those who commit the five gravest offenses, abusers of the Dharma and those without any potential for goodness.  

Of the different types of sūtras, Shinran affirms both that it is only those of the Buddha that can be relied upon, and that the three Pure Land sūtras are indeed by the Buddha. This entails a certain faith in the Buddha, though for Shinran the greater faith is Buddha’s shinjin as it is in us.

*Collected Works of Shinran* I: 380

568 The words are from Shandao, see Shinran, * Kyōgyōshinshō* 3.13; *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 86f.

569 From cultivating practices to cultivating the single practice of reciting the nembutsu; in other words, both sets of practices belong to the realm of self-power. It may be that this forward-and-back movement suggested to Shinran the imagery of ‘crosswise leap (ōchō)’, pivotal as we will see to his soteriology.

570 In the case of the first move Shinran talks of ‘turning and entering’ (*e-nyū*).

571 Shinran, like Hönen, rejected the previous paths towards salvation; unlike Hönen, though, Shinran rejected even the latter’s one practice of the nembutsu, for it, like all these other practices, is upāya.


573 Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō* 6.70; *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 241; the five types mentioned here are: the Buddha’s exposition, his disciples’ exposition, the exposition of the heavenly beings or hermit-sages, the exposition of demigods, and the exposition of miraculous spirits. His advice is: do not rely on the latter four.
Faith in Amida - *shinjin*

All other practices, such as those learnt during his days as a monk on Mt Hiei, the so-called ‘path of the sages’, are ineffective in comparison with the power of Amida; they really serve to keep one from this other-power or *tariki*. An early account, recorded by his wife, gives an insight into Shinran, the well-intentioned practitioner of the ‘way of the sages’, and his dawning understanding of faith:

A similar thought must have still remained, lingering in my mind. Once people begin thinking like this, it’s difficult to change. When I realized how difficult it is to get rid of self-generated faith and vowed to be constantly alert about it, there was no longer any need to read the sutra. And so on the dawn of the fourth day in bed [with fever and headache], I said, ‘It must be truly so.’

The deep trust or *shinjin* in Amida’s power is almost invariably qualified as ‘true and real’. It is ‘the heart and mind without doubt’. It is not that we achieve this entrusting faith but, rather, that we realize that we are established in it; it is given to us. Shinran expresses it as being grasped in the compassionate light of the Buddha. He also expresses it as that deep hearing of the Name (*nembutsu*) such that the Primal Vow is made real and one has no doubt that one enters the ‘land of bliss’; all of this is the work of the sincere mind of Amida. In yet another evocative phrase, he likens it to a diamond: *shinjin* is ‘the diamondlike mind’.

There are two aspects to this mind of trust, as taught in one of Shinran’s favourite texts, *Essentials of Faith Alone*: one, to believe oneself to be truly a *bombu* or foolish person, and,

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576 Shinran, *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls (Sōgō shinzō meimon)*: ‘Through the karmic power of the great Vow, the person who has realized true and real shinjin naturally is in accord with the cause of birth in the Pure Land and is drawn by the Buddha’s karmic power; hence the going is easy, and ascending to and attaining the supreme nirvana is without limit.’
577 See Shinran, *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling (Ichinen tanen mon’i)*: ‘When one realizes true and real shinjin, one is immediately grasped and held within the heart of the Buddha of unhindered light [Amida], never to be abandoned.’ Note that the original document is dated by Shinran when in his eighty-fifth year. In his *Jogai Wasan*, which are ‘Nine Hymns No Included in the Three Collections of Wasan’, attributed to Shinran, translated by Hisao Inagaki, downloaded from http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/jogai-wasan.htm Shinran expresses this poetically: ‘Only those who mindfully call the Name are transformed / As if tiles and pebbles were turned into gold’, see *Jogai Wasan* #5.
578 See Shinran, *Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone’ (Yuishinshō mon’i)* the diamond is ‘never breaking, or degenerating, or becoming fragmented’, see *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 455. In the same work he later writes that this ‘one mind is the shinjin of leaping crosswise’, see *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 463.
second, to believe ‘deeply and decisively’ in the power of Amida. People who possess this deep faith are rare, though. Those who allow themselves to be grasped by the power of the Primal Vow find going to the Pure Land easy. The consequence of realizing this shinjin is that we rejoice, that we are filled with uninterrupted joy. For Shinran this joy is itself indicative of our being ‘people equal to the Buddhas.’ The essence of entrusting (shingyō) is for us the sincere mind of the Tathāgata which, in the words of the Larger Sūtra, is ‘benefitting others and directing virtue.’ Yet, it is so difficult for humans to relinquish their attachment to the idea of self-power, jiriki; acceptance of the Amida’s successful compassion for us becomes the most difficult dharma, truth, for us to accept. Shinran says:

Only with the diamond-like shinjin
Can we, living in the evil world of the five defilements,
Completely abandon birth-and-death forever
And reach the Pure Land of naturalness.

That diamond-like mind, kongō-shin, which is really shinjin, is most difficult to achieve because the human heart desires to work out at least some meagre part of its own liberation. So, when Shinran speaks of various right practices traditionally regarded as leading to attainment of birth in the Pure Land, he does not abrogate them, but, instead, considers them all as shōgyō, right practice, if they are done through the shinjin of tariki; if they lack this determination, they become merely acts of jiriki, self-power, and so are ineffective. Many recite that nenibutsu as a saving practice; however, it is not that the nenibutsu effects their liberation; rather, it is a recognition of the liberation and awakening that Amida already achieves. This nenibutsu is the decisive cause, zōjōen, of liberation. Shinran also directly relates shinjin to the teaching of the ‘three minds’ (sanshin).
The Three Minds

At first, Shinran presents the ‘three minds’ as taught by Shandao and Hōnen. After long treatment of the three minds of sincere mind (shishin), deep mind (jinshin) and mind aspiring to be born (yokushō) in the Pure Land, Shinran arrives at his key point, and this marks a departure from his teachers: the three minds are really one mind, and that mind is shinjin for it is ‘shinjin alone’ that is ‘the true cause of attaining nirvana’.

If those who possess shinjin, or, better, are possessed by shinjin, have an easy path, they, on the other hand, who do not possess ‘the three minds’ will fail to be born in the Pure Land. Shinran is taking up a point of Shandao’s, namely, that the three minds are necessary for those who practice in the Pure Land way. Shinran critiques this; Shandao’s ‘three minds’ differs somewhat from the Larger Sūtra’s shinjin, which is what Shinran himself holds to. Nevertheless, in an example of on-ken, which is Shinran’s method of ‘explicit and implicit meanings’, he affirms that both types actually reveal tariki. Shishin is really Amida’s sincere mind, as are deep and aspiring minds, so that they are truly one. In one of his poems Shinran expresses this oneness:

The Name embodying the Primal Vow is the act of true settlement.
The Vow of entrusting with sincere mind is the cause of enlightenment;
One realizes the equal of enlightenment and supreme nirvana
Through fulfillment of the Vow of nirvana without fail...

When the ignorant and wise, even grace offenders and slanderers of the dharma, all alike turn about and enter shinjin,
They are like waters that, on entering the ocean, become one in taste with it.

In reality, there are not ‘three minds’, an idea that belongs to the (human) practices for attaining bodhi; instead, there is one ‘threefold mind’ and it is not human in the sense that it is not our mind but the mind of Amida. This mind of Amida enters, as it were, ours and so

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585 This is a reference to the Larger Sūtra; the three minds are sincere mind, deep mind, and mind aspiring to be born through directing merit. At root is the issue of achieving this birth by our own efforts; for, to fail in any one of these three minds is to be fated to spend incalculable ages in samsāra before at last attaining awakening; the Path of the Pure Land is so much the more easy, yet we find deep shinjin too difficult to accept. See also Shinran, Gotoku’s Notes: Fascicle Two; Collected Works of Shinran I: 619.

guarantees us the limitless merits of Amida Buddha: this is shinjin. For us to grasp fully the radical nature of Shinran’s understanding of shinjin we need to look at his use of ōchō.

Ōchō (transcending crosswise)

Another characterization that Shinran gives of this is in the contrast between ‘going around lengthwise’ and ‘leaping crosswise’. The former is like the ‘path of sages;’ it is the humans who do the actions, and so it is the logic of self-power. The latter, on the other hand, is ōchō, which is intended to reflect ‘lateral or transcendentental’ movement; by means of it one can ‘go beyond’ the world of samsāra and reach the farther shore, the shore of ‘the true fulfilled land’. Ōchō or ‘sideways jump’ or ‘crosswise leap’ is the last and most important of Shinran’s categorizations of liberation, expressed in a unique formula. It pertains directly to the Primal Vow, the 18th, and entails immediate rebirth in the Pure Land. It is the transformation that is brought about by the other power of Amida. Furthermore, and though preceding masters, such as Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, are strictly to be considered as having taught oshutsu conversion, Shinran treats them as having taught an authentic ōchō. His basic understanding of the 18th Vow is given in designatory term for it: Shishin shingyō no gan ‘the Vow of the Sincere Spirit and of Serene Faith’. It is the spirit which desires to become Buddha.

One of the most penetrating studies of transformation in Shinran is that conducted by Dennis Gira that the thematic of grace as (Amida’s) ekō most clearly emerges. Though ‘conversion’ is Gira’s preferred term a term such as ‘transformation’ is to be preferred, especially in light of the presentation of Shinran’s ideas as above; ‘conversion’ too easily smacks of jiriki in the sense that we normally associate it with an inner process that is at least somewhat our own. Nevertheless and holding to Gira’s usage, though with this caveat in

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587 One of the ‘distinguishing marks’ of faith that Nāgasena expounds is ‘leaping forward’, see Milindapañha: 35f.; Milinda’s Questions 1: 48f: as the earnest yogin having seen ‘that the minds of others are freed, leaps forward after the fruit of stream-attainment or after the fruit of once-returning or after the fruit of non-returning or after arhatship and performs yoga [yogam karoti] for the attainment of the unattained, for the mastery of the unmastered, for the realization of the unrealized, even so, sire [king Milinda], is leaping forward is a distinguishing mark of faith’; see also the following simile, in which an adept who leaps across a flood that threatens the fearful crowd and so leads them to safety.

588 See Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 173; this is the nature of their ‘l’enseignement interieur’.

589 For Hōnen the Vow was Nenbutsu ōjō no gan the Vow of Rebirth by the Nenbutsu. Thus does Shinran give precedence to faith over works.

590 Shinran, Ken jōdo shinjitsu shin monrui, as quoted in Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 133.

mind, we see that conversion is the conceptual tool by which Gira extracts the unique contribution of Shinran to Buddhism. Shinran used different terms to describe this experience. Shinran observes, across a range of works, a fourfold classification of conversion, as Gira sees it. The terms he examines are: jushutsu or gradual transcendence by jiriki, juchō or sudden transcendence by jiriki, ōshutsu or gradual transcendence by tariki, and ōchō or sudden transcendence by tariki. Before attending to the latter, which is our main concern, we briefly outline the first three. By jushutsu Shinran intends the sense of conversion as he understood it to apply to pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism. Here conversion is the outcome of long ascetic practice, i.e., by dint of the practitioner’s own efforts, and perhaps over kalpas; hence, its relationship to jiriki. It is the first of the two forms of gradual enlightenment and is termed ‘vertical release or movement’. This form is related to Shinran’s second category of juchō or ‘vertical jump’, which is the first of the two forms of sudden enlightenment; it applies to Mahāyāna Buddhism. The third category of conversion is ōshutsu. This is the second of the two types of gradual enlightenment and is called ‘sideways release’. It encompasses ‘the five kinds of correct acts’, ‘the five auxiliary acts’ or practices other than calling on the name of Amida, and ‘the mixed acts’ of other practices. It seems to pertain to tariki, yet, it actually has more in common with jiriki. It is, like the preceding forms, a provisional teaching on transformation by Amida’s power. Only with the fourth form do we meet with the true and real teaching of Pure Land, for Amida is the one who truly transfers merit.

Merit-transference – ekō

Ekō or merit-transference is another way of speaking about the effect of Amida’s vow in people; the incalculable merit that Dharmākara achieved and stored over kalpas is used for the sake of those who cannot help themselves. Until Honen’s time merit transfer or ekō implied one person’s transfer of merit to another for that other’s benefit. With Shinran there is a decisive change in this meaning. There is no human merit which effects liberation; hence, there is no comparable merit-transference, no directing of merit, by which one human may

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592 Shinran, Gotoku-shō, as quoted in Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 131-133: 132.
593 Shinran, Ken jōdo shinjitsu shin monrui, as quoted in Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 133f.: 133.
594 Gira has ‘sortie transversale’, see Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 132.
595 Shinran, Ken jōdo hôben keshindo monrui, as quoted in Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 134f.: 134.
596 The character 侘 represents jōdo-mon, i.e., the Pure Land way or gate through which salvation is attained more by Amida’s power than by the faithful’s own effort, and has the sense of tariki, see Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 135 and 64n25; however, see next note also.
597 See Gira, Le Sens de la Conversion: 135-142.

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help another to liberation. For Shinran, ekō came to refer to that transference which Amida gifts to humans, i.e., fu ekō not (human) merit-transference, or, in other words, the merit of Amida, who alone directs merit. It expresses a bodhisattva’s compassion for all sentient beings. This compassion does not involve diminution or self-sacrifice; indeed, it is simply the way bodhisattvas are. There is no duality in the compassion of bodhisattvas and so there is none in their ekō either. Ekō is the natural state, we may say, of a bodhisattva and it is synonymous with Amida’s work on behalf of the foolish and sinful. In the story of Amida ekō is not accumulation of merit so that the bodhisattva may attain complete release into nirvāṇa, nor is it accumulation of merit so that a bodhisattva, able to enter nirvāṇa, decides, out of compassion for others, to forego this while accompanying the less fortunate. It is a dual-less working (Japanese: gi) of merit for others at the same time as it makes nirvāṇa possible for bodhisattva or sinner. In the gi of human action for liberation or awakening there is really only jiriki or own-power; however, when we speak of Amida then the gi is that of tariki and is supremely effective. Such notions as these require examination of another of Shinran’s core conceptualities, to wit, jinen, which also tries to explain how Amida’s vow is fulfilled.

Suchness and True Trust – jinen and shinjin

By jinen Shinran means the naturalness or spontaneity of the working of Amida to save people; ji means ‘of itself’. So, the individual has no part to play in this as the advance along the path to enlightenment is given (from Amida). It is not by our own powers that we achieve anything, rather, it is the tariki of a buddha. If, for Shinran, ultimate reality is jinen or as-is-ness, then jinen is not humanly calculable or determinable; it is formless and eternal; it is the dharmakāya of tathātā, and it is just the way things are. By his use of jinen Shinran advanced earlier Pure Land, which did focus on Amida; with Shinran Amida is made to correspond more to a unified conceptuality of ultimate reality as suchness. In dharmakāya as compassionate means, i.e., hōben, one awakes to shinjin, and this very process is jinen, too. For, it is in jinen, in the working out of the Vow that bodhisattvas acquire the virtues of the Tathāgata so that, in the moment of enlightenment or liberation or ‘awakening to things as they are’, they return – naturally, as it were – to save others without any self-interest intervening. Though it is a distinct concept and we will treat is so, hōben or upāya also names

598 This latter is Shinran’s reformulation of Tanluan’s tariki ekō.
599 Nirvāṇa is ‘called extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharma-body, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness, and Buddha-nature’, see Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone’, Shinran, Collected Works of Shinran I: 461; and so, plant, trees and land all attain buddhahood.
the soteriological modality that underpins Shinran’s entire system, as we realize through this
discussion of shinjin, ochō, ekō and now jinen.

Skilful means
The heart of Shinran’s discussion of upāya (Japanese: hōben) occurs in chapter four, on
realization, of the Kyōgyōshinshō, which has a long treatment on the dharma-body; the
realization here is, of course, that true entrusting to Amida’s other power, i.e., tariki no
shinjin, comes about when we realize that our own powers of jiriki ultimately fail. At issue is
the question of how one can reach different stages of samādhi: with the eight or higher stages,
a bodhisattva is said to have ‘the dharma-body of equality’. Shinran relates awakening to the
11th Vow, which he calls ‘the vow of necessary attainment of nirvana’ before discussing
first the ‘going forth’ aspect and then the ‘returning’ aspect of merit-transference. Thus,
having detailed the purity of the merit of the Buddha, as a result of Amida Tathāgata’s ‘pure
Vow-mind’, Shinran prepares for a discussion of ‘the dharma-body of equality’ with another
quote from Shandao. Again compassion for sentient beings is aligned with upāya:

‘Directing virtue for return to this world’ means that after being born
in that land [Pure Land], fulfilling samatha and vipasycma [types of
meditation], and gaining the power of compassionate means [upāya],
one returns and enters the thick forests of birth-and-death, teaches and
guides all sentient beings, and brings all to enter the Buddha-way
together. Whether with regard for the aspect of going forth or the
aspect for return, all is entirely for the sake of bringing sentient beings
across the ocean of birth-and-death.

In light of this latter point Shinran’s attention to the 22nd Vow should also be noted. The idea
here is that the higher types of bodhisattvas, who would be expected to enter Buddhahood
‘after one lifetime’ but instead opt freely ‘to guide others to enlightenment’ and so ‘don the
armour of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate roots of virtue,
emancipate all beings, travel to Buddhalands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings

600 His quote from the Larger Sūtra for this Vow is: ‘If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas
in my land do not dwell among the settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the supreme
enlightenment’, in Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.2; Collected Works of Shinran I: 153. With this Vow, attainment
of nirvāṇa is assured: those of shinjin mind rest secure while in this life and will realize bodhi immediately when
born into the Pure Land.

601 This refers to the previous passage, a quotation from Vasubandhu’s Treatise on the Pure Land, see Shinran,
Kyōgyōshinshō 4.15; Collected Works of Shinran I: 158.

602 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.16; Collected Works of Shinran I: 159; the source is Tanluan’s Commentary on
[Vasubandhu’s] Treatise on the Pure Land.
to all the Buddhas and Tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in the unexcelled, right, true way. When Shinran returns to the link between meditation and those bodhisattvas who ‘attain the mind that is pliant and gentle’, he does so in relation to upāya. The bodhisattvas calm the mind and discern the real and in so doing ‘realize the mind of nonduality.’ Knowing true reality they also know the false state of sentient beings and, knowing this latter, ‘they awaken true and real compassion...[and so] give rise to true and real taking refuge in it. In this manner, then, the ‘bodhisattvas’ directing of virtue through skilful means’ is fulfilled. Skilful means is also located in the bodhisattvas’ own achievement of enlightenment ahead of other sentient beings, and that in spite of their efforts for the latter’s liberation first. ‘In putting himself [the bodhisattva] last,’ quotes Shinran from Tanluan, ‘he is in the fore; hence, the term skillful means is applied. 

Skill in Prajñā (chie) and Karunā

Finally, we look at the relationship between wisdom and compassion, prajñā and karunā, chie and hōben. Shinran formally links prajñā, karunā, and upāya. This link is made in the context of the elimination of ‘the three hindrances to bodhi’. We note that his dialogue-partners at this stage are again Vasubandhu and Tanluan. First, one becomes free of egocentric attachments through chie, wisdom. Second, one becomes free of thoughts that do not bring peace through jihi, compassion. Third, one becomes free of thoughts of paying homage to and revering self through hōben, skilful means. Though these three hindrances are opposed to entry into the ‘gate of enlightenment’, Tanluan affirms that the ‘three minds’ that are in accord with that gate. Thus, the undefiled pure mind, the peace-bestowing pure

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603 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 2.82; Collected Works of Shinran I: 57-60: 59; the 18th (realizing shinjin), 11th (attainment of bodhi is guaranteed), and 22nd (fulfilling the Primal Vow for all others) Vows form the core of Shinran’s understanding of Amida Buddha’s tariki; in this he quotes from Tanluan’s Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land. See also Collected Works of Shinran II: 180ff. and 215.

604 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 167.

605 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 167.

606 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 167; Shinran is here quoting from Vasubandhu, consistent with his own view that merit is transferred for the sake of sentient beings by bodhisattvas, and its achievement is via skilful means.

607 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 168 (emphasis in original).

608 See especially, Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 159-174, which is from Tanluan’s Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Treatise on the Pure Land, and which Shinran endorses and asks his audience to ‘reverently embrace’, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.18; Collected Works of Shinran I: 174.

609 Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 4.17; Collected Works of Shinran I: 168f.
mind, and the blissful pure mind, all conduce to enlightenment, and are the one true mind. All three, says Tanluan, include *prajña*, and *prajña* itself includes *upāya*. The explanation which follows displays Tanluan’s skilful argumentation, which is surely one of the reasons he appealed so strongly to Shinran. He writes:

Prajna is a term for insight (e [no-self]) that realizes suchness; upaya is a term for intelligence (chi) that thoroughly knows the accommodated and temporary. If one realizes suchness, one’s mental activity becomes quiescent. If one knows the accommodated and temporary, one sees beings in full particularity; while the intelligence (chi) that sees beings fully adapts itself to them, it is no-knowing. Insight of quiescence is also no-knowing and yet sees in full particularity. Thus, prajna (chie) and upaya, through their mutual dependence, are active, and through their mutual dependence are tranquil. Because of the working of prajna, activity does not lose tranquillity; because of the power of upaya, tranquillity does not abolish activity.

In concluding this chapter, Shinran makes use of two more quotations from Tanluan that add to our appreciation of the centrality of *upāya* in Shinran’s own buddhological thinking. First, birth in the Pure Land, as the ‘fulfillment of aspiration for birth’, is said to be brought about with four mind-types of pure virtue, viz., mind of wisdom, mind of skilful means, unobstructed mind, and excellent true mind. Second, going into and coming out from the Pure Land is possible through the five dharma-gates of bodily acts (worship), verbal acts (praise), mental acts (aspiration), acts of wisdom (discernment), and acts of the wisdom of skilful means (directing virtue). In terms of phases of merit-making, the first four represent ‘going in’, while the skilful means represents ‘going out’, i.e., efforts to awaken or liberate others. In terms of dharmakāya, Shinran quotes Tanluan, all buddhas and bodhisattvas have ‘dharma-bodies of two dimensions’, viz., ‘dharma-body as suchness (*jinen*) and dharma-body as compassionate means (*hōben*)’, and each arises from the other. Ultimately, and this despite all of his intellectual elaborations, Tanluan is explicit that there is no object of salvation, for there are truly no existents; ‘[m]anifesting the act of saving sentient beings is thus like a play’, i.e., insubstantial, not real. Shinran’s own final reference to skilful means comes in chapter six, on transformed Buddha-bodies and lands, where he quotes from Shandao’s *Hymns [on the Samadhi] of the ‘True’ Gate*:

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611 See Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō* 4.17; *Collected Works of Shinran* I: 170; Tanluan adds that *prajña* and *upāya* are ‘the father and mother of bodhisattvas’.
All Tathagatas use skilful means;
Now, Šâkyamuni does the same.
Through his teaching of dharma in accord with the listener, all receive benefit;
All people, each coming to their own understanding, should enter the 'true' gate.\textsuperscript{614}

In sum, as the Nirvana Sutra, which Shinran extensively quotes, states, emptiness is nothingness, which is emancipation, which is the Tathāgata, which is awakening, which is bodhi, which is nirvāṇa. Furthermore, all sentient beings have buddha-nature.\textsuperscript{615} Shinran’s buddhological concern runs through all the themes of early Buddhism, such as dukkha, saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, prajñā, samādhi and bodhicitta. In relation to bodhicitta (Japanese: bodaishin), ‘thought for awakening’, Shinran, in one of his own interjections, states:

The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood is the mind to save all sentient beings. The mind to save all sentient beings is the mind to grasp sentient beings and bring them to birth in the land where the Buddha is. Thus, the person who aspires to be born in the Pure Land of happiness must unfailingly awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment.\textsuperscript{616}

Shinjin is, as it were, Shinran’s first and last word on transformation and conversion and entry into Amida’s buddha-land.

3.3 Bodhisattva and Buddha

Finally, we need to highlight the distinction and relationship between bodhisattva and arhat, which sometimes arouses angry debate among rivals and which pertains, if tangentially, at different points of the present work to different perspectives about the path to nirvāṇa. In early Buddhism, the arhat was the ideal type of the monastic.\textsuperscript{617} Šâkyamuni Buddha was himself an arhat and many suttas end with the protagonist advancing along the path to arhatthood. He described both himself and the awakened bhikkhu in the same terms:

\textsuperscript{614} Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 6.53; Collected Works of Shinran I: 233.
\textsuperscript{615} Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 5.21; Collected Works of Shinran I: 189.
\textsuperscript{616} Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō 3.66; Collected Works of Shinran I: 113; of course, this is also given in the texts that he quotes, in this case Tanluan, see Kyōgyōshinshō 3.53; Collected Works of Shinran I: 108.
\textsuperscript{617} See Majjhima-Nikāya I: 167 and 173; Middle Length Sayings I: 211 and 217. Ananda lists four ways in which a person attains arahanthood: developing insight preceded by calm, developing calm preceded by insight, developing calm-and-insight coupled and ‘a monk’s mind is utterly cleared of complexities about Dhamma’, see Anguttara Nikāya IV: 170; Gradual Sayings II: 162f.
‘perfectly enlightened one (sammāsambuddha)’. Šākyamuni is also referred to as a bodhisattva, though in connection with his previous rebirth; he recounted the time when ‘I was still the bodhisatta, not fully awakened’. We follow the discussion of Nathan Katz, who concludes his research into the arhat-bodhisattva debate by demonstrating that, though there is a clear claim in the Mahāyāna that the arhat is inferior to the bodhisattva, there is also a second claim, which says that ‘they cannot be distinguished’. The point is that a distinction must be made between arhat as used, say, in the Lotus Sūtra and arahant as used in the Pāli canonical texts. From the prajñāpāramitā literature there is evidence that the awakening attained by an arhat differs from that of a bodhisattva yet, Katz counsels, we should not confuse a term’s historical matrix with the text’s conceptual systematizations. By this he means that ‘prajñāpāramitā’ itself can be taken, as in the previous sentence, to refer to a body of texts or it can refer to that ‘perfection of wisdom’ which, we may presume, Buddhism, whether early or Mahāyāna, would hold to be the highest wisdom. Furthermore, on the precise question of arhats and bodhisattvas, some texts use ‘srāvaka’, a ‘hearer’ or disciple, and not ‘arhat’, in a way that differentiates these two, often synonymous, terms. For instance and crucially, Katz points to this very distinction in the Lotus Sūtra: in the scene where the Buddha is about to preach on the basis that he ‘knows more than he had taught’ by his upāya, some 5,000 of those who ‘imagined having attained what they had not’ got up and left. These the Buddha referred to as sravaka, even as a delighted Śāriputra proclaimed

619 Majjhima-Nikāya I: 163; Middle Length Sayings I: 207.
621 See Katz, Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: 118.
622 See Katz, Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: 259; he calls these the outer and inner horizons, respectively, of the term; he adds that it is precisely the confusion of these horizons that has led ‘both western and traditional scholars into vast confusions regarding the arhat/bodhisattva issues’, see 260.
623 See The Lotus Sutra, translated by Burton Watson, number 202 in Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica Series, Sri Satguru Publications: Delhi, 1999 [1993]: 30: ‘what they had not attained they supposed they had attained, what they had not understood they supposed they had understood. And because they had this failing, they did not remain where they were.’
624 Sravaka [Pāli: sāvaka] is one who hears the Buddha’s message (and follows it), hence a disciple. Katz identifies in Mahāyāna texts, such as the Lankāvatāra-sūtra and the Āstasāhasrikā, a denigration of the nirvāṇa of the sravaka: the sravaka is one who ‘gets struck’ at a certain point in the practice of meditation – the dhyānas [Pāli: jhānā] – leading to nirvāṇa. See Katz, Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: 263-266; he also cites Tibetan texts that refer to the sravaka as interested in ‘self-pacification’ while the bodhisattva ‘is motivated by a desire to save all sentient beings.’

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that listening to the Buddha led to his reaching arhathood there and then. Katz further adds three trends in the Sutta Piṭaka in relation to arahants and the Buddha. First, they are identical in terms of spiritual achievement, each entailing arahattā. Second, they differ only in that the Buddha, who is also an arahant, is ‘a shower of the way’. Third, they are radically different: only a buddha is born for the welfare of the world. The Buddha has many powers, e.g., understanding ‘as it really is the acquiring of deeds for oneself, past, future, and present’, ‘recollects his manifold past lives’, and ‘with the divine eye...understands how beings pass on according to their actions’.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter formally concludes our observation of buddhology’s imaginaire of the human ‘person’ and the salvation that the or a Buddha demonstrates and embodies, by virtue of bodhi or awakening to the true state of the world, shorn of the illusions, ignorance, suffering and individual powerlessness. From the teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha the idea of a single buddha inhabiting a world-system in an aeon, the buddhak evolved into a pluri-world system and the idea of a multiplicity of buddhas inhabiting their own buddha-lands. Part of the ideology of a new buddha, for instance, is the capacity to instantaneously visit these (millions of) buddha-lands and give homage to them. Though Shinran has this consciousness of other buddhas his focus is resolutely fixed on the achievement of one, Amida Buddha. In this he is following a long tradition of Pure Land teaching, with roots certainly in China but also in India, homeland of Śākyamuni Buddha. But, Shinran is himself one of the world’s great religious teachers and his greatness derives from the way he refashioned certain notions that were handed on to him into a new and attractive imaginaire of tariki or other-power.

625 See Katz, Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: 260-262.
626 Katz, Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: 118.
627 See Sonadana-sutta of the Dīgha-Nikāya, i.e., Dīgha-Nikāya: 111; Thus have I heard: 125; see also Anguttara-Nikāya I: 172; Gradual Sayings I: 156, where the Buddha replies to the brāhmaṇin that there are ‘much more than’ five hundred who possess the same ‘three marvellous powers’ as himself.
628 See Itivuttaka: 78-80; The Itivuttaka: 70f.: there are three types of individuals who arise in the world ‘for the well-being of many folk’, viz., ‘a Tathāgata...the Buddha’, ‘a sāvaka [Sanskrit: śrāvaka, disciple] of a Buddha’, and ‘a sekha, a practitioner’.
629 See Anguttara-Nikāya I: 22; Gradual Sayings I: 14.
630 Majjhima Nikāya I: 70; Middle Length Sayings I: 94-96.
Shinran’s imaginaire was initially built on the single-practice of Shinran’s teacher, Hōnen, i.e., recitation of the *nembutsu* so that its power will carry one into the ‘pure land’, from which *nirvāṇa* is assured. What Shinran then did was to show that there is no human practice or achievement that can, in the current pervasive and unavoidable degeneracy of the world, i.e., in *mappō*, gain for us the ultimate Buddhist goal of liberation from saṃsāric existence and the round of rebirths and entry into blessedness. Rather than deny, then, the possibility of anyone achieving the goal Shinran radicalizes the *nembutsu* as, not a human practice but, the merit of Amida who gifts Amida-self to the foolish and sinful. Underpinning this idea are developments from the whole pre-history of *jōdōshinshū*, such as the identity of *buddhadhātu*, *Tathāgata*, *tathāgatagarbha*, *tathatā* and *dharmadhātu*, all notions that also relate to the great compassion and loving-kindness (*mahākaruṇā* and *maitri*) of buddhas-to-be for all sentient beings; some would even speak of all things *simpliciter* as having *buddhadhātu* or buddha-nature. It is not impossible that this last notion helped Shinran to understand the identity of Amida, salvation-liberation and fools such as himself.

Early Buddhism took for granted that *bodhi* will be an almost impossibly long process, over many kalpas, as a person progresses towards awakening; we saw that Shinran did not contradict this in relation to Maitreya Buddha, who is still a future promise. Perhaps an individual’s experience of overwhelmingly and suddenly coming to *bodhi* gave rise to the idea of ‘sudden awakening’, which in time came to be seen as distinct from and, further on still, superior to the earlier, undifferentiated and now dissimilar ‘gradual awakening’. To subitists of original enlightenment, then, it seemed that the approach of gradualists, in all the variety of their practices, was an unwarranted separation of wisdom from ignorance, of *nirvāṇa* from saṃsāra. It seemed to sunder the *jinen* and suchness that is true reality.

Shinran’s personal story of conversion is really his awakening to the fundamental imperfectability of his life of ‘wisdom naught and merits none’ and that of the lives of others. He experienced a Kuhnian paradigm shift and more. The puzzles he had as a monk on Mt Hiei led to the Tendai framework being brought into crisis; in a flash it collapsed for him and he entered the new paradigm of ‘other-power’ or *tariki*. In his new, evolving imaginaire Shinran may also be said to radicalize *duḥkha* beyond even what Śākyamuni Buddha did, so that escape from it is certainly impossible in this life. Lest this seem to vitiate the power of a buddha Shinran entrusts all power to effect *bodhi* and *nirvāṇa* to Amida, with none to humans. He did not decry the sincere religious practices of those who were his fellow-monks on Mt Hiei; instead, he made his buddhological argumentation, supported it with scriptural attestation, and based it in the most profound trust of *shinjin*. The power sufficient and
necessary to awaken and liberate humans could not come from themselves but only from the tariki of Amida, whose store of merit is infinite and is naturally and spontaneously, as jinen, given for and to others precisely as ekō. Thus, the only saving practice available to us is shingyō, the gyō of shinjin that is really Amida-in-us. Trying to grasp this calls for a type of wisdom or prajñā long recognized by Buddhist practitioners and abhidharmic scholars as far exceeding conventional thinking and discourse. In order to have some understanding of this higher understanding we look at what we do know, in all of its delusion and conventionality, and allow ourselves to be led by the special means employed compassionately by bodhisattvas and buddhas for our good. These means are both upāyaic and upāya. Even if we follow Roger Corless in his examination of Shinran in the light of a hermeneutic of suspicion – how may one judge the validity of Shinran’s trust in the hongan or Primal Vow? – what he achieved is monumental. It requires of the theologian to think again about her or his own categories and symbols of grace, human works, divine mercy and ultimate sanctification. In the next part of this dissertation I seek to ‘turn over the furrows’ again of some of language for grace, while attending to the changes that certain significant reformer such as Martin Luther and John Calvin brought about in the way we conceptualize the divine-human relationship. At last, then, in the final part I will be able to offer some suggestions for the benefit of theology and to do that theologically.

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631 From this perspective, the comment in the glossary accompanying Shinran’s collected works to the effect that here we have a ‘clearly expressed’ statement of the ‘distinctive character of Mahayana Buddhism’ seems to me wide of the mark; Shinran’s radicalizing of the bodhisattva’s gi exceeds that of others, see Shinran, Collected Works of Shinran II: 182.

632 Corless, ‘Shinran’s Proofs’: 282.
Part III

THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE
CHAPTER 4  JUDEO-CHRISTIAN HORIZONS OF GRACE

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from this corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.\textsuperscript{633}

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present some of the core elements of grace as they may be observed in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Not pretending to a comprehensive theology of grace, a task far exceeding the ambit of a number of books, this chapter nevertheless draws out a number of dimensions from the formative tradition(s) of Judaism and Christianity and uses them to show, first, that there is some theologizing of grace going on even in the earliest scriptures; second, that the core of the doctrine is present in Paul; and, third, that Augustine is indeed the decisive figure in the evident theological development of grace into its conceptual centrality in the heart of theology. This is not a denial of tensions in those early accounts, of ambiguities and difficulties in the Pauline one, or of a lack of systematization in the Augustinian. Clearly, a process of development is observable, and, more clearly still, this dissertation is premised on the supposition that development has not ceased but is open to further influence, even that theology needs to revise its theologizing of grace, especially in light of both the fact of a religion like Buddhism and some buddhological conceptualities that seem congruent with grace. Prescinding as we are from the question of God we nonetheless presuppose that there is, in the natural evolution of human sociality and culture, a congruous evolving of the divine-human relationship or, at least, of our human understanding of that relationship.

\textsuperscript{633} 2 Peter 1:1-4.
Having begun the dissertation by observing the current state of the (Western) world, using a buddhological lens, we turned in the second chapter to an examination of the Buddhist system that produced such insights. Because there is a Buddhist *nikāya* – *jōdoshinshū* – that has been taken to offer, in Alfred Bloom’s famous phrase a ‘gospel of pure grace’, we turned our attention in the third chapter to this, preeminently, and a few other Mahāyāna buddhological conceptualities.64 These additional elements of the Buddhist worldview demonstrate a religious sensibility building upon, altering, reconfiguring, deepening its intellectual and meditative bases in dialogue with its circumstances or ‘environment’. As with the subjects of the chapter following the present one in relation to Christianity, I regard the ‘reforming’ impulse of Mahāyāna as an authentic expression of Buddhism. Hence, a buddhological trajectory that reforming movements developed historically was traced, one that will be complemented by theological trajectories of Christianity that deal in particular with grace. As with our treatment of Buddhist texts, it will be impossible to cover all of the possible scriptural utterances; so, focus is necessary, though range and import of certain texts attest to the importance, centrality, and impulse of the thematic through a scriptural lens. Our purpose in doing this is to establish the imaginative frameworks out of which a theology of grace emerged so that the riches of that theological patrimony are acknowledged and retained at the same time as their hegemony is ‘dethroned’ and the possibility of other imaginaires, perhaps more adequate to present theological exigencies, created. To begin I turn to the foundational scriptures for Jew and Christian, the Hebrew scriptures (*biblia*), for a number of reasons: they contain the seeds of the Christian worldview and religion, certain texts exercised huge influence in subsequent debates, they offer elements for (re)conceiving of grace, and historically, contestation on their basis raised the *questio standis et cadentis ecclesiae*, what are the criteria upon which the church stands (or falls). In particular I try to select texts that show a human context, a divine one and some that straddle, as it were, the two. Building on Hebrew parallelism’s matching of terms we learn how the biblical writers came to think of grace. When we come to the Christian scriptures an emphasis might be expected on Paul; there is such, but I try to ‘round out’ the presentation by taking up a few hints from other writers such as Luke and Peter. Finally, the inclusion of Augustine’s understanding of grace in this chapter is not to set him with the foundational scriptures but to show it is his account of human sinfulness and corruption and the consequent necessity for divine intervention that has largely formed the theological mindset since.

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4.1 Hebrew Experience of Grace

Given the place of the Hebrew scriptures in the formation of Jewish life and culture and the use to which New Testament writers put them as preparatory and promise of the Christian message, we turn to them first in order to see how the God-human relationship was imagined. Then we analyse certain early Christian experiences of the salvation wrought by God in Christ; again, this is done so that the Christian conception of the divine-human relationship is foregrounded. As it would be impossible to cover the whole terrain of this thematic we will concentrate on some representative conceptions that relate more obviously to grace.

Story of faith of a People

It is a trite truism to say that the Judeo-Christian scriptures are a story, or sequence of stories, about the relationship between God and God’s ‘chosen people’. Many elements are woven together from various sources at different times, under a variety of authors, redactors and editors, and with a multiplicity of specific ends. Nevertheless, the unit that we call the Bible tells of a set of humans and their experiences – and their interpretations of those experiences – with the one they called the lord of all, YHWH. Over the space of approximately two millennia the ‘people of God’, the Jews, reconceived of their local god as lord of all, El-Shaddai, brooking no other (false) gods. This Lord could ‘kill and restore to life’ (2 Samuel 2:6), could order destruction or healing, as with Canaanites and the people in the desert when they made the golden calf. This God was jealous and would fight for them, would make covenants – with sacrifices and blood offerings – with them and, when those covenants were broken by human unfaithfulness, would renew the damaged relationship. This God defended the widow and orphan and used foreign kings, like Cyrus, to restore the people to their God-given land. This God excoriated kings such as Zedeki’ah and declared hatred for burnt offerings, and yet was proclaimed as full of mercy and compassion. Grace and mercy, as Moses who has ‘found favour’ in God’s sight is told in one of the divine

635 Though the work of Schillebeeckx, in his Jesus and Christ books, is to be roundly recommended and is herein willingly appropriated, I extend an analysis of some of the terms used for grace in order to drive home, on the one hand, some essential features often appealed to in later theologies, and, on the other, show the existence of certain traits that I see as supporting a renewed construal of grace for our day and our experiences. See Edward Schillebeeckx, Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World, translated by John Bowden, SCM Press: London, 1980 [1977] and Edward Schillebeeckx, Jesus: An Experiment in Christology, translated by Hubert Hoskins, Fount: Oxford, 1983 [1974].

636 We speak of the Yahwist (J) and Priestly (P) accounts in the creation story in Genesis, which itself also comprises texts from the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomist, the different persons coalesced into Isaiah.
epiphany stories, are God’s prerogative. In the same story God’s name and grace are paralleled, marking off God as ‘free and sovereign, no longer an ancient Near Eastern ‘arbitrary potentate’. Commenting on the passage (Exodus 33:12-23) in which this appears Schillebeeckx writes:

This text is characteristic of the view of grace held throughout the Tanach: election, favour, setting out together, mutual knowledge of each other’s name, the use of familiar forms of address, God’s countenance which is turned towards men, towards Israel – God who looks upon Israel, whereas otherwise this gracious God remains a hidden God, who for the sake of his revelation keeps longing alive in his concealment of himself from Israel.

The covenant on Sinai, and the giving of Torah, is paralleled with grace and mercy; this is the doxological use of hānan and raham, i.e., ‘merciful and gracious (rahūm w’hammūn)’. Already we sense the importance of language in attempting to evoke something of the experience of the divine to which they felt they had to witness. Some of those terms connote favour, graciousness and grace. The common word-family for the Hebrew notion of grace or favour derives from hm. The verb, hānan, means to be inclined, favourable, kind, gracious, to pity, to have mercy, to bestow; and, the noun, hēn, which derives from hānan, is the usual translation of ‘grace’; furthermore, the adjective, hammūn, means gracious, merciful, compassionate. Here we will look briefly at some typical uses of these terms in the Hebrew scriptures or Tanak. The root hnn has also connotations of making lovely and seeking mercy. It is used in asking for mercy, for those who are favoured, whether in human or divine relations. Thus, in Genesis 33 we have a number of the common uses to which hnn is put. As Jacob approaches Esau he is quite fearful about the reception his brother might give him; so, Jacob brings his wives and children with him, and as they near Esau’s place he skilfully sends them on ahead in different groups. In answer, then, to Esau’s query about them, Jacob answered: they are ‘the children whom God graciously gave (hānan) to your servant.’ When Esau again asks why all the different groups are coming to him, Jacob

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637 See Exodus 33:19.
638 Schillebeeckx, Christ: 90.
639 Schillebeeckx, Christ: 89.
640 Exodus 34:6, also: Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Psalms 86:15, 103:8, 111:4, 112:4, 145:8; Nehemiah 9:17, 31; 2 Chronicles 30:6.
641 There is also the ‘secular’ idea of outward gracious appearance: in Proverbs 26:25 there is reference to the malicious man, who, though charming in his speech, is actually deceitful; the word used for ‘he is charming’ derives from hnn, i.e., y’hammēn.
642 Genesis 33:5.
responds: ‘to find favour (limsō ’-hēn) in your eyes my lord’ (v.8). Pressing gifts on a reluctant Esau Jacob, as if he is now the one who is graciously giving, continues: ‘if I found favour (māsā’i ṭi hēn) in your eyes accept my gift from my hand; (v.9)...accept now my present that was brought to you because God is gracious to me (ḥannānī) (v.11).’ Thus, Esau is welcoming of his brother in a way that puts any danger of assault out of question; gracious behaviour, assiduously and skilfully applied, softens the heart. At the root, then, of hmn is the idea of looking on someone with favour, or being gracious to them.

Returning to Moses we see that the central event in the Jewish experience of God’s liberative power, the Exodus, is shaped around God not forgetting whom God has chosen. It is clear in Moses’s encounter with the burning bush and in the working out of God’s plans to liberate the people from slavery in Egypt, we find the basic notion of making something favourable in the sight of someone else: YHWH says he will make the people as grace (et-hēn) in the eyes of the Egyptians (v.21). In this sense the showing of grace or favour achieves a desired outcome. Again, when Malachi’s God makes an oracle against the people and various charges against them are laid, something practical will have to be done in order to secure grace or favour, i.e., the desired outcome, this time God’s: in this situation, the people should ‘implore now before the face of God that he may be gracious to us’ (v.9). God can be designated as the source of grace too: in Zechariah, when the prophet talks of the destruction that God will bring on those who attack Jerusalem, God is said to assure the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that God will pour out ‘a spirit of grace (ruah hēn)’ and supplication on them. In all these instances we see a treatment of grace that is dialogical and relational. As well as favourable relationships the Bible is also concerned to name relationships that are just, and it to this notion of divine justice or righteousness, which came to have such importance in later disputes over grace, that we now turn before we return to some texts that use both terms together.

When something is done at the right time, in the right place, in the right way such that a proper standard is given we speak of it being righteous, and this is central to the notion of righteousness. Thus, when the temple is readied for worship it is made righteous (w'nis' ḍdaq qōdeš). When the measures used for weighing crops, etc., are correct they are ‘accurate and righteous (šlēmā ṭāseḏeq)’. Even a pathway, if it heads towards the Lord, is righteous:

644 Malachi 1.
645 Zechariah 12:10. The reference to God’s breath here may have a deliberately creational resonance.
646 Daniel 8:14.
YHWH, like a shepherd, leads the weary soul along ‘paths of righteousness (sedeq)’. The story of Tamar provides an insight into the complexity and attendant difficulties that can arise for a person trying to act in a sedeq-way. In sum, Tamar, the daughter-in-law of the patriarch Judah, is widowed childless. As custom dictated, she was then wed to Judah’s next son ‘in order to raise up offspring for your brother’ (v.8); however, he also dies without issue. Reluctant to give a third son as husband to Tamar, Judah then abrogates the proper law but is forced to rescind on learning that in a drunken stupor he himself has made Tamar pregnant; Tamar actually connived to achieve this, though the point is that her claim to be both the wife of the next brother and the mother of children in the name of her first husband is the stronger moral position. Instead of stoning her as he planned, and as the law required in a case of fornication, Judah has to retract; he says: ‘[Tamar] is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my [third] son Shelah’ (v.26). Likewise, when a judge passes judgment it must be in accordance with justice. Thus, while there should be no perversion of justice favouring either rich or poor, all is to be done in fairness or rightness (b’sedeq). Indeed, the person who sues before a judge (or God) is claiming righteousness, just as the psalmist in Psalm 7 pleads with YHWH to ‘save and deliver’ him (v.1). In Psalm 18 the psalmist lists what YHWH did to draw him out from deep waters (v.17), and to save him from powerful enemies (v.18); so, ‘YHWH dealt with me according to my righteousness (kesidqi); / According to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me’ (v.21). Here, as a consequence of a claim to being righteous on the basis of proper conduct God will bring reward; surely, there is also here an element of just reward given by God to the person who proves to be of ‘clean hands’. Sometimes, the judgement passed is really a sentence. In Jeremiah we hear the call to quit the land of exile, Babylon, and return to Zion; judgment has been passed on Babylon and so will be destroyed. Judgment too has been passed on Israel: ‘YHWH brought [about]

647 Deuteronomy 25:15. Similarly, when Job wishes to portray himself as innocent he asks God to weigh him in a scales of righteousness, see Job 31:6.

648 Psalm 23:3.

649 This is told in Genesis 38.

650 Leviticus 19:15. Furthermore, when a judge judges it must be in sedeq between anyone, his or her sibling or the alien in their midst, see Deuteronomy 1:16.

651 The psalm goes on to declare: ‘Arise, O YHWH (v.6)...Awake, my God, decree justice...judge me according to my righteousness (k’sidqi), according to my integrity (uk’tumî), O most high. (v.8) O righteous God...make the righteous secure’ (v.9). See also, Psalm 17:1.

652 This element will shortly be made more explicit: because ‘I have kept the ways of YHWH’ (v.22)...[and] been blameless before him; / And I kept myself from my sin (v.24); / [therefore] YHWH has rewarded me according to my righteousness; / And according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes (v.25).
our vindications (*sidqôtēnû*). Come, let us tell in Zion the deeds of YHWH our God.'\(^653\) Of course, if an innocent person is charged before a judge (or God) she or he will, if innocence is proved, be declared righteous, as the story, in Genesis, of Abraham and Sarah’s encounter with king Abimelech recounts.\(^654\) However, judgment may also go against a person’s innocence. Thus, when Joseph, who now is governor in Egypt and as yet unrecognized by his brothers who have come to buy corn, accuses Benjamin, his youngest brother, of stealing a silver goblet, Judah, their father, speaks up: ‘What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we show innocence (*nisaddāq*)? God has uncovered the guilt of your servants...’\(^656\) Though the brothers had assured everyone that they were innocent of stealing, the finding of the goblet in Benjamin’s grain-sack was unassailable evidence against their stated righteousness.\(^657\) But, what of those situations in life where injustice seems to triumph? In Habakkuk\(^658\) we read of the law being paralysed and justice failing (v.4). Habakkuk pleads with God not to be silent in a situation where ‘the wicked swallow up those more righteous (*saddiq*) than themselves’ (v.13). In reply, God promises a revelation; wait for it, we are told, ‘for it will surely come’ (v.3):

> See, his spirit (*napšō*) is puffed up, it is not upright in him;  
> And the righteous by his faith(ullness) (*be *mūnātō* ) will live.\(^659\)

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\(^653\) Jeremiah 51:10.  
\(^654\) Genesis 20: not realizing Sarah was the wife of Abraham the king took her for his harem and he and his nation are about to be punished by God for this taking of a married woman. Abimelech pleads his nation’s innocence before God, saying ‘I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands’. God accepts this, and later Abimelech sets about making restitution.  
\(^655\) This is the imperfect (future) Hithpael of *sdq*, meaning ‘to justify oneself’.  
\(^656\) Genesis 44:16.  
\(^657\) The irony in the story would have been plain to all; the brothers were not guilty of the crime of which Benjamin stood accused, and neither was he, though they assume the blame; however, the brothers, but not Benjamin, were guilty of selling Joseph into slavery many years before.  
\(^658\) Habakkuk 2.  
\(^659\) Habakkuk 2:4. The LXX reads: ‘εαν ἀποστειλέται οὐκ ἐνδοκεί ἡ ψυχή μου ἐν αὐτῷ; ἴδω δεῖκαις τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ἔρπες μου λαβέται.’ The passage contains what would become one of Paul’s favourite verses (v.4b) and which, like the text from Genesis 15, takes on much importance because of its employment of the notion of faith, *mīnā* , from ‘aman meaning to stay, support, be true or faithful; also related is ‘meg’, which is usually translated as truth, or stability, fidelity. Though it is not easy to see what exactly the author is saying here, on the basis of poetic parallelism, which is a strong feature of the verses both before and after this one, we may make a postulation. The puffed up subject is a drunkard, greedy and one who takes control of nations (v.5), yet who is taunted by those who know of his stealing and extortion (v.6) and his shedding of blood (vv.8, 12, 17); such a person is full of pride and is not upright (v.4). On the other hand, the opposite type, the righteous person, lives...
A quite legalistic understanding of righteousness, which will later be termed forensic, is to be marked here. Another skilful use of forensic righteousness is to be found in Samuel’s farewell speech to the people of Israel.660 Before delivering his profession of faithfulness in God, Samuel challenges the people to testify as to whether he himself has been guilty of any wrong-doing: ‘here I am, testify against me!’ (v.3). The people affirm he has done no wrong. Hence, their witness and that of the king, Saul, is to be given in this very public way. And the witness is duly given (v.5). At this point Samuel is ready; he gives his own evidence and witness before God, and before the people; but, here his witness concerns ‘the righteous deeds (ṣiddqāt) of YHWH that he performed for you and for your fathers’ (v.7). With this prelude Samuel then lists YHWH’s righteous deeds on behalf of the people. This same forensic element is strongly represented in Isaiah, too. There is the distinctly legal sense of being charged and being vindicated (masʾddiqā).661 The ‘suffering servant’, who might otherwise seem accursed by God on account of the evils that befall him, will, says Isaiah, be proved innocent: first, the servant will be made into a guilt offering (v.10) before ‘he will see [light] and will be satisfied’ (v.11); so, ‘by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify (yasʾddiq saddiq ‘abdī) many, and he will bear their iniquities.’662 Those to whom the servant is sent by YHWH – the poor, broken-hearted, captives, mourners – will be called ‘oaks of righteousness’.663 However, seeking justice before the judge or God, is given a different twist in Job. Job begins a poem, in chapter 9, in praise of God’s greatness with a rhetorical question: but how can a mortal be righteous before God (v.1)? In terms of wisdom and power, wonder-working and self-will, no one may challenge God; were one to try all that one could do would be to plead for mercy. Then, Job returns, again by means of a rhetorical question – ‘how then can I dispute with God?’ (v.14) – to the point of interest for us: ‘though I were innocent (sādaqāt), I could not answer, [but] to the one judging me I could plead for mercy (ʿethannān)’ (v.15).664 The idea here, repeated in subsequent verses, is that, though a person may not even question God’s judgment, yet she or he can do something, namely, sue

660 1 Samuel 12.
661 Isaiah 50:8.
662 Isaiah 53:10f. In the earlier chapter 26 the thematic of being righteous occurs in a number of instances. Salvation and sḏq are linked: the ‘strong city’ will be salvation and the righteous nation (goy-saddiq) will enter it (vv.1f.). The proper path and sḏq are linked: the idea of the level path for the righteous (ʿōra /lassaddiq) being the way (of life) of the righteous (ma’gal saddiq, v.7). God’s law and sḏq are linked: when God’s judgments are followed righteousness (sedeq) is learnt (v.9); where the wicked are, there is no sedeq (v.10).
663 Isaiah 61:1-3, especially 3.
for mercy; there is always the hope – for other stories have recorded it – that God will look on one with favour.

In time, talk of divine righteousness accompanies a promise of future fulfilment. In Jeremiah we read, ‘Behold, days are coming, declares YHWH, when I will raise up to David a righteous branch and he will reign as king and he will be wise, and will do justice and right in the land, / In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety, and the name YHWH will call him [is] our righteousness.’ YHWH, salvation and righteousness are all conjoined here such that $sidq$ becomes synonymous with salvation. The resonances of Davidic and Solomonic kings, as well as of the preeminence of the land and calling into safety, were being reconfigured into a new interpretation of divine justice: a future king of righteousness will be sent.

On many occasions the biblical texts link $sidq$ and $hnn$; as many will later form polemics from these same terms some attention to a variety of these linkings will repay us. In Psalm 9, in a verse that speaks of YHWH’s ruling forever and over all, the psalmist adds: ‘He [YHWH] will judge the world in righteousness ($b’sedeq$); / He will govern the peoples with justice’ (v.9). The oppressed, those who know God ‘will trust in you [YHWH]’ (v.11); the psalmist therefore pleads with God, in the manner typical of the weak toward the more powerful, to show favour: ‘have mercy ($hnn$) and lift me up from the gates of death’ (v.13).

However, though a person may be accorded mercy there is no guarantee that she or he will become righteous before God; though the evil-doers are given favour, they continue to sin, and this too offends against God. In Isaiah 26:10, then, we read: ‘the wicked is shown mercy/grace ($yuh&$) [but] learns not righteousness, in the land of uprightnesses he does evil and regards not YHWH’s majesty.’ Later still, in Amos, we see righteousness in its legal and theological senses brought together in a way that also links with mercy or grace. In a

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664 See Job 9:17: here another use of $hnn$ is found in the adverb $himn&$, in vain, for no reason. Also, in something of a reprise of what we have seen from Judah in the story from Genesis, Job states rhetorically, ‘if I were innocent my mouth would condemn me’ (v.20).

665 Jeremiah 23:5f.

666 Salvation and righteousness are also joined in various Psalms, especially Psalm 85:12f., in prophecies of the messianic king in Zechariah 9:9, and in (Deutero-)Isaiah, e.g., Isaiah 45; healing and righteousness are linked in Isaiah 58:8.

667 As does, for instance, Psalm 4: ‘When I call, answer me, O God of my righteousness ($sidq$); from distress you give relief to me; be merciful to me ($hnn$).’

668 For example, Psalm 6:3 ‘Be merciful to me ($hnn$), YHWH for I am faint’; in v.10 God has heard ‘my cry for mercy; / YHWH accepts my prayer.’ Job 9, as we have seen, expresses a similar notion.

669 Amos 5:1-17.
lament against the house of Israel God speaks of ‘you who turn justice to bitterness; / And cast righteousness to the ground (v.7)...they hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth (v.10)...oppressing the righteous and taking bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts (v.12).’ These doings are condemned as offending against God; therefore, in order to live one must seek good, not evil (v.14). This notion is then mirrored in the following verse: ‘hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts; / Perhaps YHWH the God of hosts will have mercy (yeh^nan) on the remnant of Joseph (v.15).’ At the very least, the righteousness and mercy of God are prioritized over their human counterparts. Another text, Genesis 15, links righteousness and faith, and has often been appealed to. This is the passage where God promises Abram (’Abrám, later ’Abrahám) that his descendents will be as numerous as the stars in the heavens (v.5). Immediately following this promise it is said of Abram/Abraham that ‘he believed YHWH, and he [YHWH] reckoned it to him as righteousness (wayyah^s'behá ló ś'dáqá).’ The next verse takes us immediately to the Abrahamic covenant account.® This may be a quite separate pericope, though it is worth remarking that it begins with Abraham asking God how he is to know that God will fulfil God’s word of promise. There is, at the least, quite a tension between this now classic statement of Abraham’s faith and his seeming lack of it in the next verse but one where Abram/Abraham questions God about God’s promise.® God’s hese ã (loving-kindness)

In Hosea we find the story of God and Israel’s relationship treated like a marriage, where the wife has been unfaithful, the husband disgusted yet attempting to lure back his wayward spouse. God promises both a (new) covenant or b^ríth and betrothal to Israel; these will be ‘forever’ and ‘in righteousness (b'sedeq) and justice, in love (ūb'hese ã) and compassions.’® Here its use goes beyond the demands of obedience to the covenant and includes marital and filial love.® Jeremiah, perhaps aware of these very sentiments from Hosea, also speaks of hese ã, though this time we find God using the word of the young bride, i.e., Israel, at the time of her early faithfulness to (hese ã) and love of (’ahab) God.® But, soon Israel would turn to idols and become unfaithful to God; yet, God asks her to return. If they return – ‘in truth, in

671 Thus, ‘And he [YHWH] said to him, ‘I am YHWH who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.’ (v.7) But he said, ‘Lord YHWH, how am I to know that I will possess it?’ (v.8)’
672 Hosea 2:18-20, ‘en dikaiosuné hai en krimati kai en eleei kai en oiktirmois’ in the LXX.
673 Hosea also makes much use of ‘pity (Hebrew: raham), a word recalling ‘womb (rehem)’ that is also much used by him, to express the proper relationship of one covenantal partner for the other.
674 Jeremiah 2:2 both eleós and agapé are used in the LXX.
justice and in righteousness’—blessing shall follow; what God calls them, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to do is to ‘circumcize the foreskins of your hearts.’675 Love and faithfulness are things of the heart, not mere external conformities. Jeremiah, using the very terms we have been concentrating on, sums up this inner relationship with God thus: the only glorying that people should engage in is that they understand and know God, ‘the Lord, who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.’676 The notion of ḥesed is also to the fore in one of the founding stories of God’s people. Abraham is old and wishes to have a suitable wife for his son, Isaac, so that God’s promise of many generations would be fulfilled. He dispatches a servant to seek a wife for Isaac from amongst Abraham’s family in Nahor, in Mesopotamia. The fulfilling of the servant’s design for judging which woman would be the chosen one is proof to the servant of God’s ḥesed wĕymet, loving-kindness and faithfulness, to Abraham.677 This very combination of ḥesed and ṣmet is often met with, especially in the Psalms.678 Whether the context is command or personal appeal ḥesed is used to say something essential about God. Thus, the ḥesed is used in the Deuteronomic account of the Ten Commandments. The third command forbids idols, for God is a jealous God, one who punishes to the third and fourth generation those who hate God, yet ‘showing love (ḥesed) to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.’679 And, in his famous summary of the proper obedience to God, Micah proclaims: ‘and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice (mišpāt) and to love loving-kindness (ḥesed) and to walk humbly with your God.’680

The story of Ruth and Naomi also speaks a language of grace: the future grandparents of King David are brought together through their faithfulness to God and in fulfilment of the divine plan employs the language of grace and favour. When Naomi wants to arrange a new marriage for her faithful daughter-in-law, Ruth, she first thinks of Boaz, even though he is not the relative who by right should marry the widow of his kinsman; however, Boaz has shown ḥesed in his treatment of Ruth and herself.681 Ruth herself declares she has found favour (ḥēn)

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675 Jeremiah 4:1-4, where aletheia, krisis, and dikaiosunē are used in the LXX, respectively.
676 Jeremiah 9:23f., eleos, krîma and diskaiosunē are used in the LXX, respectively. Paul will later cite this idea of boasting or glorying in the Lord, see 1 Corinthians 1:31, 2 Corinthians 10:17.
677 This is the account of Rebekah being chosen for Isaac, see Genesis 24:1-27, especially v.14 and v.27.
678 For instance, Psalms 57:3 (eleos and alētheia in the LXX), 85:10 (dikaiosunē kai eirēnē in the LXX), and 89:24 (ḥe aletheia mou kai to eleos mou in the LXX); see also Proverbs 3:3, 14:22, and 20:28.
679 Deuteronomy 5: 8-10, eleos in the LXX. See the echo of this in Exodus 34:6f.
680 Micah 6:8, poiein krîma and agapav eleon are the first of the three in the LXX.
681 Ruth 2:20, eleos in the LXX; earlier, Naomi had used the same term in relation to her other two daughters-in-law, 1:8, with eleos in the LXX.
in Boaz’s eyes and, following Naomi’s stratagem to bring Boaz and Ruth together and Boaz’s own one to secure his right to her ahead of his senior kinsman, the basis of the Davidic line is established.

In sum, this brief account’s merit is that it looks at some key usages from the tradition that formed both the (Jewish) worldview of Jesus and of his followers; also, some of these passages were appealed to in later controversies. These usages evidence variety: grace and righteousness can have humans or God as their subject, though there are some distinctly theological constructions, too, centring on key events in the story of the faith of God’s ‘chosen ones’. We turn now to the texts of the Christian scriptures, especially to Paul.

### 4.2 Gospel and Grace

The use of ‘grace’ (Greek: *charis*) in the New Testament is predominantly Pauline: of some one hundred usages, sixty are in the recognizably authentically Pauline corpus. Nevertheless, there is some mention in the Gospels. In *Luke*, *charis* occurs eight times, but not at all in *Mark* or *Matthew*; it does occur four times in *John*, though only in the Prologue.

In terms of the early tradition of the church it is really with Augustine and his controversies with Pelagianism that the New Testament understanding of God working in the midst of humanity, as a fellow human ‘like us in all things save sin’ that the language of grace comes centre-stage. Of course, this is not to say that the experience of divine gratuity, especially and preeminently in the saving work of Jesus Christ, is either marginal or nonexistent, either unthematized or ignored. The reality and promise of salvation is clearly felt, lived and thematized variously in ‘the way’, as the early Christian movement was called, though as with the working out of the being (*ousia*) of Christ and the relations of God (Father), Christ and the Holy Spirit (*coincidentia oppositorum*), centuries with their controversies were to pass before clarity, order and interrelatedness of concepts could be achieved with general acceptance. If I am to avoid a wholly unbalanced presentation I should say something about image of divine relationship that seems to have been as the heart of Jesus’s preaching and parables, despite the fact that it is not based on the language of *charis*. This is the ‘kingdom of God’ and later

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682 *Ruth* 2:10 and 13, both have *charis* in the LXX.

683 See Schillebeeckx, *Christ*: 83; for a list of all usages, see 857n1.

684 Nevertheless, we see in *Luke*, not excluding *Acts of the Apostles*, a constellation of terms that belong to the family of ‘*charis*’; though it is an argument for another forum, the relationship between Luke and Paul, could be looked from this perspective of a language of *charis*, which would have a theological character. Such uses include: *kēcharitōmenē*, *charim*, *chariti*, *charitos*, *echarisato*, *charisasthai*.

theologians make their own links between kingdom and charis. Jesus is presented in the Christian scriptures as preaching the basileia tou theou or basileia tón ouranón.\(^{686}\) The idea of kingship looms large in the Hebrew scriptures, especially since the days when the people ‘chose’ to have a human king over them, instead of continuing to recognize the sole kingship of YHWH. God’s rule is righteous; Psalm 135 praises God as king, who is ‘great’, does ‘mighty deeds’ on which the psalmist will meditate as others ‘sing aloud’ of God’s ‘righteousness’, whose kingdom is ‘an everlasting kingdom’, who is both ‘faithful’ and ‘gracious’, and who ‘saves’ those who fear the Lord. In the book of Daniel the idea of mighty kings being brought to brook by God is strongly identified; the hand of God – rather too literally in the case of king Belshaz’zar of Babylon – is ready to strike (Daniel 5). This kingdom of God is coming soon.\(^{687}\) Such notions took root especially in the intertestamental period and Jesus used them as the central motif of his message. John the Baptist, we are told, already proclaimed the coming kingdom and warned people to prepare by converting (Matthew 3:2). If the disciples hoped that Jesus was coming to inaugurate an earthly kingdom they were to be disappointed (Luke 24:21). On the one hand, this new kingdom lies in the future and we must pray for it (Luke 11:2 // Matthew 6:10). It is small and insignificant at first but it grows as faith grows so that the basileia can be compared to ‘a grain of mustard seed’ and ‘leaven’ (Luke 13:18-21, and Mark 4:30-32). On the other, the basileia is already come and it awaits its full flowering. Jesus proclaims the kingdom and explains it to the apostles in such parables as The Sower, The Lamp, The Seed-Scatterer, and The Mustard Seed (Mark 4). The Lucan Paul tells the elders of the church of Ephesus of ‘the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God’ and so he went about ‘preaching the kingdom’ (Acts 20:24f.).

**4.2.1 ‘The way’**

Preaching the ‘gospel’ and establishing an evangelical way of life dominate the young Christian movement, called initially ‘the way. So, too, did the effort to understand who this Jesus of Nazareth really was. When Jesus, having ascertained what the people think of him, asks his disciples who do they themselves say that he is, it is Peter who replies.\(^{688}\) For Peter, as for the evangelists quoting him, Jesus is the anointed one (ho christos).\(^{689}\) This could be interpreted as God’s gift to humanity, though this is not the context in which that

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\(^{686}\) See, for instance, Mark 1:15 and Matthew 3:2, respectively; these terms may be no more than alternative translations for Jesus’s presumptive Aramaic.

\(^{687}\) See Daniel 2:44 and 7:13.


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interpretation occurred. Instead, the Christ is presented as one destined to suffer. Suffering is exemplified but hardly explained in the Christian scriptures. Nevertheless, as Mark’s Jesus says, ‘the son of Man must suffer many things.’ In spite of Jesus’s own history of suffering leading to a criminal’s death on the cross, the early ekklesia proclaimed that God raised him to new life thus transcending suffering and death but, crucially, so that he could achieve the same goal for others. When Jesus is asked whether those who will be saved are few, he does not answer the question but instead instructs those who are listening that they should strive (agônizesthe) to enter by the narrow door. In the context, then, of those who so strive, Jesus adds, ‘many will seek to enter and will not be able’ (Luke 13:24).

Perhaps the best understanding of the ‘way’ is to be found in Luke’s Acts of the Apostles which gives us his understanding of how ‘the way’ began to spread, especially into the Gentile world. Events at Joppa, Caesarea and Syrian Antioch were pivotal to this extending of baptism to those not already Jewish. First, in relation to ‘the nations’ or Gentiles, the issue is brought to a head with Peter, not Paul. Peter had to justify himself back in Jerusalem as to why he had baptized the centurion Cornelius; first, he recounted the dream he had had in Joppa concerning non-kosher eating and then the meeting with and subsequent baptizing of Cornelius in Caesarea; Peter interpreted the previous dream as a divine revelation that he should baptize this Gentile soldier, and so he did; who was he, Peter argued theologically, to withstand God who had given to Gentiles ‘the same gift he gave us when we believed in the lord Jesus Christ’? Those who had reproached Peter now glorified God and said, ‘[t]hen also to the nations God gave repentance unto life.’ Later, and prior to his bringing Paul there, we see Barnabas being sent to Antioch to investigate the preaching of the gospel to the

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689 Mark 8:29. Matthew 16:16 has ‘the christ the son of the living God (ho christos ho huios tou theou tou zōntas)’, and Luke 9:20 has ‘the christ of God (ton christon thou theou)’. When the Johannine Jesus challenges the disciples as to whether they wished to depart, it is Peter who responds (for all, for the type of believer), wondering to whom they should then go. His reply is specifically soteriological: ‘you [Jesus, lord] have the words of eternal life (hrēmata zōês aïōnion echēis), John 6:68; he presses this further, adding ‘you are the holy one of God (su ei ho hagios tou theou)’, 6:69.

690 Mark 8:31.

691 Schillebeeckx’s way of explaining suffering in the world is to talk of negativity; in the very creating of humans as creatures ‘there is the possibility (not the necessity) of a negative and original initiative of finitude, if I can put it that way’, see Schillebeeckx, Christ: 728 (emphases by the author); he is building his argument on the basis of Aquinas, Summa Theologica I-II, q112, a3, ad2, and II Sentences 37, q2, a1, ad2.

692 Luke 13:22-24; the account in Matthew seems to be part of a list as it follows straight upon the golden rule and speaks of a gate, rather than a door, Matthew 7:13f.


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Hellenists (Τελειοκτησίας). When he sees there ‘the grace of God’, which we take to mean the active work of following the gospel, he rejoices and exhorts everyone to ‘remain with the lord.’ barnabas is then joined by paul and, later still, both are sent on a missionary journey, though the account normally depicts them preaching to Jews and ‘God-fearers’. After paul’s Sabbath speech in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch he and barnabas were beseeched by ‘many Jews and worshipping proselytes’ who wanted to hear more; having talked together, they were urged by paul and barnabas to ‘remain in the grace of God.’ then, on the following Sabbath, after ‘the Jews’ contradicted and reviled him, paul (and barnabas) declared that, while it was ‘necessary’ for the gospel to have been preached to the Jews first, they had rejected it and so, ‘behold, we now turn to the nations [Gentiles].’ as part of his theological justification for this contextually rather abrupt change in preaching patterns, Luke has paul and barnabas cite Isaiah 49:6: ‘I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.’ This legitimation process becomes part of the imaginative process whereby all of God’s plan is tied to the work of Jesus. God, the author of Colossians tells us, delivered us ‘out of the authority of darkness’ and transferred us ‘into the kingdom of his beloved son (εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς αγαπῆς αὐτοῦ).’ also, God is the one who saves ‘through washing of re-generation and re-newal of the Holy Spirit (dia loutrou paliggevesias kai anakainôseos pneumatos hagiou)’, and ‘not by works (ex ergôn) which we did in righteousness (en dikaiosunê)’. God did this through the saviour, Jesus Christ, ‘so that being justified (dikaiôthentes) we might become heirs, according to hope of life eternal, by the grace of that one (Christ, τῇ εἰκόνι chariti).’

John

It is in John that a ‘higher’ christology is to be seen; and any idea of dismissing the role of charis in the John on the basis that it is so infrequently used (four times) is answered by noting that all the uses occur in the Prologue. Thus, their placing makes the notion of grace programmatic for the whole gospel, allied with logos, truth, and love. The Word (logos) of God pre-existed creation and determined it; in time, this same logos became incarnated and

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605 Acts 11:20, but some major texts read ‘the Greeks (Hellenas)’: Papyrus74, K, A and D*.  
606 Acts 11:23, and also 25f.; it is in antioch that the followers of ‘the way’ are called ‘Christians’, v.26.  
607 Acts 13:14-43, especially the latter verse.  
608 Acts 13:46; the Gentiles rejoice at this and many believed, v.48. The text betrays certain anomalies: many of those who sought out Paul and Barnabas were Jews, so not all Jews rejected the Gospel; Paul and Barnabas continue to enter and speak in synagogues.  
609 Colossians 1:13.  
700 Titus 3:5b-7. This is not a licence to avoid doing good deeds, kalon ergon, as v.8 makes clear.
‘dwelt among us’ in a form that was ‘full of grace and truth’. From this very fulness of the \textit{logos} ‘we have all received, grace upon grace’. With no further explanation, the text continues, as if reprising without expansion the law-grace opposition that may be discerned in Paul: ‘[f]or the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’ ‘Charis’ will not be mentioned again in \textit{John} though its partner term, \textit{alētheia}, will be, often. In terms of love, John uses \textit{philein} and \textit{agapein} seemingly interchangeably for ‘to love’. In the Petrine commission Jesus questions with \textit{agapein} twice and once with \textit{philein}; Peter responds each time with his ‘\textit{philo}’. What we should attend to more carefully here is the use of the verb ‘to know’, for Peter claims that Jesus truly knows the answer to his own question. Further, when Jesus earlier gives, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the command to love he states clearly that ‘all that I have heard from my father I make known to you.’ Those to whom he speaks are no longer slaves, but friends (\textit{philoi}), and it is this knowledge that Jesus has imparted to them that constitutes this difference. They may still not understand all, for Jesus speaks in allegory and not always plainly; though, when they think he speaks plainly they affirm that they believe in him. He promises that the Spirit, later called ‘paraclete’ and designated as sent by the Father, will remind them of the things Jesus has taught. Finally, \textit{agapē} and its cognates are very important in \textit{John}. They characterize the relation of Jesus and the Father and that of Jesus and those who believe in him. Indeed, \textit{agapē} defines the Johannine quintessence of divinity.

\[\text{\textit{John} 1:14.}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 1:14.}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 1:16.}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 1:17.}\]
\[\text{See, for instance, \textit{John} 4:24, 14:17, 15:26, 16:13 where it is tied to the Spirit; and 17:17, 19 where it is linked to sanctification.}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 21:15-17. In 5:20 \textit{philein} is used in ‘the Father loves the son.’}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 15:17.}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 15:15.}\]
\[\text{\textit{John} 15:15.}\]
\[\text{Jesus’s rhetorical question may put that into question, see \textit{John} 16:29-31.}\]
\[\text{See also \textit{John} 14:26.}\]
\[\text{In \textit{John} 13-17 alone ‘to love’ is used 25 times, and \textit{agapē} 6 times, see C.K. Barrett, \textit{The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text, SPCK: London, 1978: 215.}\]
\[\text{See 1 \textit{John} 4:8 and 16, where God is said to be love; and, about such things ‘we know...we have seen and we testify...we know and believe’, vv.13, 14 and 16.}\]
Peter

Peter, too, in the opening of both his letters, uses a language of grace (and peace). In 2 Peter, he, like Paul, speaks of grace and divine promises; he, too, wants his hearers to be zealous about the good news they have received. Continuing the theme of human passions from his first letter, Peter exhorts his audience to escape the passion that has corrupted the world. Instead, they are to become ‘sharers of the divine nature (theias koinônoi phuseòs)’. Peter pictures a fire burning and consuming all. This for him is but preparatory to ‘the new heavens and a new earth’ in which ‘righteousness is at home (dikaiosûnê katoikeîn)’. Already, in 1 Peter, he has signalled that those who have received from God a ‘free gift (charisma)’ should use it for one another, as ‘good stewards of God’s manifold grace’. For all his contrasting of those called and chosen by God in Christ, viz, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ (1 Peter 2:9), and those who ‘like to do what Gentiles do’, viz., live in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry (1 Peter 4:3), Peter holds out some hope even for those who lived, died and have been judged; even the dead have been evangelized. Peter is clear, though, that each of the believers has received a (different) gift, charisma, and each one, like Paul, should act as ‘good stewards (kaloi oikonomoi)’. What they act in stewardship of is the ‘pluriform grace of God (poikilês charitos theou), an expression that may tend towards reification of divine grace.

James

Like Peter, James has an image of fire, too. He writes of ‘setting on fire the wheel of nature (ton trochon tês geneseôs)’ as a way of discussing how people live with one another; one small thing (work) can have huge repercussions on the whole of life (faith). Much of James’s import stems from the author’s attempts to hold his audience to a Christ-inspired though always practical ethic: they are to be doers and not just hearers: the double-minded person (dipsuchos) is one who, coveting and not obtaining, desiring and not having, resorts to war;

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713 2 Peter 1:10, 3:14.
714 2 Peter 1:4, see below.
715 2 Peter 3:10, 12.
716 2 Peter 3:13, see also 1 Peter 4:12.
717 1 Peter 4:10.
718 1 Peter 4:6.
719 1 Peter 4:10.
720 James 3:6; the context is actually the (mis)use of the tongue, to bless the Lord and curse those who are make in God’s likeness, see vv.5-10.
721 James 1:8, and below.
he is roundly condemned. The double-minded people can expect nothing from God; instead, if any should turn to God, then God, the one who gives more grace, will exalt them. Already James has addressed the question of Abraham’s faith, though he comes to a different analysis to Paul’s. For James, faith by itself is not real faith; real faith is always accompanied by works (James 2:14-26). Indeed, faith apart from works is barren and dead, he asserts. Abraham’s offering of Isaac ‘upon the altar’ was precisely his justification by works. In this act, James affirms:

You see that faith worked with his [Abraham’s] works and faith was perfected by the works.

This, continues James, was the fulfilling of the very text that Paul cites in his argument in Romans 4, viz., Genesis 15:6. Furthermore, Abraham was called ‘friend of God (philos theou),’ Even though, then, faith and works are distinguished the author so ties them together – neither faith without works, nor works without faith – that he can say that faith without works is dead; James concludes that ‘a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.’ We now turn to Paul himself.

4.3 Pauline Grace and Justification

The first writings recorded in the Christian scriptures are the letters of Paul. As a consequence of his conversion to Christ, Paul had to engage and respond to the basic ideas or frame of reference that had previously formed him, and that in a variety of pastoral and doctrinal contexts as his letters witness. He saw himself as an apostle, one chosen by the risen Christ – whereas the Twelve had been chosen by Jesus during his public ministry – to preach the good news, especially to non-Jews, typically termed ‘the nation(s)’ or Gentiles. So,

722 James 1:22-25.
724 James 4:10.
726 James 2:22.
727 See Isaiah 41:8, and 2 Chronicles 20:7.
728 James 2:17 and 24.
729 Paul sees himself as a steward or servant of God. In the letter to the Ephesians, he speaks of the administration or stewardship of God’s grace (tên oikonomian tês charitos tou theou) which was ‘given to me for you’. This is the good news about which he writes to them and of which he became ‘a minister according to the gift of God’s grace (diakonos kata têν dôrean tês charitos tou theou)’, Ephesians 3:2-10, especially 2 and 7, which latter continues: ‘[grace] given to me according to the working of his power (tês dotheisés moi kata tên energeiai tês dunameí̂s autou).’ An essential part of Paul’s argument, of course, is that this duty is given him in
what is the fundamental background against which the theology of Paul develops? How does Paul come to understand the newness that faith in Christ engenders in him? We begin by looking at the singular event that changed the Jewish Saul, persecutor of Christians, into Paul, apostle to the Gentiles.

### 4.3.1 Conversion Experience

First, there is his account of his conversion experience; second, there is his pleading with the Lord for a ‘thorn in the flesh’ to leave him. In greeting his Galatian audience Paul begins with a prayer: ‘Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ...’ (*Galatians* 1:3). Quickly, however, he begins to upbraid them that they are ‘so quickly’ deserting the one who called them ‘in the grace of Christ’ for ‘another gospel’. The gospel Paul preaches is ‘not according to man’; neither is it something ‘received from man’ nor taught to him (by others). Rather, it is ‘through a revelation of Jesus Christ (*di’* *apokalupseōs Iēsou Christou*)’ that Paul evangelizes. He specifies, thus:

> But when the One having set me apart from the womb of my mother and having called through his grace (*dia tēs charitos autou*) was pleased to reveal his son in me in order that I might preach him among the nations, I did not confer with flesh and blood, neither did I go up to Jerusalem to the apostles who were before me, but I went away into Arabia, and again returned to Damascus.

This revealing of the Son is Paul’s shorthand for the so-called Damascus experience, which we know more fully from Luke’s account in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Later, another revelation will lead Paul, after some fourteen years, to return to Jerusalem; there, ‘James, Cephas and John’, seeing that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of [for] the uncircumcized and ‘knowing the grace given to me’, gave Paul – and Barnabas, who had accompanied him – their ‘right hands of fellowship’.

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70 Galatians 1:6.
71 Galatians 1:11f.
72 Galatians 1:15-17.
73 See *Acts* 9:1-31, especially verses 3-6; Paul’s speech on the steps of the barracks in Jerusalem, 22: 6-16; and Paul’s defence before king Agrippa, 26:12-18. All three agree on and cite the following statements: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’, ‘Who are you, lord?’, and ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’, though Luke surely had different sources for these accounts.
4.3.2 Covenant and Law

The framework that Paul inherited is summed up in the Hebrew idea of ‘the Law (Tôrâh)’: there is a system of rewards (and punishments) that follows, by divine promise, faithfulness (or unfaithfulness) to the covenantal agreement between God and God’s people.\(^{735}\) The Covenant committed people to do all that God had spoken and to be obedient.\(^{736}\) In a discourse on the place of Israel or the Hebrews in the scheme of salvation Paul at one stage speaks of ‘the remnant’ that remains true to God and will be saved while the rest seem lost. Yet, Paul goes on to deny that even the latter are ultimately lost, since – and this is his actual point – the current disobedience of his fellow Hebrews is the cause of the divine promises being opened up to those who are not Jews, that is, the Gentiles. In the end, then: ‘God has shut up all in disobedience in order that he may show mercy (eleêšê) to all.’\(^{737}\) It is in light of his own experience of both knowing and observing the Law\(^{738}\) and of his profound, personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth on the road to Damascus, that Paul came to the realization that God is not one who measures out punishments for failures to fulfil the Law, tit-for-tat-like, a condemner of weak and fallible humans; instead, God is full of grace and peace.\(^{739}\) God, he realized, gifts humans wholly out of proportion to their due, gifts them without regard for all their own distinctions between Jew and Gentile, male and female, etc., and does so

\(^{735}\) On the other hand, Paul continued to think in eschatological terms, and this is part of his conceptual framework that he could not – or, at least, did not – radically alter; Jesus becomes the new Adam, in whom the newly made righteous would be both recipients of divine blessings even as sin would die and a new life would be inaugurated.

\(^{736}\) Exodus 24:3 and 7. This is not to ignore either the awareness in some of the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures that the people had already broken this covenant by their disobedience or their awareness that a new covenant, written in the heart, was called for, see Jeremiah 31:31f. and Ezekiel 36:22-32.

\(^{737}\) Romans 11:32.

\(^{738}\) See, for instance, Philippians 3:5-7.

\(^{739}\) This combination of grace and peace – with its recapitulation of the Hebrew šâlôm, health, success, peace – normally stands at the head of Paul’s letters: Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2 (grace, mercy and peace are conjoined), 2 Timothy 1:2 (grace, mercy and peace are conjoined), Titus 1:4, and Philemon 1:3. Often at the endings of these letters is a wish that grace or ‘the grace of our lord Jesus Christ’ be with their recipients: Romans 16:20, 1 Corinthians 16:23f. (grace and ‘my love’ are conjoined), 2 Corinthians 13:14 (grace, love and the fellowship of the holy Spirit are conjoined), Galatians 6:18, Ephesians 6:23f. (peace, love with faith, and grace are conjoined), Philippians 4:23, Colossians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:18, 1 Timothy 6:21, 2 Timothy 4:22, Titus 3:15, and Philemon 1:25. Thus, whether one questions the Pauline authorship of some of these letters or not, there is at least uniformity in how they open and conclude, something which underscores a perceptibly Pauline usage.
while they were yet sinners. The reconciliation effected between God and humans is through Jesus Christ; in his blood, i.e., death on the cross, humans are justified, saved from divine wrath; if sin is in all people and brings death yet ‘the grace of God and the gift in grace of that one man Jesus Christ’ abounds ‘much more’. This internal discourse within Paul is played out in his letters, especially those to the Galatians and Romans, and is expressed in the breakdown of the Jew-Gentile distinction and the sinner-saved language of justification.

4.3.3 God Justifies and Remakes

In trying to understand Paul’s conception of the new order inaugurated by God and accomplished through the work of Jesus the ‘anointed one’, we will examine briefly four key ideas, viz., divine reconciliation, justification, faith and ‘one body’.

Paul’s image of divine reconciliation

Paul sees that differentiation between Jew and Greek or Gentile is now, in Christ, at an end. From his letters to the Galatians, Thessalonians and Corinthians we know that Paul was confronting live issues of just such differentiations and divisions; humans, even with the gospel preached to them, are not united in obedience to God. To the Romans he expresses this by saying that everyone is united in sin and failure: ‘for there is no distinction (ou gar estin diastole); for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by the grace of him (tê autou chariti) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.’ To the Ephesians he gives a similar message though in quite a different phrasing. The Gentiles, he wrote, were once alienated from ‘the commonweal of Israel (politeias ton Israel)’ and separated from them by a ‘middle wall of partition (mesotoichon tou phragmou)’. Now, however, Christ has smashed down that wall, has ‘made us both one’ and has done this in order to create in himself ‘one new person in place of two’ and to reconcile to God ‘both in one body’. At this early stage of Christianity, then, formerly opposed categories, Jew and Gentile, have been conjoined in a new offer of salvation: the once ‘strangers and wanderers (xenoi kai paroikoi)’ are instead ‘fellow-citizens of the saints and household-members of God

740 See Romans 5:8.
741 Romans 6:23.
742 Romans 5:9-15.
743 Romans 3:22b-24; also, 10:12.
744 Ephesians 2:12, 14.
745 Ephesians 2:8-16.
This topic is addressed more pointedly in Romans 9-11. Those who are saved are not saved by birth from Abraham’s flesh (but, from the promise made to him).\textsuperscript{747} God is not unjust;\textsuperscript{748} mercy is not consequent upon human will or work (but, precisely, on God’s mercy\textsuperscript{749}). This in turn entails that ‘the Gentiles who did not seek righteousness have attained it [divine mercy]’ and the Jews, who have righteousness – though that righteousness ‘based on the law (\textit{eis nomon})’ and ‘as based on works (\textit{hōs ex ergōn})’ and not on faith (\textit{ek pisteōs}) – ‘did not attain it’.\textsuperscript{750} Prior to explicitly dealing with the fact that God does not forget those already called nor withdraw promises made, Paul argues that Jewish failure is the cause of salvation coming to the Gentiles, and this is a great good; consequently, his boast is that he is apostle to the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{751} It is following his analogy of the wild olive branch grafted into the native cultivated vine that Paul reaches the high point of his argument: Israel’s heart is hardened and this is the Gentiles’ opportunity for salvation, which when complete will lead the Jews (‘all Israel’) to be saved.\textsuperscript{752} Thus, the very disobedience of the Gentiles becomes his fellow-Jews’ avenue to divine mercy, and the current disobedience of the Jews will in like manner become mercy for them.\textsuperscript{753} In sum, through the disobedience of all, Jew and Gentile, God’s mercy comes to all.\textsuperscript{754}

### Power of Justification

The divine mercy manifests the power of God, and divine power and righteousness are paralleled in Paul. This is clear from Romans:

\begin{quote}
...for it [the gospel] is the power of God (\textit{dunamis gar theou}) for salvation (\textit{eis sōtērian}) to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God (\textit{dikaiosunē gar theou}) is revealed through faith for faith (\textit{ek pisteōs eis pistin}); as it is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{746}\textit{Ephesians} 2:19. The play of language around \textit{oikos}, house, is distinctly Pauline, see also 2 \textit{Corinthians} 5:1f.: ‘[f]or we know that when the earthly tent we live in (\textit{hē epigeios ōmon oikia tou skēnous}) is folded up, we have a building (\textit{oikodomēn}) from God, an everlasting home (\textit{oikian...aiōnion}) not made by human hands, in the heavens. And indeed in this we groan longing to put on our dwelling (\textit{oikētērion}) from heaven’.

\textsuperscript{747}\textit{Romans} 9:8.

\textsuperscript{748}\textit{Romans} 9:14.

\textsuperscript{749}\textit{Romans} 9:16.

\textsuperscript{750}\textit{Romans} 9:30f.

\textsuperscript{751}\textit{Romans} 11:11 and 13.

\textsuperscript{752}\textit{Romans} 11:25f.

\textsuperscript{753}\textit{Romans} 11:30f.

\textsuperscript{754}\textit{Romans} 11:32.
written, ‘for the righteous one through faith shall live’ (ho de dikaios ek pisteōs zēsetai).\textsuperscript{756} Paul sees God revealing, along the path of faith and through the faithfulness of those who keep trust with God, God’s own righteousness: ‘now the righteousness of God (dikaiosunē theou) has been manifested apart from the law (chōris nomou), although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith (dikaiosunē de theou dia pisteōs) in Jesus Christ for all who believe’.\textsuperscript{757} God’s righteousness, as the amplification of the second part of this quote makes clear, is through faith in Christ for those who have faith. Faith, as Paul has just argued, is what makes one live. God makes righteous the person who has faith in Jesus and in this way proves Godself to be righteous.\textsuperscript{758} It is not the law, i.e., Tōrāh, that alone manifests God’s righteousness; now, Christ is at the centre of God’s manifesting of divine acting. Neither are the works of the law (chōris ergôn nomou)\textsuperscript{759} necessary for justification. If there is a law which justifies then it is ‘a law of faith (nomou pisteōs)’;\textsuperscript{760} if there is circumcision, or indeed uncircumcision, then it is circumcision ‘by faith (ek pisteōs)’.\textsuperscript{761} God, then, because God is one, will justify those of faith, whether that be the faith of the uncircumcized or of the circumcized. Yet, here and strongly, on the cusp of his discussion of the faith of Abraham, Paul asserts, in broader, more metaphorical language, that, far from destroying the law, ‘we establish’ it.\textsuperscript{762} For, the opposite of the law is not grace but

\textsuperscript{755} See Habakkuk 2:4, where Paul leaves out a term, mou (of me). Paul had already quoted this saying in Galatians 3:11, where he argued that no one is justified before God ‘by the law’ (en nomō). The addressees of Hebrews are encouraged to have confidence so that they may do God’s will, but, before expounding his (or her, perhaps) understanding of faith as ‘the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen’ (11:1), the author first quotes: ‘for yet a little while the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one through faith will live (ho de dikaios mou ek pisteōs zēsetai)...’ (10:37f.). The latter, by its inclusion of mou is an exact rendering of the LXX of Habakkuk 2:4, though Habakkuk’s emphasis is on the future while Paul’s is more clearly on faith. Also, in VanLandingham’s view, Paul’s use of dikaios in Romans 2:13 and in 3:10 ‘has an ethical sense’, see VanLandingham, Judgment and Justification: 291.

\textsuperscript{756} Romans 1:16b-17.

\textsuperscript{757} Romans 3:1-22b

\textsuperscript{758} Romans 3:26.

\textsuperscript{759} Romans 3:28.

\textsuperscript{760} Romans 3:27. The letter to the Ephesians affirms strongly: ‘for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing (ex humōn) it is the gift of God (theou to dōran), not because of works lest anyone should boast’, 2:8f.

\textsuperscript{761} Romans 3:30.

\textsuperscript{762} Romans 3:31.
Indeed, the law is holy: the commandment is ‘holy and just and good’. However, the law is for this life, not eternity and Paul’s theology takes him from the moment of creation to eternity. Therefore, in order to explain ‘the new life of the spirit’ in which he and his Roman audience now live, Paul explains that, as Christ died in the body and as we now belong to him, we were ‘discharged from the law, having died [to that] in which we were bound; we have ‘died to the law’. To explain the dilemma posed by law and sin Paul appeals to his own experience: he wants to do good, but fails; the very (bad) thing that he wishes to avoid is what he actually does. In his own self, there is a higher, spiritual self, called to new life in Christ, and there is a baser self, ‘the flesh’, lost to the law of sin. On the basis of the former, Paul gives thanks to God through Jesus Christ: ‘[s]o then, I myself on the one hand with [my] mind serve God and, on the other, with [my] flesh the law of sin.’ To the Corinthians Paul expressed this somewhat more generally: ‘though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day’. But, Abraham is the exemplar of the person changed by faith.

Growth in the Faith of Abraham

Paul cites as a favoured proof-text Genesis 15:6: ‘for Abraham believed in God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (episteusan de Abraam tò theó kai elogisthè autò eis diakaiosunèn)’. Because Abraham was faithful to the promise made by God, and this before he accepted the sign of circumcision, God reckoned him as righteous. For Paul, then, Abraham, the father of all, whether Jew or Gentile, is the model of obedience to and trust in God precisely because he was righteous in advance of being circumcized, which may well have been the archetypal human ‘work’. Therefore, Paul presses, God’s promise does not depend on works but ‘through a righteousness of faith (dia dikaiosunes pisteos)’ (v.13). A little oddly perhaps, we read that over time Abraham ‘grew strong [empowered] in his faith’;

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763 See Romans 7, especially verses 7 and 13.
764 Romans 7: 12.
765 See Romans 7:1.
766 See 2 Timothy 1:9 and Romans 5:21.
767 Romans 7:4-6.
768 Romans 7:25.
769 Romans 7:25.
770 2 Corinthians 4:16.
771 See also Romans 4:3, 9; what was reckoned to Abraham was ‘faith as righteousness (pistis eis diakaiosunèn)’; again, v.22
at the least, then, we may say that Paul had some notion of growth in faith. And, the reckoning that God made to Abraham is also made to those who believe in ‘the one who raised Jesus our lord from the dead’ (v.24), this same Jesus who was raised ‘because of our justification (dia tén dikaiōsin hémón)’ (v.25). At this point, reflecting on what Christ(’s blood) has achieved in justifying those who were already sinners, Paul moves to a language of peace, grace, rejoicing and hope. The exactitude and cool language of forensics are outweighed by joyful enthusiasm and fulsome rhetoric as Paul hopes to convince others of what he has himself felt and long been convinced of, to wit, that God freely gives salvation to all, whether Jew or Gentile, as a gift (dôrea). Indeed, ‘the grace of God (hê charis tou theou)’ and ‘the gift in grace (hê dôrea en chariti)’ of Christ ‘abound’; he says that they abound ‘rather by much’.

God’s ‘free gift (charisma)’, of course, is to be distinguished from the sin that has led to death through Adam. Those who receive the abundance ‘of the grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life’ through this one person Jesus Christ ‘rather by much’. Also, if sin abounds, then grace hyper-abounds (hupereperisseusen he charis). It was while we were ‘yet sinners’ that Christ died for us and our justification is through his cross. God wants all to be saved and to come to know the truth. The only possible response to this grace from our, human perspective is gratitude, which itself is called ‘grace’. For an appropriate image for the new life of grace that Paul has come to personally know and publicly to preach he turns to the human body.

One spiritual body

Paul’s view of the human person is basically integralist. For instance, in Romans 12, he affirms that body and spirit are united in that his hearers’ bodies are ‘a living holy sacrifice (thusian zōsan hagian)’ and this is spiritual worship. Yet, he strongly advises people that they should not be conformed to the current age but, instead, be metamorphosed into proving ‘what is God’s will, what is good and acceptable and perfect’. Nevertheless, the ruling idea is of the complete person, flesh and spirit, fulfilling the divine plan. He goes on, again in metaphorical language, to speak of the body, which is one, yet ‘in one body we have many

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772 Romans 5:15; see 6:1, and 2 Corinthians 4:15.
773 Romans 5:15.
774 Romans 5:17.
775 Romans 5:20.
776 Romans 5:8f.
777 1 Timothy 2:4-6.
778 See 1 Corinthians 15:57, 2 Corinthians 2:14.
779 Romans 12:1f.
members'; furthermore, 'we are one body in Christ' and also 'individually members one of another' such that each has different gifts according to 'the grace that is given to us'. For Paul, it is Christ who unites into 'one body' those who had the promises, the Hebrew people, and those, namely, the Gentiles (ta ethnē), who were formerly alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and outsiders (zenoi).

For by grace (tê gar charati) you have been saved in faith (este sesōsmeno dia pisteōs); and this is not your own doing (toute ouk ex humōn), it is the gift of God, not because of works (ouk ex ergōn) lest anyone should boast. At this stage a number of references have been made to charis and we learn through them something of Paul's understanding of grace. Let me synthesize this a little, before speaking of the gifts of grace.

4.3.4 Grace

So, how do we summarize Pauline grace? Grace is active and powerful; it brings joy and favour; and, in response it elicits thanks(giving). It justifies sinners and, in its victory over it it replaces sin's reign so that we give thanks to God. People can have grace, as Paul himself, in their own right. Grace establishes a new order, which supersedes that of sin or the law and it is utterly free. However, grace can also be lost. Still, people can work with grace, too. On the one hand, 'the grace of God' should not be accepted in vain, for on the 'day of salvation' (en hèmera sōterias), which is today, Paul urges the Corinthians

780 Romans 12:4-6.
781 Ephesians 2, especially verses 16 and 12.
782 Ephesians 2:8.
783 2 Corinthians 12:9.
784 2 Corinthians 13:14.
785 Ephesians 1:6.
786 Romans 3:24.
787 Romans 5:21.
789 Galatians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 1:7; 1 Timothy 1:14 and 2 Timothy 2:1
791 Galatians 2:21, see also 5:4.
792 Romans 11:6; also Ephesians 2:8.
793 Galatians 5:4; also 1:6; see also the caution of 2 Corinthians 6:1.
794 2 Corinthians 8:4, 6; 'Be strong in the grace given to us in Christ Jesus', as 2 Timothy 2:1 counsels.
to work together with God. On the other, Paul commends to the same Corinthians the example of ‘the grace of God’ that the churches of Macedonia showed when they collected alms for those less fortunate than themselves. Paul writes of them:

That according to their [the churches of Macedonia] power, I witness, and beyond their power, of their own accord, with much beseeching [and] requesting of us the grace and the fellowship of [partaking in] the ministry to the saints...themselves gave firstly to the lord...

In his own thinking Paul had divine assurance that grace was God’s power at work in him, especially in his weakness. In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul refers to a ‘thorn in the flesh’ that had assailed him three times such that he pleaded with God to remove it. Though we cannot know whether he intends a physical ailment, a psychological or emotional worry, an attack by others, or some other cause, Paul learns to accept this weakness; he speaks as though quoting Christ verbatim: ‘my grace suffices for you; for, power in weakness is perfected.’ Here, grace and divine power are equated, and this in one person’s experience of weakness. Grace, too, has power to increase thanksgiving. The idea of grace increasing and spreading is encapsulated in 2 Corinthians 4:15: ‘all things are on your account, as grace increased through the majority it may make the thanksgiving (eucharistia) abound to the glory of God’. Paul, however, also images grace in terms of discretely graced elements, called gifts (charismata).

Graced Gifts

Our theology of charisma is virtually completely Pauline; Romans and 1 Corinthians attest to this. For Paul the charisma is the gift that is bestowed and it is usually spiritual. In Romans he hopes to give a charisma; by this early stage Paul has already used charis twice, first with reference to his authority and second in prayer. When gifts, charismata, are

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795 2 Corinthians 6: 1f.
796 2 Corinthians 8:3-5. This note of partnership in a context of grace is also echoed in his letter to the Philippians, whom Paul calls ‘partakers of grace with me’, whether in his bonds or his defence and confirmation of the gospel, see Philippians 1:7.
797 See 2 Corinthians 12:9.
798 2 Corinthians 12:9.
799 And also Ephesians. See, for instance, Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-27 and Ephesians 4:7-16; see also Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle: 553.
800 Romans 1:11; though it is Paul’s intended gift he goes on to describe its context interrelationally, that is, ‘through faith in one another, both of you and of me, to be encouraged together (sumparaklēthēnai)’, v.12; also, verses 5 and 7.
given, such as to Israel, they are irrevocable. The specific charismata, such as glossolalia, healing and prophecy, that become evident in different offices in the community are, though different (‘diallases de charismatôn’), all from the one spirit. On the basis of the attention that Paul devotes to discussing charismata, in particular that of glossolalia, we may see that the Corinthian community was in much turmoil. Paul’s way of responding is rewarding on a variety of levels. Paul is clear about the basic minimum: God grants gifts to people differently and these gifts should be used for the common good. Indeed, there must be cooperation between the gifts. On the one hand, they must be tested: this is the discernment (diakrisis) of the spirits, and, on the other, they must cooperate together ‘for the common good’, e.g., glossolalia needs interpretation, for they all have the one Spirit. At this point, and not without a sense of humour, Paul further develops his conceptuality of the ‘one body’; it has many members though the body itself is one; one member – he takes the instance of the eye – cannot be the whole body! What affects one member affects the whole body, for good or ill; thus, the different members constitute the one ‘body of Christ’ (sôma Christou). Following this discussion of one Spirit and one body Paul offers the Corinthians a new conceptuality of community, what he calls ‘a more excellent way’. This is a vision that compares the present and terrestrial with the future and heavenly: now we see dimly, then it will be face to face; now we know in part, then fully; our prophecies, tongues and knowledge will pass away but there is one thing that will not pass: love (agapê). The point that Paul stresses is that all other gifts, of glossolalia, prophetic powers, understanding of mysteries, knowledge, faith, even yielding of one’s body to be burnt, all ‘gain nothing’ unless love accompanies them. Of the indisputably ‘higher gifts’, then, of faith, hope and love, the one higher than all the rest is love. This is a Pauline magna carta or, better, ‘sermon on the

801 Romans 11:29.
802 1 Corinthians 12:4 and 11.
803 1 Corinthians 12:7; in Romans 12:2 he calls it: ‘what is good and well-pleasing and perfect’.
804 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and 14:13-32; Paul wishes all things to be done ‘becomingly and in order (euschêmenos kai kata taxin)’, 14:40 (see below).
805 See 1 Corinthians 12, especially v.27.
806 1 Corinthians 12:31.
807 1 Corinthians 13:8-12
809 In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Paul designates the positive qualities of love, e.g., patient, kind, rejoices in the right, and bears, believes, hopes and endures all things; neither is it jealous, boastful, arrogant, rude, irritable, resentful or rejoices in the wrong. For Dunne, charis and agapê, as Paul links them, ‘sum up and most clearly characterise his whole theology’, Dunne, The Theology of Paul the Apostle: 329.
mount’. Finally, there are the more general principles that Paul appeals to: to think so as to be sober-minded (φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σῶφρονεῖν)\textsuperscript{810}, to be mature in thinking (ταῖς δὲ φρεσίν τελείως γίνεσθαι)\textsuperscript{811}, to make all things both for edification (πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γίνεσθαι)\textsuperscript{812} and ‘becomingly and according to order (εὐσχέμωνός καὶ κατὰ ταξιν)\textsuperscript{813}. The principles of right thinking are maintained; judgement is to be left to God. It is not for others – indeed, it is not even for himself – to judge (ανακρίνω) Paul; therefore, people should not judge (κρίνω) for that is what the Lord will do. Who, he asks rhetorically, makes distinctions in you? For, ‘what have you that you have not received?’\textsuperscript{814} The point is, if what we have has actually been given to us (as a gift), then we should not boast as if it were something of our own (and, therefore, not a gift). There is a judgement that can be made, of course. The love of Christ, Paul famously says, constrains us (ἐμαυτὸ), however, he immediately qualifies who ‘us’ are: the ones who have judged that one person (ὁις), Christ, has died for all (ὑπὲρ παντὸν).\textsuperscript{815}

4.3.5 Pauline Transformation

In sum, then, Paul uses charis to translate both the Hebrew ἡν and ἥσεδ, which we have already looked at earlier; the Hebrew ἥσεδ, often linked to the convenantal relationship, was more usually translated into Greek by ελεος. Yet, in Paul, grace and mercy, charis and ελεος are often conjoined; what Paul shows is not a denial of ἥσεδ, then, but a preference for the Greek charis.\textsuperscript{816} Favour with God is something granted by God liberally; it is not strained in some calculated quid pro quo. Relationship to God is not determined by observance of the Law but by grace.\textsuperscript{817} Grace establishes a new way of being. This is succinctly stated in Romans. In the middle of his discourse on the place of Israel in the divine scheme of salvation, especially now that Gentile as well as Jew is made recipient of God’s promise of

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\textsuperscript{810} Romans 12:3.

\textsuperscript{811} 1 Corinthians 14:20.

\textsuperscript{812} 1 Corinthians 14:26, see also verses 3 and 12.

\textsuperscript{813} 1 Corinthians 14:40.

\textsuperscript{814} 1 Corinthians 4:7: ‘[w]ho distinguishes you [from others] (τις γαρ διακρίνει;)’, which is immediately followed by ‘What have you that you have not received? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it [as a gift]? (τί δε εχεις οὐκ ελαβες; σι δε και ελαβες, τι καυχασαι ησος με λαβων;’)

\textsuperscript{815} 2 Corinthians 5:14, using the aorist participle, κριναντας touto.

\textsuperscript{816} Perhaps this is because it combines two Hebrew ideas, viz., unilateralness and lasting commitment, for God is the only source and God gives again and again, in spite of human disobedience and failure; it also reprised current Greek notions of beauty, favour, gratitude for and delight in, see Dunne, The Theology of Paul the Apostle: 321.

\textsuperscript{817} See Romans 6.
life Paul links the idea of body, service to God, transformation, renewal and the divine will. He writes:

Therefore, I beseech you, brothers, through God’s compassions, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy to God [and] well-pleasing, your reasonable service [of worship] (tēn logikēn latreian); and do not be conformed (mē suschēmatizesthe) to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind (metamorphoustå te anakainōsei tou noos) for you to prove what is the good, well-pleasing and perfect will of God.⁸¹⁸

Paul has been trying to clarify what the divine will is, namely, salvation for all; this is something already dealt with in his letter to Titus. There Paul wrote:

For the grace of God appeared saving all men, instructing us so that, denying impiety and worldly lusts, we might live wisely and rightly and piously in the present age, expecting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and saviour of us Christ Jesus who gave himself on our behalf so that he might ransom us from all iniquity and might cleanse for himself a people [who are] his own possession and zealous for good works.⁸¹⁹

These words introduce our next section. In Latin Christianity grace (Latin: gratia) underwent a semantic evolution; it could designate key and common theological notions, for instance, the Gospel or baptism; it could be applied directly to God.⁸²⁰ For this most of the credit (or blame) is given to Augustine of Hippo. History has produced few of the stature and calibre of Saint Augustine. From following impiety and worldly lusts Augustine finally embraced what he interpreted as God’s offer of grace, accepted Christ as his saviour and strove zealously to be a pastor to his flock and defender of orthodox faith against all heresy.

4.4 AUGUSTINIAN SYNTHESIZING OF GRACE

If Paul stands out as the scriptural authority who thematized grace most overtly and began to theologize it then Augustine of Hippo is the patristic figure who made grace the positive core of his whole theology. However, this is already to hint at something darker and also at the core of that theology, namely, his treatment of sin, in particular his conception of original sin. His thinking dominated the West until at least the time of Aquinas and the (re-)introduction of

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⁸¹⁸ Romans 12:1-2; I take the last phrase appositionally; it may also be translated: ‘what is the will of God, what is good, well-pleasing and perfect.’

⁸¹⁹ Titus 2:11-14.

Aristotelian thinking. Aquinas himself sees Augustine as one of his principal dialogue-partners in his own resolutely systematic construction of Christian theology. More particular to our concerns, it is Augustine’s account of grace that has informed most of Western Christianity, not least the controversies at the heart of the so-called Reformation, and perhaps most the theologies of Luther and Calvin. In this way and prescinding from faith-affirmations, he too is one of those religious geniuses, like Siddhārtha Gautama and Jesus Christ, Paul and Shinran, whose influence is palpable to today. In tracing a path through his many works we concentrate on the *Confessions* which is the story of his conversion to God and Christ, and *De Civitate Dei* which contrasts the ‘heavenly city’ that we hope to enter with the earthly one in which we labour now. From the former we see Augustine’s own understanding of conversion, the failure of humans to overcome sin, the operation of grace, and the nature of the God who offers grace freely. By the time Augustine had come to write *De Civitate Dei* his world had witnessed the cataclysm of the fall of Rome to Alaric the Goth (c.370-c.410) in 410, and the power of the Huns was already threatening the Roman Empire. This was a profound shock to him, and to the *pagani* who had remained powerful in post-Constantinian Rome, and who, ironically, blamed the Fall on Christians, arguing that the world would have been a better place were it not for Christianity. Countering such claims spurred Augustine to write his defence of the city of God.

4.4.1 Augustine’s quest
In 354 CE in Thagaste in Numidia (North Africa), Aurelius Augustinus was born to a pagan father and Christian mother, Monnica. In 371 he went for studies, especially in rhetoric, to Carthage. Soon, in 374, Augustine became and remained for almost a decade a Manichee,
following Manicheism’s dualism of good and evil. In general, his youth was much taken with imaginative ideas, e.g., ‘[i]f God made the soul, why does it fall into error?’ He did not like to be told in retort that, ‘on your showing, we might ask why God falls into error.’ Of that period he said that he was readier to assert that God’s ‘immutable substance’ had been forced into error than to confess that his own ‘mutable substance’ had gone astray ‘of its own will, and that its error was its punishment. For Augustine, secular knowledge should not be ‘unworthy’ of the essence of piety. For instance, he did not consider it much harm if Mani or, in fact, any fellow Christian held different views of the ‘position or characteristics of a material creature’; where a problem does arise is when such people also presume that their views are orthodox. This was Mani’s error; overstepping the mark he had spoken about things of which he was ignorant and of which ‘the philosophers’ had a better knowledge. Augustine upbraids himself that he had rested his faith both in Mani’s reputed godliness and on his authority. Thus, in 383 he took up a teaching position in Rome but quickly went to Milan to become a professor of rhetoric; conversations with Ambrose of Milan culminated in Augustine’s conversion experience, and led to baptism at Ambrose’s hands (April 387). Augustine suggests that it was Ambrose who was the first to meet adequately Augustine’s intellectual objections to Christianity; Ambrose’s use of allegory in the interpretation of scripture deeply impressed Augustine. Afterwards, Augustine spent a couple of years as a monastic in Tagaste, eventually setting up a community of other servi Dei. In 391 he was seized by the people and ordained a priest; in 395, he was consecrated bishop and shortly thereafter succeeded to the see of Hippo, dying in 430, after having engaged in theological controversies that helped establish core principles of Christianity, especially in relation to grace. However, it is with the Augustine of the mid-380s, and the story of his conversion, that we begin.

826 Its founder was Mani (c.216-c.277); it was a gnosis that offered a radical dualism of good and evil; the human person was of both, and, to be saved, had to both fundamentally disown what is bodily and material (because associated with evil) and realize the truth (of divinity) in a moment of instantaneous illumination, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*: 13f. Augustine tells how it was the personal encounter with the renowned Manichee, Faustus of Milevis, that finally made him realize the emptiness of this doctrine, see Augustine, *Confessiones* IV.15.26; *The Confessions*: 109.


829 Augustine, *Confessiones* V.5.8f.; *The Confessions*: 118f.
4.4.2 Conversion

The theme of conversion is essential to any understanding of Augustine. He traced its lineaments in the lives of those he knew intimately and of those whom he had read and studied. In conversion Augustine saw the hidden workings of God, the creator of all, whose grace and providential care led people from one way of life to another one. The most familiar example of conversion, greater even than his personal scriptural exemplar, Paul, was Augustine himself; his Confessiones attest to this at every turn. The dynamics of conversion preoccupied him. When Monnica was herself a young girl, she had been especially stung by the remark of one of the maids that she, Monnica, was a meribia or wine-bibber; and so, 'the shaft went home, and my mother took heed to her disgraceful conduct, condemned it, and threw it off at once.' This story becomes part of his own conversion story; the jibe of a servant became the occasion of Monnica's healing so that no one, hearing of such a happening, 'should ascribe it to his own power if another person, who in his opinion, stands in need of correction, is put right by some word of his.' Other stories affirm this. Augustine's friend and later fellow-bishop, Alypius, who was baptized with him, had been too taken with circus life until a nasty jibe of Augustine himself set Alypius on the path to reformation. Another great friend, Verecundus, just recently converted to the Christian faith through the efforts of his devoted wife, died while Augustine was in Italy. Nebridius, too, was converted. Victorinus, the orator, in his old age, went, like the humblest of converts, to publicly proclaim his conversion. The idea that he, Augustine, was in need of conversion was borne in upon him by his own experiences, such as his adoption of Manicheism and subsequent disenchantment with its doctrines, by his quest for truth, and by the unceasing prayers and comments of Monnica, who would join him in Milan. He tells us that from his adolescence he was already taken with a desire of 'loving and being loved'. However, he had sought fulfilment of this main desire in a multiplicity of desires, not least enjoyment of 'a

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830 Augustine, Confessiones IX.8.18; The Confessions: 223f.
831 Augustine, Confessiones IX.8.18; The Confessions: 224.
832 See also Augustine, Confessiones IX.6.14; The Confessions: 219, see also VIII.12.30: The Confessions: 203f.
833 See Augustine, Confessiones IX.3.5; The Confessions: 212; it was in Verecundus's country estate of Cassiciacum, near Como, that Augustine would stay with friends.
834 See Augustine, Confessiones VI.10.17; The Confessions: 150.
836 Augustine, Confessiones II.2.2; The Confessions: 62f., see also III.1.1; The Confessions: 75.
lover's body'. This led to his self-description: 'I became to myself a land of famine'. When talking of the desires of the body we should remember that, though lust (libido) is usually thought of as sexual desire (quaes in genitalibus usitatius libido nominatur), for Augustine it is 'the general name for desire of every kind (cum hoc sit generale vocabulum omnis cupiditatis). For him it is a type of craving (appetitus quidam), which, like hunger or thirst, is felt in the body as its own desire (quasi cupiditas eius). He writes of various lusts such as that for vengeance (anger), possession of money (greed), victory at any price (obstinacy), and boasting (vanity). This broader spectrum, in spite of Augustine's own longer treatment of sexual lust, has to be remembered as the context in which he regularly uses the word lust. Thus, when Augustine upbraids himself for his 'lust' we must be alert to the wide parameters of its meaning for him. It does refer to the desires of the flesh but no less to seeking after worldly fame, superstitious religion or that lust for domination that leads to civil wars, and it describes Augustine's way of life 'from my nineteenth to my twenty-eighth year'. As such, these desires fight against and often overcome what a person rationally wishes to do. Even when libido is used solely of sexual desire, and in the sense that it overwhelms lovers, it can strangely (mirum) refuse to be the servant of the will to beget — or even be lascivious — for, quite often, it is 'divided against itself (adversus se ipsa dividitur)'. So various are the passions he experiences that Augustine cries to God:

As a human being is an immense abyss, but you, Lord, keep count even of his hairs, and not one of them is lost in you, yet even his hairs are easier to number than the affections and movements of his heart.

Prior to reaching Milan, though, Augustine was beginning to read 'Platonist books' and so move away from his attachment to Manicheism. Other influences are noted, too. Now in

Augustine, Confessiones III.1.1; The Confessions: 75.
Augustine, De Civitate Dei XIV.15; City of God: 576.
Augustine, De Civitate Dei XIV.15; City of God: 576f.
See Augustine, Confessiones IV.1.1; The Confessions: 92.
Augustine, De Civitate Dei XIV.16; City of God: 577.
Augustine, Confessiones IV.14.22; The Confessions: 106.
Augustine himself mentions neither authors nor books by name. Peter Brown, cautious at first, thinks that Augustine became exposed to the works of Plotinus and Neo-Platonism in early summer 386, though soon he is telling us what Augustine read and learnt, see Brown, Augustine of Hippo: 94 and 95-100. Likewise, Henry Chadwick draws many parallels with Plotinus as he comments on the Confessiones, see Saint Augustine, Confessions: 3-6, 7, 10, 12, 19f., and passim. Given the changes in his thinking and affections that Augustine

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Milan he comes under the influence of Ambrose. He reflects that when he was nineteen he was much taken by Cicero’s philosophical text, *Hortensius*. It had excited him to seek wisdom and yet, twelve years later, he was still postponing the encounter, preferring to satisfy his vanity and pursue trivialities. One day, in the house of friends his questing, sense of sin, and willingness to know God more, all came to a head. Augustine becomes very agitated as he still hesitates to fully commit himself to Christian belief; he is at war with himself, one self willing to change, another unwilling. He imagines Lady Continence challenging him: ‘why are you relying on yourself, only to find yourself unreliable?’ Finally, he hears a child’s voice urging ‘take and read (tolle, lege)’; he stems his tears and, thinking he was following a divine prompting, rushes to find the book he had been reading and, opening it, reads *Romans* 13:13f., about ‘putting on Christ’ and making no provision for the flesh and its desires. At once, all his doubts leave him and he begins his formal entry into the Roman Catholic church, culminating in his baptism at Easter the following year (387).

Conversion is what Augustine proclaims in his public ‘confessions’. Yet, this is not a Pauline conversion, for it is not an immediate, once-and-for-all affair. Augustine presents God as bringing conversion about in many ways, as was the case with himself, and the later books of the *Confessiones*, after the story of *tolle, lege*, attest to this, and so, too, do his sermons. It had taken Augustine years to finally opt for the Christian way. One of the things that held him back was the appalling image of God presented in the scriptures. This theme of interpreting the scriptures correctly is an essential element in Augustine’s conversion. He credits Ambrose with opening his eyes to the scriptures by the use of allegory, for not all is to was undergoing, coupled with a severe health problem that began in Rome, and his translating to Milan, it seems to me that there was insufficient time for Augustine to come to grips with Plotinus in the manner necessitated by the opinions of Brown and Chadwick. The fact that Augustine would quote and debate Plotinus by name later and that this is singularly not done in the *Confessiones*, though many others in this text are named, gives us pause. It is not irrational, perhaps not even unreasonable, that Augustine would have been exposed to (some of) the works of Plotinus at the time of his conversion experience; but, he does not tell us that and so we should be cautious. If Neo-Platonism had an effect on his conversion to Catholic Christianity, Augustine does not give it prominence.

Augustine quotes from it, yet the text is no longer extant.


See Augustine, *Confessiones* VIII.9.21 and 10.22; *The Confessions*: 201f., see also VIII.5.10; *The Confessions*: 192f.

Augustine, *Confessiones* VIII.11.27; *The Confessions*: 205.

Augustine, *Confessiones* VIII.12.29; *The Confessions*: 206f.
Influential, too, was a certain rule-book, some of the themes of which touch on central elements of Augustine’s thinking. Augustine, in the third book of *De Doctrina Christiana*, makes considerable use of the theories of the former Donatist, Tyconius (Tichonius) and his *Book of Rules*. In this book Tyconius outlined seven rules designed to unlock the secrets of scripture. Augustine considers them of ‘considerable assistance’ though they are not comprehensive, as some passages are ‘very obscure’. Indeed, Tyconius himself did not always apply his own rules, ‘lacking as he did an enemy to make him wary’; for instance, he was mistaken about our having faith ‘but in such a way that we do not have it from God’, as Augustine’s debates on grace make clear. Nevertheless, something in them fascinated Augustine. The rules, as recounted in *De Doctrina Christiana* relate to:

- the Lord and his body: or, head and body, Christ and his church; though the one person of Christ may be spoken of, an individual part (Christ or his church) may be meant
- a twofold division of the body of Christ: i.e., about the true and mixed (or counterfeit) body of the Lord
- the promises and the law: the spirit and the letter, or, grace and the law
- species and genus: by species he understood a part, by genus the whole of which species is a part
- times: to enable us to conjecture about times unmentioned in the scriptures; it may be as synecdoche (the part is taken for the whole, or vice versa), or as ‘legitimate numbers’

850 See Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram Libri Duodecim I.1; The Literal Meaning of Genesis in The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century Part 1 – Books*, volume 13: Genesis: 168, where the four senses of a scriptural text are named: allegorical (eternal realities are suggested), historical (deeds are recounted), prophetic (future events are foretold), and aetiology/moral (what actions are commanded or advised); see also, Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos I.17.27; On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*: 51ff., which Augustine later took to offer the allegorical sense in deference to the loftier literal one, see his *Retractationes II.24*, in *Genesis*: 167.


852 On the other side of the planet at around the same time Tao-sheng (fl.397-432), in advising his fellow translators of Indian texts into Chinese, offers his own hermeneutic: they should rely first on those passages which are understood (rather than those not (yet) understood), second on the meaning (rather than the words) of scriptural passages, and third on wisdom (rather than knowledge), see Yu, ‘Skill-in-means’: 422.

853 Faith itself is a gift from God, see Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana III.33A6; Teaching Christianity*: 190. Interestingly, Augustine himself misunderstood this work of Tyconius, conflating the latter’s categories of *regulae* and *claves* in such a way that he missed the (mystico-)theological intent of Tyconius’s own hermeneutic.
recapitulation: the scriptural author moves between times without indication and continuity appears broken
the devil and his body: some statements are made of the evil one, others of his followers (some of whom may be part of the church here and now). In summary, Augustine writes: ‘[n]ow all these rules, however, except the one which is called about the promises and the law, result in one thing being understood from another, and this is the peculiarity of figurative speech’. The point that Tyconius made about scriptural passages having one meaning in one context and another meaning in a different context is helpful, and was not lost on Augustine: what appears negative may well have a positive meaning. This was Augustine’s own experience; this was how he re-interpreted past events from his life in the light of his conversion. Bound in with this interpretation was a certain necessity of holiness: examining the scriptures demands prayer and must be undertaken in true piety. Furthermore, pastoral experience in Hippo would deepen Augustine’s understanding of the dynamics of conversion. From what, though, did Augustine change? What did he convert from, such that his account of the experience continues to inspire? What enabled his conversion? What understanding of God, and Christ, did Augustine come to have? We turn now to the first of these questions: Augustine’s account of human sinfulness.

4.4.3 Sin

Augustine was deeply conscious of sin and of its compulsive power in his own life. When a person speaks of being compelled to some sin or other, the fact of compulsion does not cancel the quality of sinfulness. Sin is really a ‘perverse imitation’. i.e., of the good. So, Augustine understood sin as imitating God, though pervertedly. In sinning the person shows ‘a counterfeited liberty’ or ‘a deluded omnipotence’. The human condition itself means that natural human capacity is ‘wounded, injured, beaten, ruined (vulnerata, sauciata, vexata,

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Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana III.30.42-37.56; Teaching Christianity: 188-197.
Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana III.37.56; Teaching Christianity: 196f.
Thus, the African theologian and bishop, wondering how to address the problem of those who, under persecution, apostatized, found here a principle which enabled those who had ‘gone away’ to return.
See Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana II.9.14; Teaching Christianity: 135: one must know the scriptures and their styles, and then seek to unravel obscurities. After his own conversion to Christianity, Augustine set up a small monastic community in Thagaste, devoted to common life, prayer, scriptures and personal holiness.
For instance, it led him to oppose the extremism of the Donatists, who would deny rehabilitation to any Christian who had apostatized during a persecution.
Augustine, Confessiones II.6.14; The Confessions: 71 (see above).
In Adam Augustine sees humanity ‘taking no heed of God who had created him’; to have obeyed God’s command would have meant for humans ‘support in healthy obedience’. Now, in consequence, ‘man’s wretchedness is nothing but his own disobedience to himself, so that because he would not do what he could [i.e., obey God’s command not to eat of the tree], he now wills to do what he cannot’, for neither mind nor flesh obeys the will. Augustine adds:

Even against his volition his mind is often troubled; and his flesh experiences pain, grows old, and dies, and endures all manner of suffering [et quidquid aliud patimur].

This is at the heart of the notion of original sin (peccatum originale). When Adam sinned the consequence was immediate: separation from God. When we sin we too separate ourselves from God. However, this is not the whole of the doctrine of original sin, which was at the heart of Augustine’s objections to Pelagius, especially following the latter’s acquittal at the Synod of Palestine. Augustine represents Pelagius as have been duplicitous: at the Synod, condemning anyone who held views that he was to propose in a four volume publication of his own about the same time. The issue was fought over the baptism of infants, which, Augustine argued, was necessary; Pelagius, on the other hand, argued that unbaptized infants were like Adam before the fall, i.e., they had original righteousness and were free of the condemnation that befell Adam. Likewise, the Pelagians held that there was no natural transmission of the original sin to infants and, therefore, there was no need for them to be cleansed by the ‘laver of regeneration’. Instead, infant baptism was for entry into the kingdom. For Augustine, the problem concerned the nature of evil (malum) and how that was to be explained without implicating God, who is goodness itself. As a Manichee, Augustine had taken evil to be a principle that was at war with the other principle, the Good or Light. Evil and sin are contrary to nature, and ‘the fault of wickedness supervenes upon a faultless natural state’. At twenty-nine, Augustine still imagined evil as a type of corporeal substance; yet, probably from his reading of the Platonists, i.e., Porphyry, he came to a more

Augustine, *De Natura et Gratia* LIII.62; *Nature and Grace*: 256.

Augustine, *De Civiitate Dei* XIV.15; *City of God*: 574.

Augustine, *De Civiitate Dei* XIV.15; *City of God*: 575.

Augustine, *De Civiitate Dei* XIV.15; *City of God*: 575; indeed, quoting Psalm 144:4, he writes: ‘[n]ow, as we observe in the offspring of the first man, and as the Bible witnesses, “man has become like nothingness [homo vanitati similis factus est]”.’

See Augustine, *De Gratia Christi et de Peccato Originali* II.17.19-18.20; *Grace of Christ and Original Sin*: 443.

Augustine, *De Civiitate Dei* XI.17; *City of God*: 448.
subtle understanding. For Augustine, entities are good precisely because God has created them and has found them good (Genesis 1); there is no such entity as evil and, therefore, ‘evil (malum)’ is merely ‘a name for the privation of good (privatio boni)’. Indeed, says Augustine, one of the impressive proofs of the goodness of nature is one’s choice of evil and choice is drawn by desire (voluptas cupientis), i.e., what allures by the promise of sensual enjoyment. There are many types of evil and they have varied motives, such as revenge, stealing, attack on another, averting evil, envy, pleasure in others’ pain. Augustine sums them up as springing from three desires or cravings (libidines), viz., for domination, of the eyes, and from sensual pleasure. Augustine looks into his own heart and sees, as with Adam, disobedience and opposition to the divine will. ‘Who am I’, he asks, ‘and what is my nature?’ His answer is stark: ‘[w]hat evil is there not in me and my deeds; or if not in my deeds, my words; or if not in my words, my will?’ Sin abounds, Paul had said, but this does not take one’s freedom to will. To follow one’s (evil) choice results from following one’s will: so, then, ‘the failure is voluntary, not necessary, and the punishment that follows is just.’

This position is maintained by Augustine in later works. In the *Enchiridion* (421) Augustine gives one of his mature statements on the essentials of Catholic faith. He repeats that evil (malum) is privatio boni. If a person is wholly consumed with evil desires such that we say ‘this is an evil person’, Augustine replies by means of a distinction between the entity that is the person and defective quality of that person. Thus, the so-called evil person is good as a human entity (because created so by God), and evil on account of sins committed. As a principle, evils have their source in the good: ‘unless they are parasitic on something good, they are not anything at all.’

Everything with its own natura or self-subsistent status is

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866 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XI.22; *City of God*: 454; see also XI.9: *City of God*: 440; *Confessiones* III.7.12; *The Confessions*: 83; and *Confessiones* VII.12.18; *The Confessions*: 174: to exist is to be good, and things that are prone to destruction cause harm because, in their destruction, they diminish the good. See also *Enchiridion* 3.11-4.15; *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love*: 6-10.

867 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XI.17; *City of God*: 448; see also XII.3; *City of God*: 474.

868 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XI.16; *City of God*: 448; this desire is contrasted here with reason (ratio considerantis) which looks for ‘the truth as it is revealed to enlightened intelligence’.

869 ‘Hae sunt capita iniquitatis quae pullulant principandi et spectandi et sentiendi libidine’, Augustine, *Confessiones* III.8.16; *The Confessions*: 86f.


871 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XII.8; *City of God*: 480.


good. He adds, if an entity cannot be corrupted it is a great good, and if it can then it is a lesser good. Even if something is corrupted wholly, yet ‘not even the corruption remains, for it is nothing in itself, having no subsistent being in which to exist.’ The *De Civitate Dei* contrasts the heavenly and earthly cities so as to highlight the world that is ruled by lusts and desires. The earthly city is built on self-love such that it ends in contempt of God; in contrast, the heavenly city, still only *in spe*, is built on love of God, which is ‘carried as far as contempt of self’. Indeed, while the earthly city loves its own strength, as shown in its powerful leaders, the other says to its God, ‘I love you, my Lord, my strength [2 Corinthians 10:17].’

However, God’s righteousness, a grace without merits, is unknown to people who try to establish their own righteousness; they fail to see that God’s righteousness is a ‘great abundance of God’s sweetness’. Furthermore, those, like new born infants, who die without the ‘bath of regeneration’, and also the young or old who die without the possibility of hearing Christ’s name, do not enter the kingdom of heaven. Here we touch on one of the images of sin that has made Augustine somewhat infamous: his picture of the *massa perditionis*, a picture which will continue to haunt theology down to Reformation times. Following scripture – ‘for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ – Augustine considers divine justice as condemning all, and yet, God’s mercy, and the gratefulness of its recipients, take precedence, at least psychologically:

> The whole mass of humanity owes a debt of punishment, and if all suffered the penalty of damnation they deserved, they certainly would not be paying an unjust penalty. Those then who are set free from it by grace are not called vessels of their own merits, but ‘vessels of mercy’ [Romans 9:23]... Who then is going to be so wildly insane as not to offer inexpressible thanks to the mercy of God, if he sets free those whom he wills since one could in no way find fault with his justice, if he condemned absolutely everyone?  

Here Augustine is preserving the absolute sovereignty of God, whose justice, despite appearances, is absolute, too, in saving or damning whom God wills. In spite of the divine will that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) Augustine can state that not even the majority are saved. People decide not to be gathered to God, yet there are some whom God wills to be saved.

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*Augustine, Enchiridion 4.12; Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love: 8.*  
*Augustine, De Civitate Dei XIV.28; City of God: 593.*  
*Augustine, De Civitate Dei XXI.24; City of God: 1006.*  
*See Augustine, De Natura et Gratia VIII.9f.; Nature and Grace: 228f.*  
*See, for instance, Augustine, De Civitate Dei XIV.26; City of God: 591f.*  
*Augustine, De Natura et Gratia V.5; Nature and Grace: 227.*  
*Augustine, Enchiridion 24.97; Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love: 60.*
in heaven, and some to remain lost. All should be damned; most are; and a few – ‘those whom He [God] had mercifully predestined to grace’ – are saved by grace. The idea that humans have the power not to sin though they cannot avoid sin is directly challenged by Augustine. For him the mediation of Christ is crucial, and any suggestion that humans – given ‘this present life of ours’ – have it in their own power to avoid sin is rejected. Interestingly, he postulates that the former, Pelagian, view would not be correct even were we discussing ‘a whole and healthy human nature’, for the latter, too, needs the help of God to avoid sin. Augustine teaches that human nature was initially created ‘blameless and without any defect’, but now, because it is not sound, this nature ‘needs a physician’. In turning to this notion of grace, then, we come to the positive pole of Augustine’s theology.

4.4.4 Grace

Grace comes from God, as a gift. It leads all ‘who have been predestined and called’ to the heights of perfection and glory”; by it they discover what they should do and then actually do it. All stand in need of grace, however, due to the effects of original sin, though grace of itself is unmerited and wholly free. Augustine writes:

This grace of Christ, without which neither infants nor adults can be saved, is not a recompense for our merits, but a free gift. This is the reason it is called grace.

Grace, as the possibility of not sinning, ‘ought only to be attributed to God’. So, concerning the controversy between them, Augustine says it would be resolved if only Pelagius would agree with Augustine on the means necessary for people who, if they had it in their power to do so, would gladly will to be without sin; these means are ‘the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ’. Indeed, while Augustine was initially happy with the

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881 This absolutizing of a putative condemnation will be given an even stronger contrast in the systematic theology of Calvin.
884 See Augustine, De Natura et Gratia III.3; Nature and Grace: 226.
886 Augustine, De Natura et Gratia IV.4; Nature and Grace: 226f.; he adds, while quoting Paul in Romans 3:23, ‘[a]ll have, after all, sinned – whether in Adam or in their own persons – and lack the glory of God.’
887 Augustine agrees with Pelagius here, see Augustine, De Natura et Gratia XLIV.51; Nature and Grace: 250f.
888 See Augustine, De Natura et Gratia LIX.69; Nature and Grace: 261, quoting Romans 7:25; in praying not to sin, we are admitting that we are helped by grace, and this is something that Pelagius does not want to admit.
account he received of Pelagius’s affirmation of the necessity of grace, he only becomes suspicious of its real worth when he sees the type of language Pelagius employs to explicate his position. The Pelagians held that there was only one grace not given on the basis of human merit-making, namely, the forgiveness of sins. In other words, only the forgiveness of sins requires the outside assistance of divine grace. They held, for instance, that eternal life is gained by human merit. For Augustine this is plainly wrong: for, as he answers in Paul’s words, what have you that you have not received? The Pelagians held, Augustine acknowledged, that human nature is created in grace; to this Augustine replied, though, that this nature is possessed in common with both the ungodly and unbelievers, who are not in grace. Also, the Pelagians understand grace as the help that God gives by means of scriptural teaching and revelation, opening the eyes of the heart, prophecy, finding out the designs of the devil, and illumination of the mind. As such, these lures, for Augustine, represent only ‘the commands and promises of God’, which is a righteousness of the law, and not, therefore of true grace; they may diagnose the disease, but they do not cure it. For, humans cannot achieve what God commands or promises unless they are also helped by God with a strength beyond their own capacities; they cannot bring about their own justification: ‘[i]n this matter, no doubt, we do ourselves, too, work; but we are fellow-workers with Him [God] who does the work, because His mercy anticipates us [quia misericordia praevenerit nos].’ For Augustine, the work of grace both precedes and follows human action. He writes:

We too, of course, do something but we do something along with God who also does it, because his mercy goes before us. But it goes before us so that we might be healed, because it also comes after so that, once we are healed, we might also grow strong. It goes before us so that we might be called; it comes after us so that we might be glorified. It goes before us so that we might live in piety; it comes after us so that we

889 Pelagius, in fact, is given away by his similes, see Augustine, De Natura et Gratia: Nature and Grace: a person disputing, a bird flying, a hare running (XI.12; 230), a physician ready to heal a wounded person (XXVI.29; 239), one fire extinguishing another (XXVIII.32; 241), my power to speak (XLV.53; 251), and seeing, hearing and smelling (XLVII.55; 252f); see also De Gratia Christi et de Peccato Originali 1.2.2-7.8: Grace of Christ and Original Sin: 403-407.

890 1 Corinthians 4:7.


893 Augustine, De Gratia Christi et de Peccato Originali 1.8.9; Grace of Christ and Original Sin: 407f.

might live with him forever, since we can do nothing without him. After all, if the way is not his, but ours, it is certainly not the right one. Let us reveal it by confessing, since it is not hidden from him even if we try to hide it.\textsuperscript{895}

In this we see Augustine introducing an element of cooperation between God and humans. Augustine once used the image of a boy drawn by his own desire to depict the reality of cooperation, of grace, between divine and human. In a homilies he speaks of grace, freedom and himself in the image of an adult who dangles a bag of nuts before the eyes of a boy; without compulsion, the boy is drawn to the nuts because he desires them; by delight, Augustine tells us, the boy is drawn along ‘by a cord of the heart [\textit{vinculo cordis}]’ and so are we when God draws us: there is no compulsion, no denial of freedom here, but, rejoicing and gladly, we follow our heart’s desire.\textsuperscript{896} Looking back, then, at the time of his coming to Milan in answer to a job-application for a teacher of rhetoric, he was ‘little by little, without knowing it, I was drawing near.’\textsuperscript{897}

He repeatedly expounds the necessity of grace for the salvation of creatures: we cannot of ourselves achieve salvation; it comes as a gift graciously given, yet, though people cannot of themselves be righteous, they should do what they can. Augustine also expresses this note of cooperation, thus:

\[ \text{…rather, by his [God’s] commandment, he warns you to do what you can and ask for what you cannot. Let us now examine the reason why one has the ability and the reason why one does not. This man [Pelagius] says: ‘Natural ability does not depend on the will.’ I say: A human being certainly is not righteous as a result of the will, if one can be by nature, but one will be able to be as a result of medication [\textit{medicina}] what one cannot be because of one’s injury.} \textsuperscript{898} \]

A person’s free will cannot justify before God, and this is surely the heart of Augustine’s complaint against Pelagius, who says that humans can attain salvation by their own power of will. For Augustine, it is when one is given divine grace that one is able to put that will – long since in thrall to sin – to good use. It is not the case, however, that there is a clear

\textsuperscript{895} Augustine, \textit{De Natura et Gratia} XXXI.35; \textit{Nature and Grace}: 242f.


\textsuperscript{897} Augustine, \textit{Confessiones} V.13.23; \textit{The Confessions}: 131.

\textsuperscript{898} Augustine, \textit{De Natura et Gratia} XLIII.50; \textit{Nature and Grace}: 250, where the issue being discussed is that God does not command impossibilities.
incompatibility between free will and grace; where one knows and wills, says Augustine, 
there the will is truly free.\textsuperscript{899} He writes:

\begin{quote}
Now we do not, when we make mention of these things, take away freedom of will, but we preach the grace of God. For to whom are those gracious gifts of use, but to the man who uses, but humbly uses, his own will, and makes no boast of the power and energy thereof, as if it alone were sufficient for perfecting him in righteousness?\textsuperscript{900}
\end{quote}

Thus, when Pelagius speaks of a natural ability to avoid sin, i.e., as something implanted in our nature by God—because human nature is the work of God and so of the order of grace—Augustine makes it clear that he himself is talking about the present fallen state of humanity, and not some ideal state, and in this state we cannot avoid sinning, though of course we should not sin.\textsuperscript{901} For even if he allows the possibility and actuality of a natural ability to avoid sin still Augustine holds that the grace of God ‘through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and him crucified [1 Corinthians 2:3]’ is necessary for the justification of that person.\textsuperscript{902} In The Spirit and the Letter, Augustine is very clear on the relationship between grace and free will.

‘Grace’, he says, ‘makes free choice stronger’, faith gives grace to struggle against sin, grace heals the soul of ‘the wound of sin’, and ‘through the good health of the soul we have freedom of choice’, which latter gives ‘love of righteousness’ by which ‘we fulfil the law.’ Even so, too, free choice is strengthened by grace ‘because grace heals the will by which we freely love righteousness.’\textsuperscript{903} Augustine’s larger point is that in the real life lived by humans only the grace of God suffices; the human capability to avoid sin has to be, not made, but restored and for this grace, assistance from outside any human capacity, is what is necessary if good is to be done.\textsuperscript{904} The effect of original sin, tout court, is that there is no merit in human works.

**Merit**

In the Confessiones Augustine has a short discussion of merit.\textsuperscript{905} It is not, as it later will be in the heat of controversy, concerned with being righteous before God. In fact, it concerns the more general point that nothing at all in creation has merit before God. Augustine addresses

\textsuperscript{899} See Augustine, De Natura et Gratia XI.VI.54; Nature and Grace: 252.
\textsuperscript{900} Augustine, De Natura et Gratia XXXII.36; Nature and Grace: 243.
\textsuperscript{901} Augustine, De Natura et Gratia XLVII.55; Nature and Grace: 243.
\textsuperscript{902} Augustine, De Natura et Gratia XL.51: Nature and Grace: 241.
\textsuperscript{903} Augustine, De Spiritu et Littera XXX.52; The Spirit and the Letter: 177f.
\textsuperscript{904} See Augustine, De Natura et Gratia LIII.62; Nature and Grace: 256.
\textsuperscript{905} See book 13, the last of the Confessiones.
God: ‘what advance claim did heaven and earth have upon you, when you made them in the
Beginning?’906 Likewise, what merit have formless spiritual and physical entities, including
that light which (spiritually) enlightens ‘the spiritual creation’, before God?907 Again, in the
late Enchiridion, Augustine absolutely denies that the merits of people’s works can earn them
heaven.908 As lost, sinners can do nothing save be rescued; it is as if in the ‘evil use of his free
will’ a person commits spiritual suicide. How, then, can such a person be saved, how ‘get
back his liberty to do good’? The answer, as always, is by God’s good grace freely given.
However contradictory it appears, Augustine argues that, though it needs ‘the mercy of God’,
the human will (for the good) must be present, too.909 The process itself is credited to God
who both prepares the will ‘to receive divine aid’ and helps the will ‘which has been thus
prepared.’910 The lost person can perform no good work; the lost are saved only by grace
through faith. Now, this faith is itself not within the power of humanity: Augustine warns
humans against arrogating ‘to themselves the merit of their own faith’.911 But, what is this
faith?

Faith

Faith, like hope and love, is for Augustine a grace.912 Though he liked the account of
Tyconius on the distinction between the ‘letter and the spirit’, which was, Augustine also felt,
at the heart of the Pelagian heresy, he argued that Tyconius carelessly attributed faith to
humans and understood works as given to us by God as a reward for faith.913 For Augustine,
though, there is no doubt: faith is itself God’s gift.914 To his mind, faith goes hand in hand
with love. In discussing the ‘trinity of the inner man’ Augustine writes: when ‘you believe it
to be true, and love in it what should be loved, then you are already living according to the

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906 The question is rhetorical; heaven and earth merit nothing before God, see Augustine, Confessiones XIII.2.2; The Confessions: 343.
907 Augustine, Confessiones XIII.2.3-3.4; The Confessions: 343f.
909 Indeed, ‘the mercy of God is not sufficient by itself unless there is also the will of man’, Augustine,
912 This is the very point of the Enchiridion.
913 See Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana III.33.46; Teaching Christianity: 190, where he applies the third rule
of Tyconius, ‘the promises and the law’, which ‘open the secrets of scripture’.
trinity of the inner man; every man lives according to what he loves.915 The importance of faith, along with the other two graces, is further adumbrated with reference to the importance Augustine places in a proper understanding of the scriptures. In his De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine addresses the question of the need for scriptures, a question which seems unusual given his commitment to, teaching of, and constant use of them. Yet, in his view, they are not to be considered necessary, except for the instruction of others, if one already possesses faith, hope and love. These latter are built with ‘a kind of scaffolding’ of prophecies, tongues and knowledge and this is why Augustine refers to them as ‘these three graces’.916 The scriptures are the means used by God for revelation. Because Augustine changed the way he imagined God, as we saw in the Confessiones, he came to faith in God, and it is to his understanding of God that we now turn.

4.4.5 God

Augustine ‘found’ God in the created reality about him. Augustine was drawn by beautiful things and so by the more abstract beauty. He was also awed by the pull of beauty over him. When he tried to work out what this beauty was he was ultimately led to God. In Book IV of his Confessiones, while making a brief summary of his earlier writings on the subject, he remarks that in the beautiful things he saw about him ‘there was both a quality inherent in the whole – beauty – and a different quality that was seemly in something that was harmoniously adapted to something else, as the part of a body to the whole, or a sandal to the foot, and other similar things.’917 Augustine tells us that his early view of God, like that of the mind (anima), was of ‘an ethereal body spread out through space.’918 In a book he had written on beauty he conceptualized in terms of ‘material forms’ and even his examination of the ‘nature of the soul’ eschewed ‘incorporeal reality’, preferring lines, colours and physical magnitudes instead.919 He thought of God in terms of bodily size, a ‘huge brilliant substance’, which was ‘infinite on all other sides’ though finite in ‘that one side where the mass of evil opposed

915 Augustine, De Trinitate XIII.26; The Trinity: 365; also, when we say we love things unknown what we mean is that we love them ‘in virtue of things that are known’; he cites Romans 1:17 and Galatians 5:6 to show that the virtues too are related to this faith by which one lives: the just man lives by faith and this faith works through love.

916 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I.39.43; Teaching Christianity: 125, referring to 1 Corinthians 13:8, see also I.40.44; Teaching Christianity: 125f.

917 Augustine, Confessiones IV.13.20; The Confessions: 105.

918 Augustine, Confessiones V.10.20; The Confessions: 128.

919 Augustine, Confessiones IV.15.24; The Confessions: 107f.; this book of his mid-twenties is De Pulchro et Apto, which is not extant; further, the thought of evil, too, as a substance at this time.
you'. Augustine should not be understood to be criticizing the ‘beautiful things’ of creation; they can lead to God, but as such they are external to God in that they ‘rise and set’, coming to be, growing old and dying, i.e., they rush to non-being (‘ut non sint’) for ‘this is the law of their nature (sic est modus eorum)’. Yet, this reified idea of having ‘the form of human flesh’ and being ‘bounded by the bodily shape of our limbs’ was an unseemly belief that his adherence to Manicheism had entailed. In Manicheism, various elements, including Christian, Buddhist and Zoroastrian, were combined in a radical dualism; on the one hand, was the Good or Light, and on the other was Evil or the Dark. God was identified with the former and matter with the latter and, for instance, both the sun and the moon were treated as divine. Increasingly questioning of these reifications and of other Manichean doctrines, Augustine comes to understand that the spiritual realm is not like matter. For instance, in relation to Genesis 1:26, the Hebrew image of God was rejected by the Manichees on the basis that, if ‘man’ was made in the ‘image and likeness (ad imaginem et similitudinem)’ of God, then God must be like humans. As a Christian, Augustine was able to reject this account, arguing that it is in one’s interiority, i.e., one’s reason and intellect, that one is like God, and not in one’s physical body. He writes that people who do not have a spiritual understanding do not believe...

...that is circumscribed in a bodily shape; and when man is said to have been made to the image of God, it is said with reference to the interior man where reason is to be found and intelligence...In this way, it can be understood, with the upright posture of the body to remind us, that it is above all as regards the spirit that man was made to the image and likeness of God.

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920 Augustine, Confessiones IV.10.15; The Confessions: 102.
921 Augustine, Confessiones V.10.19; The Confessions: 128; having bodily extension was the sine qua non of existence for the young Augustine, a view he characterized as ‘the chief and almost sole cause of the error I could not avoid’.
922 See Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines: 13f.
923 The identification of matter with evil led to a total devaluation of sex. Probably as a result of Christian teaching about incarnation the young Augustine rejected Christianity; all things to do with the flesh were inherently bad. For texts, see Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia, HarperSanFrancisco: San Francisco, 1993.
924 Some of the other doctrines include the idea that a fig weeps when picked and that the fig plant sheds milky tears, see Confessiones III.10.18 and, in relation to God as spirit, III.7.12; The Confessions: 88f.
925 See Augustine, De Genesi contra Manichaeos 1.17.27; On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees: 56f.
926 Augustine, De Genesi contra Manichaeos 1.17.27; On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees: 57.
Augustine’s account of the impermanence of all things, including speech, and of the slowness of our physical perceptions, is given in order to heighten a proper understanding of God’s permanence. At last, then, Augustine ends by holding the Judeo-Christian teaching that God is spirit, not material or of the soul; God is omnipotent and no other principle compares with God. This brings other effects: evil is rejected as a principle in its own right, and humans’ sexual nature is given a positive interpretation for God is now seen as creating all things as good and as the source of morality. Whatever virtue we call our own ‘has been granted to us by his [God’s] bounty.’ In response, Augustine singles out the Greek latriea, service, as alone the proper word for worship of this bountiful God. Augustine proposes, as a parallel to the understanding of God as spiritual, that the way God judges is not by the customs and laws of ‘different countries and times’ but by ‘true inward righteousness’.

God is another reality, which, in his Manichee years, Augustine was unaware of, though God

In De Trinitate VIII Augustine uses a triple truth – what the understanding beholds, the highest good from which all others come, and justice that enables a not-yet just soul to love the just – to help explain God’s nature as incorporeal and unchanging.

That Augustine abjured and condemned sex is a crass and simplistic accusation, levelled with the same inaccuracy as the charge that he is responsible for centuries of Latin Christianity’s negative judgement of the body. The use to which Augustine was put by others helps explain some of the accusations that, for instance, Ute Ranke-Heinemann levels at him, see her Eunuchs for the Kingdom: The Catholic Church and Sexuality, translated by John Brownjohn, Andre Deutsch: London, 1990 [1988]: 62-83. As a young Manichee, Augustine lived, contrary to the celibate lifestyle of his companions, with a concubine, whose name is unknown to us though she bore him a son, the gifted Adeodatus. Augustine wrote of him: ‘I contributed nothing to that boy other than sin’; however, we agree with Chadwick that this latter statement is more a confirmation of Adeodatus being brought up a Christian and not a Manichee, than a specifically anti-sex comment; hence, the concubine was a Christian, see Chadwick, Saint Augustine: Confessions: 164n17. Even when, for instance, in De Civitate Dei XV.22; City of God: 636, Augustine condemns ‘the female sex’, because responsible for the death of all of us (XV.20; 633), he softens it by referring to all ‘temporal, carnal goods’ as good or evil depending on whether they are loved in a right way or a wrong one (XV.22; 636). However, for a more positively expressed view of sex and sexual intercourse we turn to the earlier Book XIV; here, in a discussion of the evil of libido, Augustine poses the question whether a married man would not prefer to beget children without libido (XIV.16; 577): the point is that, without libido, the will would rule (see also XIV.23; 585 and XIV.26; 591). Sexual intercourse, within marriage certainly, ‘craves for recognition in the light of the mind’s understanding’ and is both ‘right and proper’ (XIV.18; 580). Indeed, Augustine laments that, as a consequence of sin and lust and the resulting sense of shame, what is said of the sexual organs is taken to be obscene though such talk is really ‘as respectable as any talk about other parts of the body’ (XIV.23; 587).
is ‘that which truly is (vere quod est)’. And what God is is the highest good and each person’s true good (‘deus summum bonum et bonum verum meum’). Thus, in answer to the question of who God is that he poses at the beginning of the Confessiones, Augustine answers with a litany of praise: God is most high, utterly good and powerful, most omnipotent, merciful and just, profoundly hidden yet most intimately present, creating and nourishing and perfecting, seeking though lacking nothing, etc. Certainly, it is this invisible God who makes Godself visible; however, this is not, as it were, the totality (totum) of God. God is ineffable and both excels in dignity all other things and is unchangeable wisdom. God is creator of all and eternal and creates by divine will, which is of ‘the very substance of God (in dei substantia)’. Nothing, then, not even time, existed before God chose to create. When God chooses to create it is through the divine Word. As creator God is ‘in the beginning’. Also, and crucial for the created and because God is the principio, God speaks to us. Augustine writes:

In this Beginning, you made heaven and earth, O God. You made them in your Word, your Son, your Power, your Wisdom, your Truth, wonderfully speaking and in a wondrous way creating.

In God’s created order, then, Christ is the image, wisdom, and voice of God, and he is the fulfiller of divine promises.

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933 Augustine, Confessiones III.7.12; The Confessions: 83f.
934 ‘O God, you are the highest good and the true good for me’, in Augustine, Confessiones II.6.12; The Confessions: 70.
935 ‘Summe, optime, potentissime, omnipotentissime, misericordissime et iustissime, secretissime et praesentissime...creans et nutriens et perficiens, quaerens cum nihil desit tibi...’, Augustine, Confessiones I.4.4. See also The Confessions: 41.
936 Augustine, De Civitate Dei X.13; City of God: 391.
937 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I.6.6; Teaching Christianity: 108.
938 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I.7.7; Teaching Christianity: 109.
939 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I.8.8; Teaching Christianity: 110. Interestingly, Augustine here relates the wisdom of the wise person to its source, namely, ‘the wisdom that is unchanging, unchangeable and the latter is never found in humans because they are always changing.’
940 Augustine, Confessiones XI.10.12; The Confessions: 293.
943 Augustine, Confessiones XI.9.11; The Confessions: 292.
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4.4.6 Christ

Though Augustine had thought well of Christ from his earliest years his conception of him was ‘only as a man of excellent wisdom which none could equal’. Looking back he sees that his studies of the Platonist books prepared him for his finding of Christ in the scriptures; in the former he learnt something of ‘immaterial truth’, though more by way of presumption and the desire to be taken as a wise person. Later, the humility of Christ would impress him and lead him to a deeper and more satisfying sense of true wisdom; this is the way of confession. Augustine had been led to an explicit love of wisdom by Cicero’s *Hortensius*: it altered his feelings, prayers, values and priorities. Later, this wisdom becomes flesh in Christ, though not everyone recognizes it. Likewise, addressing Porphyry, in *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine first praises his use of *gratia*, especially when quoting Plato, but then he castigates him for not recognizing ‘the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord’. For, Christ is the true ‘image of God (*imago dei*)’ and, in his incarnation, is ‘the supreme instance of grace (*summum esse exemplum gratiae*)’. This grace is what Augustine sees at play in his earlier life; in the same context where he discusses his own sinful nature Augustine talks of Christ casting out the ‘sweet frivolities’ that he, Augustine, was wont to will; Christ replaces those frivolities with himself and, now, Augustine wills what the Lord wills; now he feels his ‘freedom of will called forth in a moment (*evocatum est in momento liberum arbitrii meum*)’ and ‘sweet did it suddenly (*subito*) seem to me to be without the sweets of folly’. In this there is a purification of the soul, for, in order to see God the human soul

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845 Augustine, *Confessiones* VII.10.16; *The Confessions*: 172f.: reading them, Augustine began a deep self-examination, entering ‘in the innermost places of my being’, seeing the transcendent light that illuminates the soul, and learning that he was far from God, in Plato’s words ‘in the region of unlikeness’; the editor traces this to Plotinus, *Enneads* I.8.13, who got it from Plato, though ‘equally’ Luke 15:13 may have been the source, see 173n72.
847 Augustine, *Confessiones* III.4.7; *The Confessions*: 79; impressed though Augustine had been with Cicero’s *Hortensius*, its main flaw lay in that it did not mention Christ.
848 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* X.29; *City of God*: 414; Augustine will often praise Porphyry if he thinks the latter has presented truth more accurately than Plato, ‘a teacher of such eminence and authority’, see also Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* X.30; *City of God*: 419.
849 Humans, of course, were but ‘ad imaginem dei’, see Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram Imperfectus Liber* II.16.
850 Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* X.29; *City of God*: 414.
851 Augustine, *Confessiones* IX.1.1; *The Confessions*: 209f.; now, his mind (*animus meus*) was free of career-building, gain, self-indulgence and ‘scratching the itch of lust (*scalpendi scabiem libidinem*)’. 214
must be purified; otherwise it will lack both the power to perceive God’s light and, perceiving it, to rest in it.\textsuperscript{952} The incarnation is the key to purification; here wisdom, as Christ, adapts itself to human frailty and weakness and, in the forgiveness of sins, makes himself ‘the pavement under our feet along which we would return home’\textsuperscript{953} and thereby it sets a pattern of purification for humans to follow.\textsuperscript{954} For, Christ is the ‘true mediator’ between God and humanity. Unlike the ‘deceiving mediator’, who has sin in common with humans, Christ is ‘righteous like God’. This understanding of Christ is developed in De Trinitate. God loves us, not for what we are, but for what we will be and then Christ, our mediator with the Father, will no longer intercede for us ‘because God himself loves us’, i.e., not simply in virtue of the Son who has shared humanity and divinity with us. He continues:

And how do we deserve this if not by faith, by which we believe before we have seen that which is promised to us? It is through this faith that we come at last to sight, so that he may love us for actually being what he now loves us that we might be; and that we may no more be what he now hates us for being, and what he urges and helps us not to want to be forever.\textsuperscript{955}

The righteousness of Christ unites him to God so that he voids the death of ‘malefactors rendered just’, and ‘saves through faith in the passion’.\textsuperscript{956} Through Christ, therefore, sinners find their only way to liberation. This is the \textit{vera religio} in which people sacrifice to the one God through Christ; Christ is the ‘royal way (\textit{regalis via}) to the kingdom of God.’\textsuperscript{957}

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Christian anthropology of the human is shot through with a theology of sin. Paul and Augustine drew on personal experiences that had profound effects on their theologizing. On the one hand, the idealized human (and whole creation) is good and worthy, without sin or fault; yet, the world as we have it and human action within it are fallen. The human person is seen to be spiritually distorted; instead of a vision of humans in relationship with their Creator we have a picture of disordered human-divine and human-human relationships. For the cause we have to look into our own hearts, where the deepest disorder lies; there too, though, is to be found \textit{pistis}, the faith that saves, for the \textit{telos} of faith is the salvation of souls.\textsuperscript{958}

\textsuperscript{952} Augustine, \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} I.10.10; \textit{Teaching Christianity}: 110.

\textsuperscript{953} Augustine, \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} I.17.16; \textit{Teaching Christianity}: 113.

\textsuperscript{954} See Augustine, \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} I.11.11; \textit{Teaching Christianity}: 110f.

\textsuperscript{955} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate} I.3.21; \textit{The Trinity}: 81.

\textsuperscript{956} Augustine, \textit{Confessiones} X.43.68; \textit{The Confessions}: 282.

\textsuperscript{957} See Augustine, \textit{De Civitate Dei} X.31f.; \textit{City of God}: 420-422.

\textsuperscript{958} 1 Peter 1:9.
Paul, expresses the new relationship with humans that God has effected in Christ (and his atoning work, i.e., the cross). It is in ‘righteousness’ or divine ‘justification’ that the proper relationship is conceived. Paul uses the whole semantic range of dikai- terms – dikaiôma, diakaiósis, dikaiosunê, dikaios – in Romans 5:12-21. We agree with VanLandingham that it is ‘highly unlikely’ that Paul is simply alternating terms from sentence to sentence, but we are more cautious about his view that ‘Paul consistently employs each of the dikai- terms with the same sense’\(^{59}\), for Paul is seeking to persuade rhetorically, rather than, say, philosophico-logically. Righteousness is of God, and therefore Paul does not disparage the Law, for both it and grace are given by the one God. However, on other occasions, it seems that there is not the slightest room for the Law, when the contrast is between what saves sinners, i.e., grace, and what condemns them precisely as sinners, i.e., the Law. In fact, the real opposite to grace, in Paul’s eyes, are the works that humans undertake and which they all too often mistake as making them worthy of what God has promised. Rather, what grace holds is free, undeserved, total gift; it opposes what works claims as my deserved and earned right. If something is done as a ‘work’ then there is no grace.\(^{60}\) This is the simplification that reduces the mystery of how God interacts with persons to the status of a shibboleth. It displays a dichotomous mindset that risks operating in an exclusionary way. It is important to note that Paul speaks of our being saved not simpliciter but ‘rather by much (pollô...mallon)’\(^{61}\) in which we observe the idea of salvation being produced more processually than instantaneously. In this way, a static notion of person is undermined by the language of Paul and, while naturally not buddhologically conceived, is such as may not naively be set up in opposition to it. For, Paul’s conception of the ‘body of Christ’ argues for human sociality as essential to following ‘the way’; it also entails shedding, as it were, our present form of being and putting on that morphê of Christ that itself is the morphê of God. Perhaps it was his experience on the road to Damascus that led him to begin each new venture, such as his letters evidence, with an appeal to grace. Perhaps he had experienced what James called ‘double-mindedness’, being pulled to and away from God, until his conversion sealed his path in one direction.

Indeed, Augustinian theology pictures the latter as the consequence of a disorder internal to each human herself or himself. As a Manichee, Augustine undervalued the material, which was a divine-like principle of Manicheism, and, once he became a Christian, his gross understandings of the spiritual fell away and he developed a more positive understanding and

\(^{59}\) See VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification*: 311

\(^{60}\) Romans 11:6.

\(^{61}\) Romans 5:9f.
theology of human bodiliness and physicality. Nevertheless, Augustine sought and found God in the scriptures, and when the Judeo-Christian scriptures want to portray what sin is they speak of idolatry, the placing of what is created in the place that rightly belongs to the Creator. Of course, this is already to introduce anthropomorphic thinking, but how can it be otherwise? The anthropomorphic category is the condition for the possibility of recognizing the sin that is idolatry, and Augustine dissects this sin with rigour. Sin, perhaps most of all as original sin, is the category through which the disjunction between ideal and reality is theorized theologically. Furthermore, the category of sin most closely correlates to dukkha in the sense that it is all-pervasive, negative and destructive, and demands a somewhat superhuman effort to win through it. For Augustine, only divine grace can achieve this; where evil turns the heart from God, as in the story of Augustine’s stealing from a pear tree when he was sixteen, the talk is of sin; though, when he talks of grace his language is of conversion.962

In converting, the sinner responds to divine assistance and is freed from sin’s destructiveness. Augustine’s own story of conversion illustrates three dimensions of conversions, viz., epistrophè, metanoia, and conversio: for, it is only when people undergo change in their belief, behaviour, and belonging that they are deemed ‘converted’, truly turned from one way of life to another.963 A Matthean or Markan Jesus might say that in turning from sin one enters the basileia tou theou. Augustine strictly interprets the necessity of Christ’s justification for salvation: to declare such entry into the basileia possible without the ‘bath of regeneration’ would be to render the cross of Christ of no effect. This defence of the necessity of Christ is the very point of Augustine’s holding to this position on exclusion from the kingdom of God.

The foundational scriptures of Jew and Christian construct a view of ‘the world’ as mired in idolatrous, sinful and disobedient attitudes that fail to live up to the imago dei that Genesis spoke of. The positive imaginaire of graced living is almost lost sight of and prophets arise to return people to a ‘righteous’ relationship with their God. The doctrine of original sin, as devised by Augustine, affirms that sin comes, so to speak, with the territory of being human. Thus, even the really good person is born into a situation of sin – Augustine explained this sin as being inherited biologically from one generation to the next. This is not, it seems to me, to be taken too literally. Augustine had to explain, within the bounds of the information that he had – for instance, that all humankind descended from one single set of human parents at a fixed time and place, and that sin in consequence infected all – how sin had come to be

962 See Augustine, Confessiones II.4.9; The Confessions: 67f.
pervasive. It seemed natural, as all humans inherited obvious physical traits from their parents and as Adam and Eve were the first parents and had committed the first sin, that all humans inherit a state of sinfulness in a process of natural filiation. This tied biological reproduction to each person’s experience of sin most unhelpfully; for, a theological argument became a biological one, which in turn became a theological weapon other disputes, and the consequences for both theology and our view of human sexuality has been deleterious, though Augustine is too easily blamed, given some of his more positive views. The reality that Augustine saw was a world, despite its many wonderful things, of disorder; the human heart suffered a radical disorientation which led to the distortion of all relationships. For Augustine, then, creation, though initially good, now stood in need of such help, healing and restoration as it was wholly incapable of providing for itself. The point of Christ’s coming is the provision of a medicine for humans’ healing; for, this Christ, though human, is also divine and acts beyond all human capacities; and, so, it is only by his divinity that the necessary extra-human help is effected. This understanding is at the heart of all Augustine writes in


For instance, we see this in Augustine’s relationship to Porphyry, and to Plotinus, Porphyry’s teacher, and to Plato, from whom all of them had learned. Also, Augustine had a deep appreciation of symbolical interpretations of the Scriptures; however, this had the proviso, ‘that we believe in the truth of the story as a
his critique of Pelagius, whose theology’s attractive exterior masks ‘the very real rigours of an implacable asceticism.’ Pelagius seems a champion of human cooperation with God, but really at the roots of his system, which is a strict asceticism or moral code in which human ability suffices for success, is a pride in human achievements. Augustine, at first the more loud and strident voice, is actually realistic about the human condition in all its fallibility and fracturedness. Augustine, so obviously talented and able from a human perspective, affirmed before all his profound need of God’s grace not just in the following out of God’s way but in the desire for it and in the very first impulses towards it and in the bringing of it to completion. Such a person is more in tune with the ‘ordinary’ believer, who struggles to do the things that conscience and scripture make clear but which the will resists. This mentality links Augustine with Shinran who also held no illusions about a human capacity to achieve ultimate states of blessedness and bliss. Indeed, for us, the *jiriki-tariki* debate within Shin Buddhism will parallel that of works-grace, deriving from Paul and elaborated by Augustine. Their mental construals of the ultimate, whether as *yathābhūtatā* or *tathatā*, on the one hand, or the *vere quod est* that is God, on the other, are not the same, of course, yet we hear a conceptual resonance of one in the other once we are prepared to alter the key or register with which we hear them. If we try, for instance, to compare *malum* and *duhkha* on the basis that the former is a non-thing, an absence of good, and the latter is ‘the one thing’ that the Buddha analyses everywhere we will never arrive at a satisfactory conceptual dialogue, for both notions have different registers in different systems. On the other hand, the place of desire or craving in each one’s system differs considerably. Desire, for Augustine, helps explain how we are drawn to beauty or grace or God, though as *cupiditas* it risks bringing people more deeply into sin. The Buddhist view of desire is almost wholly negative as the sermons of the Buddha and the practice of meditation make clear; still, maybe *tanha-nirodha* means ‘desire for nirodha’, and not the ‘ceasing of desire’. Both Augustine and Shinran, however, try to interpret for others the world – conventionally understood, if one wills – as it confronts and would apparently crush them; and so, in their compassion for others, in recognition of what they have been gifted with, and in realization of a power that comes from beyond both religious adepts are singular in attributing any and all success in achieving the highest spiritual goal to an other-power.

faithful record of historical fact’, see Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIII.21; *City of God*: 535

Lancel, *St. Augustine*: 342.
CHAPTER 5  REFORMERS’ GRACE

...it is only in relation to grace that human freedom can be defined in depth...freedom is no doubt essentially the acceptance or refusal which it is up to us to make in relation to grace – this refusal, moreover, always being able to disguise itself in a fallacious neutrality. The important thing is simply to recognize that freedom cannot any more than grace be translated into a language of causality.\footnote{Gabriel Marcel, Problematic Man, translated by Brian Thompson, Herder and Herder: New York, 1967: 60.}

Gabriel Marcel

Gabriel Daly OSA

Introduction
In this chapter we look at one of the major upheavals in the life of Christianity such that new ways of being Christian were conceived and a new way of Western thinking inaugurated. Perhaps the Reformation was the forerunner to the European Enlightenment; perhaps both sprang from similar wellsprings. Prescinding from such speculations we nevertheless affirm that a new way of thinking and relating to God was forming during the period of the Reformation and Enlightenment. We look especially at the conceptualities of Martin Luther and John Calvin, initiator and systematizer respectively of Protestantism. Each faced the world as he knew it and acted to change it. If the Reformation began as a movement of reform within the Roman Catholic church the hostility and opposition that Luther, Calvin and many others encountered soon drove them to separate from it. To them, though, this was no separation from the essence of Christianity, which was taken to reside in the Scriptures. Breaking free of scholastic construals Luther and Calvin wanted to return to the ostensibly simple and clear message of the scriptures that God reconciled the world to Godself through the action of Christ. In the second part of our earlier treatment of Buddhism we ended with an examination of the thought of Shinran in light of his seemingly radical departure from
accepted' buddhological positions and principles. In the present chapter we examine two Christian theologians who have marked theology in a seemingly similarly radical way.

5.1 Experiencing Reform – Martin Luther

The Reformation is popularly taken to date from the nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses on the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in 1517. Certainly Luther's name is synonymous with the movement for reform, though many other influences, political and military, social and legal, technological and cultural had to be in place first, as well as a critical mass of energy demanding reform. In so far as the Reformation heralds a new understanding of the relationship of the individual to her or his Creator, with all that that entailed for socio-political life, we agree that the identification of Luther with that movement is justified. By examining the thinking of Luther and of John Calvin (1509-1564), the more systematic of reformed theologians, especially in terms of grace, we will come to a deeper appreciation of the human problematic underpinning the theology of grace. From the Reformation to today problems still beset theology and the need for a new approach to grace, such that account can be taken of the circumstances in which theology has to be undertaken today, becomes deeper.

5.1.1 Creation – Original and Corrupted

Here we try to grasp the understanding of the world that informed the Reformers and led them to think as they did. We begin by looking at Luther's anthropology. This anthropology is to be discerned in his teachings about the scriptural account of creation in Genesis. Even in the one area where human knowledge alone operates, i.e., 'the knowledge of the material and formal cause', we are, Luther says, 'subject to many shameful delusions' and it is only in the scriptures that one may know the origin and final end of our lives. These delusions arise because of our fallen state, as a consequence of the first sin of Adam. In the story of Genesis 1-3, Luther, in common with his time, read an historical account, scientifically accurate in its detail. This account explained how the first persons, uniquely created and ideally perfect, reasoned their way from perfect natural happiness to the imperfection and unhappiness of earthly living. For Luther, the human person is 'a rational animal which has a heart that imagines' and, now fallen, this imagination, which includes the reason, will and intellect, is

969 The works to which we refer below are from Martin Luther, Luther's Works volumes 1-55, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Concordia: Saint Louis MO, 1955-1969.

970 This view is also to be seen in his lectures on Romans of 1515-16.
always opposed to God’s law, for everything that this animal imagines is evil.\textsuperscript{971} However, prelapsarian Adam, i.e., in his original status before the fall, was in a state of bliss: he had been created in the \textit{imago Dei} (\textit{Genesis 1:26}), and possessed the clearest intellect, the best memory and the most straightforward will, ‘all in the most beautiful tranquillity of mind, without any fear of death and without any anxiety.’\textsuperscript{972} Thus, for the prelapsarian Adam, command and obedience are both natural and graced; in other words, they are not the result of sin. When the first sin of disobedience is committed, this \textit{imago Dei} is lost.\textsuperscript{973} Though humans still command ‘those things that are beneath us’, and in this sense still have something of free will, yet ‘in those matters that pertain to God and are above us no human has a free will’.\textsuperscript{974} God’s commandments, too, after the fall, assume a different aspect: now, God’s command is an \textit{alia lex}.\textsuperscript{975} In this way grace and nature are sundered from their initial, original integration. This integration is what we mean by ‘original righteousness’.

Original Righteousness

This original righteousness is identified with the prelapsarian Adam; it is, in fact, his natural state.\textsuperscript{976} Luther thought it would lead, in time and naturally, from a physical state to a spiritual one, i.e., to eternal beatitude with God. When the first sin is committed, the basic constitution of the human remains, though now leprous, wounded and delusional. For Luther, the human is still to be seen as intended for communion with God, as revealed in the creation account.\textsuperscript{977}

\textsuperscript{971} Luther, Luther’s Works 2 [Lectures on Genesis Chapters 6-14]: in relation to Genesis 8:22.
\textsuperscript{972} Luther, Luther’s Works 1 [Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5]: 62; later, he writes of the \textit{imago Dei} in Adam and Eve, i.e., having justice, wisdom and happiness, see 69. The creation account refers to the original state of the world, up to the seventh day, which Luther took to be natural days: it was pure and innocent because man was pure and innocent, even the sun was more brilliant and beautiful then ‘before man’s sin’, and Adam would have sanctified the seventh day and ‘the physical life would have been blissful and holy, spiritual and eternal.’
\textsuperscript{973} Luther, Luther’s Works 1: 63-5; even in their fallen state, though, there is still ‘a great difference between the human being and the rest of the animals’; also, the once most beautiful sight in all the world to Adam, viz., Eve, now becomes ‘a necessary evil’, see 67.
\textsuperscript{974} Luther, Luther’s Works 1: 85.
\textsuperscript{975} See Luther, Luther’s Works 1: 107-110.
\textsuperscript{976} This raises a problem concerning original sin: it appears that this sin alters not just original righteousness but the natural human state. For Luther, though, this alteration is more of a wounding of the original, not its metamorphosis; for him the \textit{naturalia} are no longer whole (\textit{integra}). Thus, his position is to be distinguished from, say, that of his Wittenberg colleague, Matthias Falcius Illyricus (1520-1575), who subsequently went on to identify human nature with postlapsarian Adam, that is, with the state of being in original sin.
\textsuperscript{977} Thus, Luther rejects the medieval idea of this communion or original righteousness being a \textit{donum superadditum}, what he likened to a wreath placed on the head of a pretty girl, a thing not intrinsic to herself. At his creation, Adam received the supernatural gift of grace in addition to his \textit{pura naturalia}; with the fall, he lost
Of course, this natural end for humans is no longer possible because of sin: the natural end of humans cannot be fulfilled, that is, unless God’s grace is given, and that is discussed below. Luther’s stated position is that the original state of Adam was righteousness, and this was as essential to his being as the sin which replaced it is central, and that to argue otherwise is effectively to say that Christ is unnecessary to our salvation because what he removes is not essential to our human state. A picture emerges, at this stage, of the prelapsarian person already living a grace-filled existence, what we may call an intrinsically graced life. After the fall, however, sin has displaced this graced existence; another grace becomes essential if the life that God first created for humanity – a life, which, through Adam, was lost - is to be possible. What is the fallen state of humans now? Into what condition have they – we – sunk as the natural heirs of the first parents?

Sin and Fall

The first sin of Adam and Eve by which the *imago Dei* is lost is the ‘original sin’, and, ‘as blindness is the deprivation of sight’ so this sin is the deprivation of original righteousness. Not only is original righteousness lost, but Adam’s intellect, his knowledge of all creatures, his perception and ‘his upright yet imperfect will’, all were impaired as so many punishments for his disobedience. For Luther, the universal sinfulness of humanity sets free choice at naught. Building on *Romans* 1:18, Luther sees in ‘all ungodliness and wickedness of men’ and in the ‘holding back of the truth of God’ human righteousness, law, and free choice. All these, he says, are under the wrath of God and need the power of God to rescue them from this revealed wrath. Quite opposed, though, to human righteousness is another kind, viz., righteousness of faith, which does not rely on works but ‘on God’s favourable regard and his “reckoning” on the basis of grace.’ To begin our investigation of these points we turn to one of Luther’s most trenchant treatments of humanity’s fallen state, to wit, his *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525), written as part of a dialogue with Desiderius Erasmus (c.1466-1536).

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978 See Luther, *Luther’s Works* 1:165-167.
979 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 1:114.
980 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 1:114f.
981 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 247f., also 257.
982 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 270f.; Luther expands this by referring to *Romans* 4:4-23.
Bound Choice

The tone and content of Erasmus’s text, *De Libero Arbitrio*, both eirenic and sceptical, offended Luther. Erasmus’s dismissal of useless speculations concerning the ultimate unknowability of grace versus free will in favour of a way of personal holiness, his ‘true religion’, angered Luther. Where Luther sees the divine will as compromised by any claims to human free will, Erasmus saw that humans can apply themselves to those things ‘which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them.’ It is not that Luther denigrates either the will or reason, ‘the most excellent thing in all men’ as such; rather, now that we are born into sin, our will is ‘wicked’, our reason is ‘blind and ignorant’. In consequence, and in stated agreement with Erasmus, the most excellent thing in man is naught but ‘flesh, i.e., ungodly’. The fallen state of humanity determines, for Luther, the human capacity for good as, simply, an impossibility. For, even when saints had the Spirit, showed sanctity and performed miracles, this was not because of any power of free choice, but ‘by the power of Jesus Christ, and in support of the doctrine of Christ’. Luther relates this to the Pauline distinction between Jews and Gentiles in accepting God’s revelation in Christ. When, on the one hand, the Jews seek to be righteous, in observing the law, they – including Saul/Paul – in whom ‘nothing is lacking…that is attributed to free choice’ nonetheless fail. On the other hand, ‘those without merits and the most undeserving’, the Gentiles, are given grace freely. Luther argues that when we speak of human faculties and possessions and when one has ‘the right to use, to do, or to leave undone, according to his own free choice’ this is no contradiction of his position, for, he adds, ‘even this is controlled by the free choice of God alone, who acts in whatever way he pleases.’ The essential point is that ‘in relation to God, or in matters pertaining to salvation or damnation, a man has no free choice, but is a captive, subject and slave either of the will of God or the will of Satan.’ Such is the way of God. To the argument that the human state is fallen Luther adds another, viz., scriptural, warrant for the absoluteness of grace for any action: ‘[a]part from me you can do nothing’ (*John* 15:5).

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983 The proper title is: *Diatribae seu Collatio de Libero Arbitrio.*

984 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 254f.

985 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 276.

986 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 73f.

987 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 70. We follow the terminology as it moves between *arbitrium* (choice) and *voluntas* (will), though surely it is lack of distinction and of rigour in their use that underpins much of the disagreements between Erasmus and Luther and later theologians; for instance, Luther’s text here is normally referred to in English as ‘The Bondage of the Will’ where something like ‘Concerning Bound/Enslaved Choice’ would be more accurate.

988 See Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 70 (emphasis mine).
Erasmus had already taken – Luther’s word is ‘reduced’ – this verse to permit ‘only a little thing’. But, Luther will have nothing of it. Even where he would allow of free choice doing many things, such as ‘eating, drinking, begetting, ruling’, Luther is swift to retort: ‘but these are nonetheless “nothing” in the sight of God [coram Deo].’ He contends:

...that man apart from the grace of God remains nonetheless under the general omnipotence of God, who does, moves, and carries along all things in a necessary and infallible course, but that what man does as he is thus carried along is nothing, in the sense that it is worth nothing in the sight of God, and is not reckoned as anything but sin.

In sum, then, Luther begins and ends by castigating Erasmus for the narrowness of his definition of *liberum arbitrium* as ‘a power of the human will by which a man may apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them.’ Given, then, that free choice belongs to no one but God alone, Luther’s attack even uses Erasmus’s own arguments. Agreeing both that works can be good if done with the aid of divine grace and that nothing is impossible to humans with the same help, Luther finds that what Erasmus calls the power of free choice is really ‘the power of the grace of God.’ Indeed, every scriptural passage that speaks of divine assistance attests to the lack of free will in humans. As far as concerns that ‘tiny bit’ of free choice that Erasmus had commended to Luther, the latter responds that this *via media* marks no advance; the only way to rid oneself of the seeming contradictions of the scriptural evidence upon which Erasmus erected his argument is to either attribute ‘absolutely everything’ to free choice or ‘completely deny’ anything to it and instead refer everything to God. For Luther, as we have seen, there is no choice. For the ungodly

983 Or, and imperfect thing, see Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 234.
984 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 239.
991 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 240; in line with this, he can agree with 1 Corinthians 13:2, ‘If I have not love then I am nothing’, and add: ‘[s]o in the realm of grace, anyone who is without love is nothing.’
992 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 102, with reference to Erasmus’s *Diatribe* 4.36; and, where Erasmus had only discoursed, Luther will assert and demand assent, see 294. Luther readily agreed with Erasmus that a person without grace ‘cannot will good’, 112f. And he reads Erasmus, *malgré lui*, as proving that ‘free choice can do everything without grace’, 128f.
993 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 243. Luther often returns to Paul, in whom he finds more ‘thunderbolts against free choice’, e.g., Romans 3:21-25, see *Luther’s Works* 33: 263.
994 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 246; earlier he held that any attempt, such as Erasmus’s, ‘to will or unwill’, even if prevented from completion, is to ‘will the word and work of God’, leaving no place for grace or the Spirit – in this Erasmus outdoes the Pelagians by attributing divinity to but half of free choice, see 106f. In a later confession of faith (1528) Luther rejects and condemns as ‘sheer error all doctrines which glorify our free will, as diametrically contrary to the help and grace of our Savior Jesus Christ’, 37:362f. 226
there is neither liberty nor free choice; instead, everything depends 'on the will of God alone.' But, when God so wills, what does the divine favour consist in? What is its effect on the bound person?

5.1.2 Justification by Faith

The gratia or favor that Luther talks about is the forensic imputation of justification to the sinner. For Luther, both the donum or gift of justification and justification as such are one in the righteousness that God gives freely through Christ.

Justification

Primarily, for Luther, justification was an experience validated within itself; our conscience, by trusting in the mercy of God, finds peace such that 'sin can no longer accuse us'. This is the first part of justification and is 'grace revealed through Christ' that 'we have a gracious God.' It is from his experience of God’s saving work in Christ that the power of his conviction derives. Luther had, as a monk, sought Christian perfection in religious practices, vigils, fasts, prayers, etc., such that if works could save then his place in heaven was secure. Yet, these practices did not fulfill his deepest religious needs. It was only in light of his ‘tower experience’ that he saw that God saves us, not according to anything we (can) do to merit this salvation, but as free gift given while we were yet sinners. He held that true order, which is in the human heart, is brought about by the transformation which grace works there. The union of believer with Christ the head constitutes true justification, and differs from any self-justification. As Luther recognizes, in Paul’s understanding of Abraham’s faith, in Romans 4:1-3 there are two justifications. First, there is the righteousness of works. Even though this refers to the best of what Abraham did, of the moral or civil type, and is valid before humans, it is not coram Deo. Second, there is the righteousness of faith, which depends solely on God’s favour and divine ‘reckoning’ on the basis of grace. Thus, true righteousness is reckoned to us by God, and not by any works of our own doing.

For if grace comes from the purpose or predestination of God, it comes by necessity and not by our effort or endeavor, as we have shown

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995 Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 188f; furthermore, God’s omnipotence and foreknowledge ‘completely abolish the dogma of free choice.’

996 Justification is distinguished from the donum or gift, i.e., one is made to be justified, and is maintained as a separation in the theology of Lutheranism subsequently, see Kärkkäinen, One With God: 53.

997 Luther, Luther’s Works 12: 331.

998 The second part, sanctification, is treated below.

999 Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 270f.
above. Moreover, if God promised grace before the law was given, as Paul argues here and in Galatians, then grace does not come from works or through the law; otherwise the promise means nothing.\footnote{Luther, \textit{Luther's Works}, 33: 272.} Because justification or righteousness is a divine gift, it is God’s, wholly and freely, to bestow or withhold; not all will be justified, but only some and they are the elect. Luther states:

God wills that I and all others should be under obligation and yet gives grace only to whom He wills, and gives it not to all but reserves for Himself an election among them.\footnote{Luther, \textit{Luther's Works}, 25: 163.}

This restricting of justification is so that God “may show forth so much greater glory in the elect.” Of course, he adds, this will only be known in the next life.\footnote{Luther, \textit{Luther's Works} 25: 163.} The problem that besets so many in this life is learning what to do so that the reward of heavenly bliss is vouchsafed. For Luther there is a clear distinction between reward for good that humans do and even the possibility of earning eternal life with God, i.e., the problem of merit, viz., can humans do anything that merits heaven?

Merit

The question Luther poses is whether humans are able to ‘do the kind of things for which a reward is given.’\footnote{See Luther, \textit{Luther's Works} 33: 151.} Quickly he moves to the issue of whether merit pertains to necessity, for necessity belongs to the work of God. Parenthetically, for Luther, ‘necessity’ is not the best of words for what is really ‘willingness’: whether we talk of divine or human will, there is no compulsion in what the will does (whether that be for good or evil).\footnote{Luther, \textit{Luther's Works} 33: 39.} The distinctions he makes are undertaken so that this is brought out when we use the word ‘necessity’. If one intends by necessity coercion or compulsion (\textit{coactionis}) then there is neither merit nor reward. If, on the other hand, one intends the ‘necessity of immutability’\footnote{Elsewhere Luther explains this necessity: ‘the will cannot change itself and turn in a different direction, but is rather the more provoked into willing by being resisted, as its resentment shows’, see Luther, \textit{Luther's Works} 33: 64.} then there is merit: where a person voluntarily does good (or evil) then reward (or punishment) ‘naturally and necessarily’ follows.\footnote{Luther, \textit{Luther's Works} 33: 151f.: this is the case ‘even though they cannot alter their will by their own powers’. If we consider merit as \textit{worthiness}, then free choice, unaided by grace, has no merit for it cannot will good by itself; if, however, we consider merit as \textit{consequence}, as free choice through grace alone, then we see...} However, the ‘freedom of the will’ is not to be based on the idea...
of merit, for, as he agrees with Erasmus, fallen humanity’s free choice wills nothing good.\textsuperscript{1007} Luther counsels that we should attend to the necessity of consequences rather than illusory worthiness; for, and the distinction is clear, the ungodly await hell even as the godly await the kingdom. This becomes even clearer in his discussion of the distinction between condign and congruous merit. Condign (\textit{de condigno}) merit, that of worthiness, is denied not only by Luther but by the scholastics, for no human work earns or merits or is worthy of God’s reward. However, because the scholastics attributed ‘some little bit’ or minimum of merit to human actions by way of congruous (\textit{de congruo}) merit\textsuperscript{1008} they, for Luther, are actually utilizing condign merit ‘in fact and in their hearts’.\textsuperscript{1009} Grace, however, is free (\textit{gratis}) and unmerited. Finally, though one is often commanded by scriptural imperatives to do this and avoid that, what is one to do when one, in fact, can do nothing unless God permits it? This question is relevant to the Commandments themselves: if we cannot act of ourselves why pretend to try and obey? Luther’s answer is of a piece with the above: the very attempt to obey should convince us of our true state, namely, impotence. Thus, he writes, the Commandments ‘are not, however, either inappropriate or purposeless, but are given in order that blind, self-confident man may through them come to know his own diseased state of impotence if he attempts to do what is commanded.’\textsuperscript{1010} In reality, people are not able to merit anything ‘before God’: ‘good will, merit and reward’ all derive from ‘grace alone (\textit{sola gratia})’.\textsuperscript{1011} So, what gives them confidence that they are in fact saved? How does God effect this salvation of people who neither deserve nor can make themselves worthy of it? How does justification come about?

\textbf{Christ and Cross}

Luther begins with a strong sense of the human person – in particular, himself – being always sinful and so never really pure or innocent. Yet, it is this very person who is justified by God, the only just one. And God works this justification through Christ and his suffering on the

\textsuperscript{\textit{That ‘the good will, the merit, and the reward all come from grace alone.’ We speak of ‘a worthiness of merit’ when we should of ‘a consequence of reward’ and so are led astray, 153.}}

\textsuperscript{\textit{See Luther, \textit{Luther’s Works} 33: 152.}}

\textsuperscript{\textit{By this is meant that, notwithstanding a lack of personal merit, she or he is ‘merited by God’ because in doing what they could (\textit{facere quod in se est}) towards the good they behave fittingly and are rewarded for this fittingness.}}

\textsuperscript{\textit{Luther, \textit{Luther’s Works} 33: 267f.; and, so are the Pelagians.}}

\textsuperscript{\textit{Luther, \textit{Luther’s Works} 33: 128.}}

\textsuperscript{\textit{Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 152}}
cross. For Luther, then, being just—or, better, being made just—results from the other (or, alien) justice that is proper to God as such and which is imputed to the sinner by faith in the forgiveness of God in Christ; though the sinner is always there, as it were, underneath, God chooses to cloak, in the sense of both hiding the sins and putting on a garment of true justice (Christ), the sinner in righteousness. In this configuration we see first the invincible link for Luther between the person, completely mired in sin and wholly unable to do anything worthy of being justified before God, and the cross of Christ which redeems from sin, and hence the centrality of justification for the meaning of Christianity, which is to say, for God’s purpose.

If we believe that Christ has redeemed men by his blood, we are bound to confess that the whole man was lost; otherwise, we should make Christ either superfluous or the redeemer of only the lowest part of man, which would be blasphemy and sacrilege.

If a person obtains the grace of God by reason of her or his own works then ‘what need have I of the grace of Christ in order to receive it?’ Thus, too, to assert free choice is to deny Christ, and in this way Luther buttresses his view of the powerlessness of human choice or will by a christological argument. This Christ is divine and ‘begotten of the Father from eternity’ as the scripture alone teaches. To fulfil what God commands is something greater than what any human can achieve. Thus, Luther sees Christ as the (only) fulfilment of the law.

God grants ‘forgiveness of sins, redemption from death, eternal righteousness, and eternal life’ to us for the sake of Christ alone (solus Christus) ‘who paid for our sins with His suffering and death and reconciled the Father, [and] who conquered and destroyed death by His resurrection’. The forgiveness of sins is ‘received by faith alone (sola fide).’

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1012 We are to understand the continuous present here, not a once-for-all event.
1014 Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 247f.; in fact, free choice is, in everyone, ‘equally impotent’ and is ‘nothing but mud’, 170f.
1015 Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 279.
1016 Luther, Luther’s Works 12: 53; also, ‘scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth’, 32:11f., also 33: 167.
1017 Luther, Luther’s Works 25: 88f.: Christ is ‘the fulfilment and the consummation, the fullness’, see also 247.
1018 Luther, Luther’s Works 13:289f.
1019 Luther, Luther’s Works 12: 345.
Knowledge of ‘grace and righteousness’ comes through the Gospel, i.e., through Christ. If what links Christ to the righteous cannot be something that they achieve by their own efforts what then is it? How is the grace of Christ, the fruit of the via crucea, vouchsafed to people? How do we come to faith in what God has done in Christ? The answer lies in the sola fides.

Faith

Luther says that, through God’s grace, we die to the law and in so doing we live by faith. This means that the postlapsarian law, the ‘old law’ is now contrasted with the ‘new law’ of Christ and his Spirit; furthermore, this new state is not that that Adam enjoyed with God before the fall. When by faith we ‘consciously (secundum conscientiam) take hold of Christ Himself, we enter into a kind of new Law which devours the other Law that held us captive.’ Because faith is the fulfilling of the First Commandment – ‘the measure and yardstick of all the others’ – it has priority; faith affirms God even as it denies false gods. Indeed, faith is the source of all good works. It renders a Christian free, in her or his freedom, to do works of love. Luther, in reprise of Paul, says that faith in Christ means being incorporated into his body, that is, into his church. Thus, faith is primarily unitive and being justified, then, is just this union of the believer with Christ. Also, faith in Christ ‘creates unity and makes men equal’. This is not a union of will, but an incorporation.

One must be ‘cemented’ to Christ so that ‘He and you are as one person’. Union with Christ is sometimes unusually portrayed by Luther: when the individual is consumed – he says ‘accused and damned’ – with a sense of personal sinfulness then this sin ‘is itself damned

1020 Luther, Luther’s Works 14: 77.
1021 Luther, Luther’s Works 26: 157.
1022 Luther, Luther’s Works 26: 157ff.
1023 Luther, Luther’s Works 9: 69f.: Luther interprets Moses thus: ‘[i]f you desire to understand the First Commandment correctly, and truly not to have other gods, act so that you believe and love one God, deny yourself, receive everything by grace (gratia), and do everything gratefully (gratis).’
1024 Luther, Luther’s Works 6: 204; 1: 229. For Luther, love is the instrument of faith and derives its power from faith.
1025 This is to distinguish it from a forensic understanding of faith, i.e., one where the believer, in light of God’s promise, lays claim to the grace won by Christ’s obedience.
1026 Luther, Luther’s Works 12: 295; earlier Luther links faith, the First Commandment and Christ: to adore God alone does not contradict belief in Christ, for there is ‘divine unity’ between Christ and God, 12: 286.
1027 Luther, Luther’s Works 16: 123; also, ‘[t]he true knowledge of Christ begets harmony.’
1028 Luther, Luther’s Works 23: 150; this unity makes humans ‘heirs of His possessions and partakers of His divinity’, though Christ himself is ‘God’s Son from eternity’, 23: 150 also.
1029 Luther, Luther’s Works 26: 168.
by sin’, by which he means that Christ crucified, as the one ‘who for our sake was made to be sin’ (2 Corinthians 5:21), takes the person’s sin away, ‘crucifies and devours’ it. Our only response to this is to hear it and ‘take hold of it with an undoubted faith.’ In consequence of this faith, i.e., truly fides formata, we are able to do good works, love God, give thanks, love our neighbour. Indeed, this is the new law of faith, what Paul, as Luther affirms, calls the ‘law of the Spirit of life’ (Romans 8:2); this law is ‘the living will itself and the life of experience (vita experimentalis).’ The highest degree of faith, says Luther, is to believe God both merciful ‘when He saves so few and damn so many’ and righteous ‘when by His own will He makes us necessarily damnable.’ What, though, can be said of the salvation that God offers?

5.1.3 Salvation

Given sinfulness, a divide between nature and grace, it is not humanly possible to bridge this gap. Human sin seems to have led God to ‘abandon, harden and damn men as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, eternal torments of his wretched creatures’. Luther attests to his own sense of offence at this idea: ‘I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace.’ In the very moment of his own despair Luther saw that God is ever merciful, rather than harsh judge. Accepting God, in divine omnipotence and foreknowledge, entails accepting that ‘we are under necessity’; for, as we came to be of necessity and not of will, so we do not do anything without God’s counsel and power. In De Servo Arbitrio, Luther states the fundamental issue thus:

Therefore, it is not irreverent, inquisitive, or superfluous, but essentially salutary and necessary for a Christian, to find out whether the will does anything or nothing in matters pertaining to eternal salvation. Indeed,
as you should know, this is the cardinal issue between us, the point on which everything in this controversy turns. For what we are doing is to inquire what free choice can do, what it has done to it, and what is its relation to the grace of God. If we do not know these things, we shall know nothing at all of things Christian, and shall be worse than any heathen. Let anyone who does not feel this confess that he is no Christian, while anyone who disparages or scorcs it should know that he is the greatest enemy of Christians. For if I am ignorant of what, how far, and how much I can and may do in relation to God, it will be equally uncertain and unknown to me, what, how far, and how much God can and may do in me, although it is God who works everything in everyone [1 Corinthians 12:6]. But when the works and power of God are unknown, I do not know God himself, and when God is unknown, I cannot worship, praise, thank, and serve God, since I do not know how much I ought to attribute to myself and how much to God. It therefore behoves us to be very certain about the distinction between God’s power and our own, God’s work and our own, if we want to live a godly life.

Free choice, like virtus, is proper to God and it is erroneous to make human attributes of either choice or virtue. God’s will alone is free and immutable and therefore necessarily efficacious, and if human will can only be, and is, in servitude (to sin) and contingent (to external influences), then a problem arises with respect to salvation: some must, of divine necessity, be saved while others, of a similar necessity, be damned. Luther, to explain this, proceeds to postulate two wills in God, one the revealed will as found in Scripture, and other the inscrutable will. In the former, God’s righteousness seems, humanly speaking, unjust, and yet Christ is the proof of divine love. The inscrutable will of God, on the other hand, is not for humans to inquire into; it suffices merely to know that this hidden will exists. From the human point of view, Luther feels it is of supreme importance, in relation to salvation, to know what the power of the human will is as regards grace; as we know from above, it has no power at all.

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1040 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 35.
1041 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 18: 636, 614 [1524]; also 3: 107. Nor does Luther forget that for the Christian, there is another liberty, viz., the glorious liberty of the children of God, see 33: 158.
1042 See Luther, *Luther’s Works* 23 [Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 5-5]: 62-65. Luther has objected to the ‘papist’ notion that obedience to the law, the commandments, is the will of God; to make this equation is to speak the language of works, and, true as the notion is per se it is not all that can or needs to be said of God’s will. For, there is another type of divine will, revealed by Christ, God’s ‘real will’. This latter is tied to John 3:16: ‘[w]hoever believes in the Son shall not perish but have everlasting life.’
1043 See also, Luther, *Luther’s Works* 33: 140 and 170.
1044 Luther, *Luther’s Works* 18: 614.
to God’s working of salvation, ‘we can do nothing of saving significance, whether we wish or not.’¹⁰⁴⁵ Free will without grace ‘has absolutely no power to achieve righteousness, but of necessity it is in sin.’¹⁰⁴⁶ It is only in possessing grace ‘that the will is actually made free, especially with respect to salvation.’¹⁰⁴⁷ Indeed, we know that we are saved because of the sola gratia: ‘grace alone justifies.’¹⁰⁴⁸ What, if anything, though, leads to salvation? The things that lead to salvation are the ‘words and works of God’, by which Luther intends the Law and the Gospel: ‘nothing else...leads either to the grace of God or to eternal salvation...since grace or the Spirit is life itself’.¹⁰⁴⁹ Though it is impossible for humans to comprehend what eternal life is Luther is concerned, nevertheless, not to abolish the idea of the Law: it does contribute to salvation.¹⁰⁵⁰ This is not to say that it itself manages to justify the sinner but, rather, that ‘it impels one to the promise of grace and makes it sweet and desirable.’¹⁰⁵¹ The sense of salvation is aided by the sense of personal sin. To feel ‘sin and the wrath of God because of sin is a very great grace, and salvation is close to such sinners.’¹⁰⁵² In a real way, ‘salvation and light and grace’ are always with us, yet without the fulfilment of the promise we have to constantly cry to God for salvation, lest being in the midst of grace we risk losing it.¹⁰⁵³ Before looking at the role of Christ in salvation we note that Luther makes a distinction between salvation and ‘general salvation’. Here he is following Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:6: general salvation, like the grace of God as such, is ‘one and the same, even for the faithless.’¹⁰⁵⁴ God saves all though not in the same way: the faithful in one way, the unfaithful another.¹⁰⁵⁵ This general salvation refers to earthly things: victory in battle, a throne, preservation from a plague, sunlight; a quiet life, a wife, a healthy crop, etc.¹⁰⁵⁶ In terms of salvation per se, Luther distinguishes three degrees among the elect. First, are those who simply rely on their election and do not wish to be damned. Second, are those who are content if it be God’s will that they be among the reprobate. Third, are those who

¹⁰⁴⁵ Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 64.
¹⁰⁴⁶ Luther, Luther’s Works 25: 375.
¹⁰⁴⁷ Luther, Luther’s Works 25: 375.
¹⁰⁴⁸ Luther, Luther’s Works 25: 242.
¹⁰⁴⁹ Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 105.
¹⁰⁵⁰ Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 105f.
¹⁰⁵¹ Luther, Luther’s Works 26: 315; the ‘true function and use’ of the Law is that it impels us to Christ.
¹⁰⁵² Luther, Luther’s Works 5: 157.
¹⁰⁵³ Luther, Luther’s Works 11: 510f.
¹⁰⁵⁴ Luther, Luther’s Works 28:262.
¹⁰⁵⁵ Luther, Luther’s Works 28: 261f.
¹⁰⁵⁶ Luther, Luther’s Works 28: 262f.
resign themselves to hell ‘if God so wills’.

Thus, God’s double predestination logically concludes in willing, if it be God’s will, that one is damned for eternity.

Finally, it is through faith in Christ that everything is granted to us, namely, ‘grace, peace, the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life.’ Being received into God’s promise, fulfilled in Christ, is entry into ‘the kingdom of grace and salvation’. It is only in putting trust in Christ’s ‘merits and grace’ that ‘you will live eternally’. Consequently and though we continue to use our ‘reason and wisdom’ for managing the household, doing our jobs, buying and selling, when it comes to the worship of God, then ‘you should deny all access to reason and cling to this Son alone.’

Christ, in sum, is the truth because he ‘showed forth the promise made to the fathers concerning Him, so that God might be true in His promises, since the salvation which he promised has been given.’

5.2 _The Promise of Grace – John Calvin_

Often taken as emblematic of the second generation of reformers of the 16th century, John Calvin (1509-1564) has less appeal for the modern reader than the more fiery, passionate and engaging Luther. And yet, in the coolly cerebral quality of his writing, Calvin is ever deepening the Reformation’s perception of the utter gratuitousness of God’s saving work in Christ. His theology, with its affirmation of divine sovereignty and grace, has had an enormous effect on the field. Part of this effect, examined by Max Weber, is enacted in Western capitalism. As a theologian who constructed his theology around the notion of grace Calvin constitutes perhaps one of the best Christian interlocutors for dialogue with Buddhism as such and with Shin Buddhism in particular. Calvin, then, the mature and severe theologian, adds another essential dimension to our understanding of reformed theology at the same time as he develops his own theology of grace. We begin by examining Calvin’s account of creation and providence, by which we appreciate the theological contribution he makes to our understanding of God. Then we see how he accounts for both humanity’s fall from grace and how grace is restored. Finally, we look at Calvin’s understanding of salvation itself.

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1057 Luther, _Luther’s Works_ 25: 378.
1058 Luther, _Luther’s Works_ 26: 134.
1059 Luther, _Luther’s Works_ 6: 361.
1060 Luther, _Luther’s Works_ 12: 88f.
1061 Luther, _Luther’s Works_ 11: 165.
5.2.1 Creation and Sin

It is in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*\(^{1062}\) that we find the fullest expression of the central theological concerns of Calvin. In four books, beginning with our knowledge of God the Creator and ending with the external means by which God invites humans into the society of Christ and ‘holds us therein’, via knowledge of God the redeemer in Christ and the way in which we receive the grace of Christ, Calvin moves from the way humans have knowledge of God to how they are to act in society.\(^{1063}\) We begin with knowing God. For Calvin, to have such knowledge, i.e., ‘an awareness of his lowly state’, one must compare oneself with God’s majesty.\(^{1064}\) Our salvation depends on God, and this depends on our knowledge of God. Calvin proposes a twofold account of the knowledge of God (*duplex cognitio dei*): we know God as creator, provider, and sustainer of all; however, it is quite another thing to know God as ‘Redeemer in Christ’ and thereby embrace the ‘grace of reconciliation which God offers us in Christ’.\(^{1065}\) The whole created order is, for him, ‘a theatre of the divine glory’\(^{1066}\), at the same time that the scriptures are ‘a school’\(^{1067}\).

God’s sovereignty is absolute; all that is is so by the divine will, all that happens happens so by the same will and providence. Calvin warns: ‘there is no erratic power, or action, or motion in creatures, but that they are governed by God’s secret plan in such a way that nothing happens except what is knowingly and willingly decreed by him [God].’\(^{1068}\) God’s rule is direct. In seeking to preserve God’s ‘determination’ or direct rule of creation, rather

\(^{1062}\) John T. McNeill (ed.), *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* in two volumes (volume XX: Books I.i to III.xix), translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles, Volumes XX and XXI in The Library of Christian Classics series, Westminster John Knox: Louisville and London, 2006 [1960 (= basically from the 1559 Latin edition)]. Reference to this edition will be made by numbers: the first number refers to the Book, the second to the Chapter, and the third to the Section, thus II.i.4 refers to section Four of chapter Three of book Two, according to the numbering system employed for self-references within the texts’ footnotes; it should be noted that this format differs slightly, but to more clear effect, from that in those texts where the above example is given as II.III.4. I follow this reference with the page number in McNeill’s edition.

\(^{1063}\) This discussion of the political ends the book on the means of grace. Obedience is a dominant theme, of people to the officers of the law as well as the laws, and of all to God. Calvin states that even where there is ‘unbridled despotism’ people should not assume God’s prerogative, i.e., ‘to avenge’, for to them ‘no command has been given except to obey and suffer’, see Calvin, *Institutes* IV.xx.31: 1518.

\(^{1064}\) Calvin, *Institutes* I.i.3: 38f.

\(^{1065}\) Calvin, *Institutes* I.i.1: 40. God is revealed in the general sense in creation, and in the more special sense in scripture as revelation.


\(^{1067}\) See Calvin, *Institutes* I.vi.2: 71f., which is replete with the imagery of the school.

\(^{1068}\) Calvin, *Institutes* I.xvi.3: 201.
than to assert a divine power which merely keeps creation in motion, Calvin draws a distinction between general and special providence. He accepts that there is a universal providence, in which God ‘watches over the order of nature’ as set by Godself and which applies to all. However, there is also a special providence in which God’s ‘fatherly favor’ and judgements have their place, and ‘not one drop of rain falls without God’s sure command.’

This special providence applies most particularly to humans, for whom ‘the universe was established especially.’ But, how humans understand the divine will is not itself direct. Even though Calvin eschews any notion of fate or chance in creation, humans may not perceive it like this: ‘however all things may be ordained by God’s plan, according to a sure dispensation, for us they are fortuitous.’ God, ‘by the bridle of his providence’ commands every event by divine will; things do not happen by chance, but ‘what for us seems a contingency, faith recognizes to have been a secret impulse from God.’ This secret impulse is better known as divine foreknowledge and Calvin also distinguishes it from providence. In relation to foreknowledge he writes:

> When we attribute foreknowledge to God we mean that all things always were, and perpetually remain, under his eyes, so that to his knowledge there is nothing future or past, but all things are present.

In this account he is consonant with Augustine. Having clarified, then, the universal extent of this foreknowledge Calvin goes on to the question of predestination, in which God foreordains some to eternal bliss and others to damnation:

> We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.

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1069 Calvin, *Institutes* I.xvi.5: 204. Indeed, he goes on to hold that ‘particular events are generally testimonies of the character of God’s singular providence’, and adumbrates: stirring the south wind (*Exodus* 16:13; *Numbers* 11:31), or a whirlwind (*Jonah* 1:4), leaving some in barrenness and others with offspring (see *Psalm* 113:9; *Genesis* 30:2), provision of bread (*Deuteronomy* 8:3; *Matthew* 4:4; *Isaiah* 3:1; *Matthew* 6:11), see xvi.7: 205f.

1070 Calvin, *Institutes* I.xvi.6: 204.

1071 Calvin, *Institutes* I.xvi.9: 208 (emphasis mine), see also 8: 207f. In the same section, i.e., 9: 208-210, Calvin applies the same logic to ‘the contingency of future events’: ‘nothing will take place that the Lord has not previously foreseen.’


1073 Calvin, *Institutes* III.xxi.5: 926.
Here we are introduced to one of Calvin’s more notorious notions: double predestination. Speaking with certainty of the salvation of the elect few, Calvin is at least, if not more, certain of the damnation of the many. With many scriptural citations he affirms that divine election takes place in two degrees. First, God elects Israel, the ‘one nation preferred above all others’. However, this election was ‘not always firm and effectual’ and many members of Israel lacked ‘the spirit of regeneration that would enable them to persevere in the covenant to the very end’. Here Calvin is distinguishing general election, such as the call of Israel to be ‘the inheritance of God’, from the actual election of individuals, for God freely chooses only ‘some out of the many’. For, election is itself qualified or limited to the ‘election and reprobation of individual Israelites’: ‘Ishmael, Esau and the like were cut off from adoption’ even as Ishmael’s brother Israel, as well as Isaac and Jacob, were chosen. Thus, and in extension of this second degree, something far more powerful comes centre stage in Christianity. In ‘the members of Christ a far more excellent power of grace appears’: these members ‘engrafted to their Head...are never cut off from salvation’. We will return to the role of Christ below, but here we must look more closely at what Calvin means by divine election.

Election, i.e., choosing some and reprobating others, is a hallmark of Calvin’s theology. Calvin sees in the election of Abraham’s ‘spiritual offspring’ a call that testifies to actual election. He writes: ‘[n]ow among the elect we regard the call as a testimony of election.’ The call is God’s seal on election; because we know the call, so we know election. This will apply to justification, too. Both the call and justification are signs that manifest that God has actually elected these few alone to salvation. Thus, returning to the figure of Jacob, we see

1074 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.5: 926; this is reprised in section 7: 931: ‘As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction.’

1075 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.7: 930f. Already in Book II, when discussing the differences between the ‘Old’ and the ‘New’ testaments, he says that ‘until the advent of Christ, the Lord set apart one nation within which to confine the covenant of his grace’, Institutes II.xi.11: 460.

1076 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.7: 930.

1077 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.7: 931.

1078 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.6: 929f.

1079 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.7: 930.

1080 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.7: 931.

1081 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.7: 931: the many, whom God ‘would devote to destruction’ are damned: ‘as the Lord seals his elect by call and justification, so, by shutting off the reprobate from knowledge of his name or from the sanctification of his Spirit, he, as it were, reveals by these marks what sort of judgment awaits them.’

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that it is not that Jacob was favoured over Esau because of some good work done by himself that could be said to merit God’s grace. Rather, ‘the adoption of Jacob comes not from works but from God’s call’, as Paul demonstrated in Romans 9-11. Calvin continues:

Jacob, therefore, is chosen and distinguished from the rejected Esau by God’s predestination, while not differing from him in merits. [Why?]… It is simply the Lord’s clear declaration that he finds in men themselves no reason to bless them but takes it from his own mercy alone [Romans 9:16]; therefore the salvation of his own is his own work.

In this divine calling, Calvin distinguishes two types, and they parallel general and special providence. In discussing Christ, Calvin, having first drawn our attention to the advantage of following the callings or ‘various kinds of living’ assigned to us by the Lord, distinguishes general from special callings, which relate to divine election. In the former, then, through the outward preaching of the Word, all are called equally by Godself, though not all will respond. This calling is vincible precisely because it can be rejected. On the other hand, in the special calling – almost always given to believers alone – the Spirit causes the preached word to dwell within, in people’s hearts. This calling, on the other hand, is invincible. By this, Calvin is not claiming that humans know the mind of God. In fact, he makes a virtue out of our not knowing God’s secret ways, in words that echo Nicholas of Cusa. Of course, humans may not know the mind of God. We are ignorant of the divine will and yet, from revelation, there are things that we know. In this context, we speak of a docta ignorantia, a learned ignorance. Calvin writes:

Let this, therefore, first of all be before our eyes: to seek any other knowledge of predestination than what the Word of God discloses is not less insane than if one should propose to walk in a pathless waste [cf. Job 12:24], or to see in darkness. And let us not be ashamed to be ignorant of something in this matter, wherein there is a certain learned ignorance.

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1082 Calvin, Institutes III.xxii.4: 936. See also III.xxxiii.10: 958f.
1083 Calvin, Institutes III.xxii.6: 938, also 10-11: 943-947. Later, in chapter xxiv, he treats of this calling more fully, e.g., ‘[t]his inner call, then, is a pledge of salvation that cannot deceive us’ (xxiv.2: 967), and the way of our inquiry is ‘to begin with God’s call, and to end with it’ (xxiv.4: 969)
1084 Calvin, Institutes III.x.6: 724.
1085 See Calvin, Institutes III.xxiv.8: 974f.
1087 Calvin, Institutes III.xxi.2: 923.
For Calvin knowledge of God means learning what we do not – cannot – know of God. The ‘learned ignorance’ leaves no room for doubt and so, he writes ‘[n]o one who wishes to be thought religious dares simply deny predestination, by which God adopts some to hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death.’ Indeed, it is most unwise to desire to know God’s mind; he writes,

And let us not be ashamed to submit our understanding to God’s boundless wisdom so far as to yield before its many secrets. For, of those things which it is neither given nor lawful to know, ignorance is learned; the craving to know, a kind of madness.\footnote{Calvin, Institutes III.xxiii.8: 957.}

What we do know is that creation is of God and therefore good, and that all creation is under God’s will and providence. So, how is it that creation is subject to evil? Is not God’s will defied and opposed? What is the reason for this most unhappy state of God’s good creation?

Sin

Humans have marred creation by their sins, by being disobedient to the divine will. They have not kept the relationship that God first established with them; people have gone astray. This condition is what Calvin understands as original sin. He writes:

Original sin, therefore, seems to be a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God’s wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls ‘works of the flesh’ \cite{Galatians 5:19}.\footnote{Calvin, Institutes II.i.8: 251.} Unfaithfulness is the root of Adam’s sin.\footnote{Calvin, Institutes II.i.4: 245.} Through Adam the ‘whole order of nature in heaven and on earth’ was perverted. In his obliteration of the heavenly image in himself, Adam also ‘entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries’, in ‘the inherited corruption’ which the Christian tradition calls original sin.\footnote{Calvin, Institutes II.i.5: 246; interestingly here Calvin cites Romans 8:20-22, but taking the ‘groaning’ as evidence of punishment for sin.} Sinfulness is natural to humanity; this is God’s ordering of things. Because the whole of human nature is corrupted each new child is likewise corrupted. The ‘contagion of sin’ does not derive from either one’s body or one’s soul; rather, it is a divine ordinance: ‘that the first man should at one and the same time have and lose, both for himself and for his descendants, the gifts that God had bestowed upon him.’\footnote{Calvin, Institutes II.i.7: 250.} If used of the whole person, Calvin assents that ‘concupiscence’, the
disease caused by human lusts, is an appropriate word for original sin. Indeed, the whole person is ‘nothing but concupiscence’. Though the whole person is ‘overwhelmed – as by a deluge – from head to foot’ by sin, yet sin is not the nature of humans but, rather, the derangement of their nature. Sin inflicts a wound on nature, which of itself is not the cause of our ruin; rather, the vitiation that sin brings is adventitious, it does not come from human nature as such, for to hold otherwise would be to make God, the author of nature, responsible for our ruinous state.

A true knowledge of ourselves, then, begins for Calvin – and this is how he opens the second book of the Institutes – with ‘know thyself’ from Greek philosophy. Self-knowledge, which is ‘the second part of wisdom’, consists in a consideration, first, of what God has given us in creation and continuously, and, second, of ‘our miserable condition after Adam’s fall’. Thus, he divides knowledge that one ought to have of oneself in two: on the one hand, consider – meditate on – the purpose for which we are created and given such gifts, viz., divine worship and the future life; and, on the other, weigh up our own (lack of) abilities such that when someone perceives ‘this lack, he should lie prostate in extreme confusion, so to speak, reduced to nought.’ The knowledge of self, then, is knowledge of sinfulness.

Because all have sinned and have this ‘contagion’ within them the forensic mind of Calvin could argue, in clear contradiction of Christ’s own words about ‘little children’, that even infants themselves, while they carry their condemnation along with them from the mother’s womb, are guilty not of another’s fault [i.e., Adam’s] but of their own. For, even though the fruits of their iniquity have not yet come forth, they have the seed enclosed within them. Indeed, their whole nature is a seed of sin; hence it can be only hateful and abhorrent to God. From this it follows that it is rightly considered sin in God’s sight, for without guilt there would be no accusation.

Yet, when discussing infant baptism and original sin his analysis is distinctive and relatively positive (where others, including Augustine, were negative). Infants are not created in sin

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1093 See Calvin, Institutes II.i.24: 284.
1094 Calvin, Institutes II.i.8: 252.
1095 Calvin, Institutes II.i.9f.: 252-255.
1096 Calvin, Institutes III.i.11: 254.
1097 Calvin, Institutes II.i.3: 243.
1098 Calvin, Institutes II.i.1: 242; this is consistent with what he has already said in Book 1, see I.i.2: 37.
1099 Calvin, Institutes II.i.3: 244.
1100 Calvin, Institutes II.i.8: 251.
though they have ‘been enveloped in original sin and defiled by its stains’. In infants, he wrote, there is the seed, though not yet the fruits, of their own iniquity; indeed, ‘their whole nature is a seed of sin.’ In baptism there is full and complete remission of sin both of any possible guilt and of the punishment such guilt would merit, and the righteousness that the baptized obtain as members of the people of God is that imputed to them by Christ. By this token, then, infants who have not been baptized will not be ‘barred from the Kingdom of Heaven’. For, Calvin went on, God’s promise is to be our God even before we are born, and God’s promise ‘suffices for its effect’. When Christ comes, the divine promises are fulfilled, not abolished. What, then, is the promise that is fulfilled in Christ?

5.2.2 Promise and Faith
The promise is mercy and this is God deigning to ‘give us the grace of eternal life to the end that he may be loved, feared and honored by us’. This mercy, promised in the scriptures, has its end in directing us to ‘reverence and honor’ God as the author of all the benefits we receive. By God’s grace we are adopted; the divine mercy is the basis for faith even as faith itself is the ‘way of salvation’. Calvin is clear: God announces salvation to all. Does this mean that all will therefore be saved? Can anyone be ultimately lost, bound for perdition?

Promise and Predestination
However and as we have seen, he also holds that God has fixed those whom ‘he wills to embrace in love, and those upon whom he wills to vent his wrath’, and this without contradiction. Calvin states his view, thus:

1101 Calvin, Institutes I.i.8: 251.
1102 Calvin, Institutes IV.xv.10: 1311; see also II.i.8: 250-252.
1103 Calvin, Institutes IV.xv.10: 1311.
1104 Calvin, Institutes IV.xv.22: 1323, see also 20: 1320f.; the point he makes is that it is not the act of baptizing that brings salvation to the child; God promises to be ‘our God and the God of our descendants after us [Genesis 17:7]’ and it is this promise of God that is salvation, not the sign that baptism actually is. Implicit here, we may note, is a distinction between the (unbaptized) children of (baptized) members of the church and the (presumably unbaptized) children of the reprobate.
1105 Calvin, Institutes IV.xv.20: 1321.
1106 Calvin, Institutes III.i.29: 575.
1107 Calvin, Institutes III.xviii.6: 808.
1108 Calvin, Institutes III.xviii.6: 808.
1109 Calvin, Institutes III.i.30: 576.
I maintain that these statements agree perfectly with each other. For by so promising he [God] merely means that his mercy is extended to all, provided they seek after it and implore it. But only those whom he has illumined do this. And he illumines those whom he had predestined for salvation.\textsuperscript{1110}

In those illumined by grace there is for Calvin, then, a real, internal transformation of the person that continues right through life, reforming her or him to newness of life.\textsuperscript{1111} It has two aspects: on the one hand, the believer dies to sin by recognizing her or his sinfulness and turning away from it, and, on the other, she or he lives in Christ, who by ‘a wonderful exchange (\textit{mirifica communicatio})’ has become ‘Son of man with us’ in order to make us ‘sons of God with him’.\textsuperscript{1112} Calvin says this in the context of a discussion of the eucharist.\textsuperscript{1113} In his account of baptism and the eucharist, especially in book four of the \textit{Institutes}, Calvin uses the language of ‘sign’ or ‘symbol’ and is careful in distinguishing them from ‘their mysteries’ so as to neither regard the former too lightly nor ‘obscure somewhat the mysteries themselves’.\textsuperscript{1114} Likewise, he distinguishes the signification, matter and effect of the sacraments.\textsuperscript{1115} Baptism is the believer’s ‘confession before men...the mark by which we publicly profess that we wish to be reckoned God’s people’.\textsuperscript{1116} It is given for ‘the arousing, nourishing, and confirming of our faith’ and ought to be received from God alone who ‘speaks to us through the sign’. God is working all this within the soul; the outward and actual washing with water represents this inner cleansing. Calvin makes the purpose clear: ‘that we should see spiritual things in physical, as if set before our very eyes’.\textsuperscript{1117} He continues:

\begin{quote}
For the Lord was pleased to represent them by such figures – not because such graces are bound and enclosed in the sacrament so as to be conferred upon us by its power, but only because the Lord by this token attests his will towards us, namely, that he is pleased to lavish all these things upon us. And he does not feed our eyes with a mere appearance
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1110} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xxiv.17: 985.

\textsuperscript{1111} See Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xv.5: 1307; nonetheless, it is not human works that fulfil this mercy of God but Godself, see III.xv.6: 809.

\textsuperscript{1112} See Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.2: 1362.

\textsuperscript{1113} Much of his theology of grace is tied to his treatment of the sacraments.

\textsuperscript{1114} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.5: 1364f.

\textsuperscript{1115} See Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.11: 1371.

\textsuperscript{1116} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xv.13: 1313; it also is the mark by which ‘we testify that we agree in worshiping the same God, in one religion with all Christians’ and by which ‘finally we openly affirm our faith’, 13: 1313f.

\textsuperscript{1117} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xv.13: 1314.
only, but leads us to the present reality and effectively performs what it symbolizes.\textsuperscript{1118}

Clearly, then, in relation to the eucharist we are also ‘led by a sort of analogy to spiritual things.’\textsuperscript{1119} When bread is given ‘as a symbol’ of Christ’s body a comparison is being made between bread which ‘nourishes, sustains, and keeps the life of our body’ and ‘Christ’s body [which] is the only food to invigorate and enliven our soul.’\textsuperscript{1120} For Calvin the chief function of the sacrament is ‘to seal and confirm that promise by which he [Christ] testifies that his flesh is food indeed and his blood is drink, which feed us unto eternal life’\textsuperscript{1121}. Because it is the Cross that performs and fulfils the promise, it is to the Cross that the eucharist sends us. Furthermore, the eucharist is not the cause of Christ becoming the bread of life; rather, it causes us to ‘feel the power of that bread’ because it reminds us that Christ was made the bread of life.\textsuperscript{1122} If others would designate the eating of the eucharist as (an act of) faith, Calvin himself would prefer to say that ‘the eating follows from faith’. Thus, when Paul says that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (\textit{Ephesians} 3:17) he does not mean that the eucharist is this faith, but rather that it is the effect of faith, and a remarkable one at that.\textsuperscript{1123}

How, though, does Calvin understand the meaning and effect of the sacraments in relation to the divine promise? What are the terms that clarify these for him? By a sacrament’s \textit{signification} Calvin intends the promises that are contained in the signs. The \textit{matter} of the sacraments is Christ ‘with his death and resurrection’. Finally, their \textit{effect} is ‘redemption, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life, and all the other benefits Christ gives us.’\textsuperscript{1124} Thus, we see that the sacraments are christologically structured. In any sacrament, however, ‘we obtain only as much as we receive in faith’, which is Calvin’s rather enigmatic way of saying, for instance in relation to baptism, that though at a certain time in life we receive baptism and, therefore, with it the divine promise of forgiveness, it is only at a later time that we come to truly repent of our sins and, therefore to have faith. Only then is the promise fulfilled. Thus, fulfilment of the promise is not necessarily contemporaneous with its being made: though God may offer it now, it is only later that we may ‘embrace it in faith’ and ‘by

\textsuperscript{1118} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xv.13: 1314.
\textsuperscript{1119} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.3: 1363.
\textsuperscript{1120} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.3: 1363; Calvin used \textit{signum} here for symbol, though in earlier editions he used \textit{symbolum}, see 3: 1363n12.
\textsuperscript{1121} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.4: 1363.
\textsuperscript{1122} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.5: 1364.
\textsuperscript{1123} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.5: 1365.
\textsuperscript{1124} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} IV.xvii.11: 1372.
An outcome of this approach is a separation in understanding between Calvin and Catholics on the way grace works. The *ex opere operato*, by which the grace of the sacrament is guaranteed by the work of the sacrament itself and independent of the (un)worthiness of the minister, is implicitly denied. In this way signification is divorced from sign, as can be seen in baptism: should the unbaptized children of those who are chosen by God, the elect, die, they are not as such excluded from heaven; the promise of salvation to the elect and their posterity, as in that made to Abraham, will be fulfilled. Indeed, the contrary position, namely, that salvation should depend on baptism, would entail, says Calvin, that God’s promise was now dependent on a sign, which would mean that ‘our condition is worse than that of God’s ancient people – as if the grace of God were more restricted than under the law!’ On what, then, does the fulfilment of the promise depend?

Faith

What distinguishes ‘between pious and impious’ is whether one has faith or not, and this is not to be set in opposition to any universal quality of the promise of salvation. For Calvin, only those who have been illumined – i.e., have faith – seek after and implore God’s mercy. It is these illuminated ones, the faithful, who ‘possess the sure and unbroken truth of the promises [of salvation]’. Faith itself is:

...a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Calvin first understands by faith not the common knowledge of comprehension but a higher knowledge ‘so far above sense that man’s mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it’; and in attaining it the mind still does not comprehend what it feels. Second, if faith is not doubtful, it is also not obscure: so, Calvin speaks of it as requiring ‘full and fixed certainty’. Of course, while on earth our faith may be imperfect: we are assailed by all.

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1126 Calvin, *Institutes* IV.xv.20: 1321. Yet again, he is a person of his time, and against a more nuanced interpretation of Pauline strictures, Calvin is not in favour of laymen baptizing and he prohibits women from doing so, see Calvin, *Institutes* IV.xv.20f.: 1320-1323.
1128 Calvin, *Institutes* III.ii.7: 551.
1129 Calvin, *Institutes* III.ii.14: 559; he continues: ‘[b]ut while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity.’
1130 Calvin, *Institutes* III.ii.15: 560.
sorts of doubts and terrors, yet, like a light beneath ashes, the light of faith is never extinguished or snuffed out.\textsuperscript{1131} The faith that Calvin, with Paul, marks is the one that ‘distinguishes the children of God from the wicked, and believers from the unbelievers.’ Further, this ‘firm condition of faith’ has to rest on God’s mercy.\textsuperscript{1132} Calvin determines to make two points: ‘first, that faith does not stand firm until a man attains to the freely given promise; second, that it does not reconcile us to God at all unless it joins us to Christ.’\textsuperscript{1133} The attaining, of which he writes here, is not a human achievement; faith gains ‘a sufficient and stable support’ once we grasp how Christ accomplishes salvation.\textsuperscript{1134} For, it is not that faith of itself justifies. Faith is said to justify ‘only in so far as it receives Christ’.\textsuperscript{1135} Calvin’s point is that (human) faith, if per impossible it could justify, could do so only fragmentarily, which would have the consequence of making salvation defective.\textsuperscript{1136} It is in Christ, and in him alone – as the one who ‘was made an atoning sacrifice for us’ – that we are justified.\textsuperscript{1137} He writes that ‘he [Christ] deigns to make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him.’\textsuperscript{1138} In this fellowship, is there anything that makes us worthy of the promise of divine mercy, grace, salvation?

\textsuperscript{1131} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.ii.21: 567. Calvin quotes Bernard of Clairvaux at length on faith’s double aspect: on the one hand, when we look at our own soul we see ‘that it is reduced to nothing’, but when, on the other, these very nothings are called before God and are now ‘magnified’; the undignified self is dignified by God, see Bernard of Clairvaux, \textit{In Dedicazione Ecclesiae}, sermon 5, as quoted in Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.ii.25: 571f. 

\textsuperscript{1132} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.ii.30: 576.

\textsuperscript{1133} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.ii.30: 576.

\textsuperscript{1134} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} II.xvi.1: 504.

\textsuperscript{1135} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xi.7: 733.

\textsuperscript{1136} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xi.7: 733.

\textsuperscript{1137} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xi.9: 736; see below.

\textsuperscript{1138} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xi.10: 737.
Merit
For those who follow God’s call, developing ‘holiness of life’ amidst life’s ‘great tribulations’ there are rewards, as the scriptures say, that is, comforts for troubles. So, rewards are recompense ‘for their miseries, tribulations, slanders, etc.’ Evil things in this life are changed into ‘greater goods’ in the next. However, rewards are not merits, and merits cannot be deduced from these rewards. Merit denies the giftedness of grace and God’s plan of salvation is wholly a divine free gift. Calvin begins his formal treatment of merit with a lament for the damage this word, ‘foreign to Scripture’, has occasioned. Merit is surely, he says, ‘a most prideful term, [and] it can do nothing but obscure God’s favor and imbue men with perverse haughtiness.’

There is no doubt that whatever is praiseworthy in works is God’s grace; there is not a drop that we ought by rights to assign to ourselves. If we truly and earnestly recognize this, not only will all confidence in merit vanish, but the very notion.

With the idea of merit humans become proud, and pride was the sin that led Adam to be unfaithful to God’s command. Anticipating what he will say later we see Calvin’s positive understanding of merit in relation to the merits of Christ (see below). These merits alone suffice before God; any merits humans may be said to have are only those of Christ, though we receive them by divine adoption. Calvin again:

Therefore, as soon as you become engrafted into Christ through faith, you are made a son of God, an heir of heaven, a partaker in righteousness, a possessor of life; and ... you obtain not the opportunity to gain merit but all the merits of Christ, for they are communicated to you.

In countering the position of the so-called Schoolmen Calvin on the one hand continues to deepen his position on the lack of worth of human works and merits in comparison to the merits of Christ, which alone are effective for salvation, and, on the other weakens the

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1139 E.g., Matthew 5:10, 6:1, see Calvin, Institutes III.xviii.4: 825.
1140 See Calvin, Institutes III.xviii.3: 823f., where Calvin follows Ambrose’s analysis of the parable of the workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20:1-16.
1141 Calvin, Institutes III.xv: 788-797.
1142 Calvin, Institutes III.xv.2: 789.
1143 Calvin, Institutes III.xv.3: 790. This accords with Calvin’s earlier treatment of supererogations, in chapter xiv: ever conscious that God bestows on us grace upon grace, daily, we only freely accept them, not as our works but as the Spirit’s gifts, which come from the first cause and in ‘nowise detract from it’, see Institutes III.xiv.21: 787f., and also 12-20: 779-787.
1144 Calvin, Institutes III.xv.6: 794.
diatribe element in the moment of its execution for, in the light of what they—and here he is thinking of ‘the schools of the Sorbonne, mothers of all errors’ and Peter Lombard—taught, he is forced to nuance the degree of contrast; he contends:

Because they [the schools, Lombard\textsuperscript{1145}] see that good works are of little avail to exalt man and that these are not even called merits, properly speaking, if they be accounted fruits of God’s grace, they derive them from the power of free will, as oil from a stone. And they do not deny that the principal cause, indeed, lies in grace. But they still contend that in this, free will is not ruled out, through which all merit exists.\textsuperscript{1146}

Instead of using the term and language of merit, Calvin counsels that people should be praised for their works and assured that these are acceptable to God. Nevertheless, even in this point, he requires that ‘no man attempt or go about any work without faith, that is, unless with firm assurance of mind he first determines that it will please God.’\textsuperscript{1147}

Finally, we may add, that the state in which humans find themselves makes a systemic social structure virtually essential for helping them to cope with life and make the proper response; the church gives hope of hearing the Word preached, the sacraments dispensed, and the practice of the faith supported. In other words, people need (a) church and this helps to explain why Calvin’s adopted hope, Geneva, developed theocratically; people’s sinfulness and lack of merit makes the institution of church vital. For Calvin, the tradition and church order were important for the right ordering of society.\textsuperscript{1148} The very way he structured his Institutes attests to Calvin’s catechetical intent.\textsuperscript{1149} Nevertheless, church order is marginal to

\textsuperscript{1145} Unfortunately, the textual notes in the Institutes here seem to indicate that Thomas Aquinas is to be included in Calvin’s strictures; of the some 150 mentions of Aquinas in the index not one refers to the text of Calvin himself, all are to the footnotes of the editors.

\textsuperscript{1146} Calvin, Institutes III.xv.7: 795.

\textsuperscript{1147} Calvin, Institutes III.xv.7: 796.

\textsuperscript{1148} The part he played in Geneva to order his adopted home according to theocratic principles famously, and sometimes infamously, attests to this. The theocratic ordering of all life in Geneva was not, of course, as clear-cut as is often thought, for Calvin had many difficulties in trying to get people to see his way and the civic authorities did not always follow his lead, see Bernard Cottret, Calvin: A Biography, translated by M. Wallace McDonald, William B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids MI and Cambridge, and T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 2000 [1995]: 130f., 146-151, 157-160, etc.

\textsuperscript{1149} See Richard A. Muller, After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition, in Oxford Studies in Historical Theology series, OUP: New York, 2003: 86f. By the time of the 1559 edition the Institutes begin with a book devoted to God the Creator, and move to others on God the Redeemer, how we receive Christ’s grace, and the external means by which we are maintained in ‘the society of Christ’.
the larger thematic: it is his understanding of the order of salvation that brings us to the heart of Calvin’s and the Reformation’s thematization of the divine-human relationship.

5.2.3 Salvific Order
What is Calvin’s understanding of how God effects reconciliation with sinful humanity? Simply, it is by an act of justification or making them righteous. We then look at the role of Christ in this soteriological drama.

Justification
When Calvin formally discusses justification he begins with a distinction between reconciliation and sanctification, for there is a difference between made just in God’s eyes and ‘being made new creatures’, i.e., achieving that destiny of eternal life which God intends for (some of) humanity. In itself justification means that the sinner is made righteous before God; it is ‘the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men.’ By sanctification Calvin means being ‘consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to obedience to the law’. To the question why are we justified by faith Calvin answers:

Because by faith we grasp Christ’s righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also.

So, though distinguished, justification and sanctification are ‘inseparable’. Justification itself has a double aspect. On the one hand, there is the remission of our sins and, on the other, there is the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. In relation to the remission of sins, Calvin follows Paul in Romans 4:6f. and, especially, in 2 Corinthians 5:18ff.: the good news is that we have been reconciled to or made righteous before God, i.e., we have received a free pardon of our sins. The manner of this justification is ‘free imputation’, i.e., God, in sovereign freedom, deigns to impute to humans a righteousness or justice that they neither have intrinsically nor are entitled to in any way by virtue of anything meritorious they have

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Based on 1 Corinthians 1:30, see Calvin, Institutes III.xi.6: 732.

Calvin, Institutes III.xi.2: 727.

Calvin, Institutes III.xiv.9: 776.

Calvin, Institutes III.xvi.1: 798.

See Calvin, Institutes III.xi.4: 728f. Later, Calvin, in refuting certain positions of Osiander on Christ’s righteousness, also states that in Christ there is both righteousness and sanctification: thus, when Christ receives a person into righteousness he ‘at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption’; though both come together in Christ’s work, they are separate, even as we say the sun both lights the earth and warms it, see xi.6: 731f.
done or could do.\textsuperscript{1155} The content of justification is Christ himself. Thus, in the imagery of a cloak, we see the true righteousness of Christ being draped over the sinner, so that when God beholds the sinner it is Christ’s intrinsic justice, and not the sinner’s intrinsic sinfulness, that is beheld. In this way, the person’s righteousness is foreign or alien to herself or himself in that it is always and only Christ’s.

However, this is not yet the full story; for, it is not simply that justification brings pardon for sins and imputes Christ’s righteousness onto people. Accompanying, though distinct from, justification is regeneration, by which grace renews the whole of a person’s life: regeneration is ‘a renewal of the divine image in us.’\textsuperscript{1156} This renewal is the beginning of that bliss which God promises the elect will share for eternity. God, because sins’ traces remain even after justification, ‘gradually, and sometimes slowly’ progresses in regenerating the elect throughout life.\textsuperscript{1157} As people undergo regeneration their lives and actions become better; they ‘put on’ Christ. Yet, when Calvin compares ‘righteousness by faith’ or that ‘by works’, he is unequivocal in holding to the former. Nevertheless, he makes room for works, as long as no one imagines that they are either equal to or surpass the efficacy of grace:

For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them. This alone is of importance: having admitted that faith and good works must cleave together, we still lodge justification in faith, not in works.\textsuperscript{1158}

\textsuperscript{1155} See Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xi.11: 738; in the same section he later repeats this, ‘not intrinsically but by imputation’.

\textsuperscript{1156} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xvii.5: 807; see also I.xv.4: 189.

\textsuperscript{1157} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xi.11: 739: so that the elect ‘are always liable to the judgement of death before his [God’s] tribunal.’ Later, confronting the views of Peter Lombard, Calvin adds: ‘[s]ince, therefore, no good comes forth from us except in so far as we have been regenerated, but our regeneration is entirely and without exception from God, there is no reason why we should claim an ounce of good works for ourselves’, \textit{Institutes} III.xv.7: 795f.

\textsuperscript{1158} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xvi.1: 798. Here the context is the distinction between \textit{fides formata} (i.e., faith informed by works of charity) and \textit{fides informata}, see \textit{Institutes} III.xv.7: 794-796; a distinction with which Calvin disagrees on the basis that \textit{fides informata} is not really faith at all: it is the imagining of the schoolmen that those who do not fear God and have no piety, can yet ‘believe whatever it is necessary to know for salvation’, III.ii.8-10: 551-555: 551.
Though both are affirmed, yet it is not within human comprehension to understand how regeneration or sanctification happens in all instances. The role of Christ is pivotal to the process of justification, as averred.

Role of Christ

Calvin is much taken with the *en Christō* of Paul: ‘in Christ’ salvation comes to those who in no wise either have or could have earned it. The gift of Christ, as we saw, is God reconciling the world to Godself. Thus, it is concerning justification that the necessity of Christ becomes foremost. Christ was gifted to us by God. In partaking of Christ, then:

we principally receive a double grace (*duplex gratia*): namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.

Christ is to the fore in God’s work of redemption. Christ’s incarnation was for the sole purpose of human redemption: ‘it is’, Calvin declares, ‘too presumptuous to imagine another reason or another end.’ In general, Calvin is wary of wandering through ‘many evanescent speculations’, especially concerning God’s secret designs. Thus, there is no question but that, in his christological affirmations of Christ, Calvin follows in the tradition of the Council of Chalcedon, i.e., in Christ there are two natures: one divine, the Word of God; the other human, the son of ‘the virgin’s womb’. He affirms the usual account of why one text will speak, in reference to Christ’s human nature, of a divine quality, and, in reference to his divine nature, of a human quality, i.e., the doctrine of the *idiómaton koinònia* or

1159 Thus, with reference to infants, who, born as sinners, must either remain hateful to God or be justified, he affirms that ‘God’s work...is still not annulled’: some children are saved (and that not without regeneration), and God’s power may not be confined within limits set by humans, see Calvin, *Institutes* IV.xvi.17: 1337f.
1160 Calvin, *Institutes* III.xi.1: 725.
1161 Calvin, *Institutes* II.xii.4: 467.
1162 By the time of the final edition of his *Institutes*, he nevertheless achieves a developed structure and content: the oneness, threeness, difference of Father, Son, and Spirit, relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit, and the triune God, see Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiii.16-20: 140-145, respectively. Even then, he makes further clarifications in relation to the ground of all heresy (21: 145-147), Servetus’s contention against the Trinity (22: 147f.), the Son is God even as the Father (23: 149-151), the name ‘God’ in Scripture does not refer to the Father alone (24: 151-153), the divine nature is common to all three Persons (25: 153f.), the subordination of the incarnate Word to the Father is no counterevidence (26: 154f.), our adversaries falsely appeal to Irenaeus (27: 155f.) and to Tertullian (28: 157), and all acknowledged doctors of the church confirm the doctrine of the Trinity (29: 158f.).
1163 Calvin, *Institutes* II.xiv.1: 482.
Christ is salvation: it is ‘in the whole course of his obedience’ that Christ, by his death, achieves for us a way of salvation; in Christ we are justified and reconciled (see Romans 5:9f.). However, we must also bear in mind that God’s love for humans does not begin with this redeeming and saving work of Christ. For, from the beginning, before our reconciliation in Christ, God ‘wills not to lose what is his in us, [and] out of his own kindness he still finds something to love’. God loved us before we were created. Yet, now we live sin-bridled lives. So, it is through Christ alone that we escape ‘the imputation of our sins to us – an imputation bringing with it the wrath of God.’

For as soon as God’s dread majesty comes to mind, we cannot but tremble and be driven far away by the recognition of our own unworthiness, until Christ comes forward as intermediary, to change the throne of dreadful glory into the throne of grace.

This intermediary role of Christ – to take ‘what was ours [so] as to impart what was his to us’ – was ‘so to restore us to God’s grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the heavenly kingdom.’ In this way Christ made ‘what was his by [divine] nature ours by grace.’ Christ the priest, ‘an everlasting intercessor’, had...
to expiate our sins with a sacrifice before he could ‘obtain God’s favor for us and appease his [the Father’s] wrath’: the sacrifice, of course, was Christ’s death on the cross.\textsuperscript{1173}

Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election.\textsuperscript{1174}

Going beyond this observation, though, Calvin intimately ties the work of Christ to those elected to salvation. It is in virtue of his redemptive role that Christ becomes Saviour. The first thing that Christ initiates in ‘his pupils’ is the lesson of the difficulty of renouncing one’s possessions and ‘not only all his possessions but himself as well.’\textsuperscript{1175} From the human perspective, though we are redeemed by Christ’s death on the cross, which effects our reconciliation with the Father, we may subsequently ‘turn away even slightly’ from Christ and, in such gradual degrees, lose salvation. Then, ‘our redemption would be imperfect if he [Christ] did not lead us ever onward to the final goal of salvation.’\textsuperscript{1176} Apart from Christ the human condition is ‘miserable and ruinous.’\textsuperscript{1177} Indeed, apart from him, God is spoken of as ‘hostile to us’; and, divine ‘wrath and curse always lie upon sinners until they are absolved of guilt.’\textsuperscript{1178} On the other hand, when we are in communion with Christ, we are assured of divine election.\textsuperscript{1179}

Salvation and Damnation

For Calvin a ‘sense of divinity’ is naturally engraved on human hearts, and though ‘this seed is so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruits’ yet ‘the reprobate themselves’ are forced to confess it, for ‘that seed remains which can in no wise be uprooted’.\textsuperscript{1180} Calvin writes:

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\item \textsuperscript{1173} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} II.xv.6: 501-503.
\item \textsuperscript{1174} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xxv.5: 970.
\item \textsuperscript{1175} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xviii.4: 824f.; the next lesson is the lifelong one of ‘the discipline of the cross that they may not set their hearts upon desire of, or reliance on, present benefits.’
\item \textsuperscript{1176} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} II.xvi.1: 503.
\item \textsuperscript{1177} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} II.xvi.1f.: 504.
\item \textsuperscript{1178} Calvin cites Paul: \textit{Romans} 5:10, \textit{Galatians} 3:10, 13, \textit{Colossians} 1:21f., see his \textit{Institutes} II.xvi.2: 505 and I: 504.
\item \textsuperscript{1179} See Calvin, \textit{Institutes} III.xxv.5: 970f.: ‘For since it is into his body the Father has destined those to be grafted whom he has willed from eternity to be his own, that he may hold as sons all whom he acknowledges to be among his members, we have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life [cf. \textit{Revelation} 12:27] if we are in communion with Christ.’
\item \textsuperscript{1180} Calvin, \textit{Institutes} I.iv.4: 51.
\end{itemize}
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As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion in all men. But scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it, once received, in his heart, and none in whom it ripens — much less shows fruit in season.  

The fact that some succeed in holding ‘the simple folk in thrall’ by their devices in religion is itself a proof of (true) religion, for, ‘they would never have achieved this if men’s minds had not already been imbued with a firm conviction about God, from which the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed.’ Thus, Calvin refers approvingly to Plato’s teaching that the soul’s highest good is likeness to God, ‘where, when the soul has grasped the knowledge of God, it is wholly transformed into his likeness.’ Yet, people have nothing to boast of, and God operates by a divine inscrutability. To those who would object that humans were created to shape their own fortune and be rewarded accordingly by God, Calvin comments:

If such a barren invention is accepted, where will that omnipotence of God be whereby he regulates all things according to his secret plan, which depends solely upon itself? Yet predestination, whether they will or not, manifests itself in Adam’s posterity. For it did not take place by reason of nature that, by the guilt of one parent, all were cut off from salvation...The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree.

Nothing, either from the sinner’s heart or the best theologizing that he, Calvin, can achieve, is permitted to challenge the sovereignty of God. Thus, his very defence of divine sovereignty is intimately tied to Calvin’s dynamic of election and reprobation. For Calvin, ‘election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation’ and it is ‘highly absurd’ to think of it being acquired ‘by chance’ or being obtained by ‘their own effort’ ‘what election confers on a few.’ ‘Therefore’, he writes, ‘those whom God passes over, he condemns; and this he does for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his own children.’ Indeed, Calvin will not cavil to maintain that there are

Calvin, Institutes I.iv.1: 47.
Calvin, Institutes I.iii.2: 45.
Calvin, Institutes III.xxiii.7: 955. See also Institutes III.xxiii.11: 959f.
Calvin, Institutes III.xxiii.1: 947, also 12: 960f.
some, like the elect, whom God illumines so that they can ‘recognize his grace’ but who, unlike the elect, are truly reprobate. Though the latter truly believe that God is merciful to them, the reality is ‘that God does not show himself merciful to them, to the extent of truly snatching them from death and receiving them into his keeping, but only manifests to them his mercy for the time being.’ The note sounded here of divine acting in freedom strike the modern ear as akin to divine arbitrariness. Yet, neither for Luther nor Calvin was God arbitrary. Each sensed God acting only mercifully in each’s life. For them God is the truly gracious one.

5.3 Reformers’ Grace

Calvin repeatedly affirms the sovereign power and role of God, the place of Christ and the Spirit in the economy of God’s saving grace, and he does not neglect the church in this either. Yet, it is scarcely a positive, let alone a wholly positive, view of the divine-human relationship that emerges from his writings. Calvin’s deep sense of God’s majesty and sovereignty makes him radically disparage humanity on the basis of its sinfulness which is offensive to God. God is utterly free, and gracious, in divine action. Yet, this freedom is defended at the cost of such a doctrine as double predestination. Ironically, Calvin’s constant stressing of God’s exaltation becomes the measuring rod by which his undermining of divine majesty and difference is marked. When he writes that because our human nature is corrupted we are condemned before God ‘to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence and purity’ Calvin makes God correlative to ‘righteousness, innocence and purity’ as humans judge them. This risks, however, making the understanding of God’s difference from us one of degree rather than of kind. Luther, too, in distinguishing between divine and human willing, writes of the free and immutable will that is God’s; in no wise does any human exercise such freedom and immutability; hence, it is erroneous to claim that humans have free will for, after the fall, it exists in name only. Luther, in one of his favourite compositions, De Servo Arbitrio, states clearly that his concern is for God’s freedom, for this is the foundation stone of grace and the gospel; the freedom of God, in fact, is the freedom of grace. Without grace there is no free choice. Such a comparison is indubitably denigratory.

1186 Calvin, Institutes III.i.11: 555f.
1187 Calvin, Institutes IV.xv.10: 1311.
1188 Cardinal Sadoleto made a similar charge; in His Institutes Calvin argues that faith is treated by so the ‘we may grasp the way of salvation’, see Calvin, Institutes III.i.30: 576.
1190 Luther, Luther’s Works 33: 67.
of the human will, save the wills of those, like Luther, who can and do make this judgement. Both Luther and Calvin evidence a black-or-white attitude, which pervades their accounts of creation, the meaning of justification, the role of Christ and the salvation (and damnation) of people. The danger of either-or thinking is a clarity that leaves no space for those things we are unavoidably blind to; having chosen one way, another, or others, is eschewed, and the theological imagination is stunted. Nevertheless, Calvin is often hermeneutically sensitive and a favoured device of his in dealing with the objections and counter-positions of opponents is to show how they anthropomorphize; in arguing against the notion of a ‘double will’ in God he attributes the otherwise manifoldness of God’s wisdom in various scriptural passages, for instance, Isaiah 65:2, to the notion that ‘what is human is transferred to God.’ Yet, he shared a literalist view of Genesis with Luther. When Luther describes Adam and Eve before their fall he imagines that he is reasoning naturally and historically, that he is recounting concrete historical events, though they are obviously at variance with his own natural world: the beasts of the earth in that time were more docile than ‘now’, lions could be commanded as a trained dog ‘now’, and the soil could be cultivated to produce whatever they wished. Detailing what cannot be known is a besetting sin of reformers and theologians (and buddhologists).

Forensics of grace
Surely, neither Luther nor Calvin realized how much their previous educations in law helped shape their theologies; of course, both develop an approach to justification that is highly forensically inflected, but both were attracted to the word iustificatio itself, rather than to that

1 For instance, in the 1545 Preface to his complete Latin works Luther, recalling the events of 1518-1520 mentions his early thesis that the pope ‘is not the head of the church by divine right’. Though he had publicly defended this he refrained from drawing the conclusion, viz., that ‘the pope must be of the devil.’ The latter is the only alternative because, he writes, ‘what is not of God must of necessity be of the devil’, see Luther, Luther’s Works 34: 334.

2 For instance, in discussing Christ’s role as redeemer, and though he uses the scriptural language of humans being under God’s curse (see Galatians 3:10, 13), of God being the enemy of humans (see Romans 5:10), etc., Calvin understands that this is a particular type of language-use, one fitted for humans, who are in a truly miserable state, to better comprehend God’s mercy, see Institutes II.xvi.2: 505: so, ‘we are taught by Scripture to perceive that apart from Christ, God is, so to speak, hostile to us, and his hand is armed for our destruction’ (emphasis mine). Again, he shows a contextual understanding of how the notion of the nether world, limbo, (wrongly) arose on the basis of Psalm 107:16 and Zechariah 9:11, see Institutes II.xvi.9: 514.

3 Calvin, Institutes III.xxiv.17: 986. Of course, it is easy for us, even as it seems impossible for him, to see how Calvin’s own ideas of divine power are no less dominated by anthropocentrism.

4 See Luther, Luther’s Works 1: 63f.
of *gratia*, which both use also, as the key term defining their understandings of how God deals with people. Thus, Luther can give a courtroom image of divine justice, in three movements. In the first, God looks and sees humanity’s unfaithfulness, worthy only of condemnation because it has broken divine law; indeed, even when attempting to keep the law the sinner seeks to win or merit God’s favour. In the second, God, in beholding the human Christ, forgives the crime and instead imputes the (alien) righteousness that belongs to Christ to an otherwise sinful humanity; in this imputation the bondage of the will to the sinful state is broken and grace reigns. Finally, in hearing the Word of God, *ex auditu*, one comes to faith; though always the sinner, he or she is now also righteous by virtue of God’s grace, *simul iustus et peccator*.

In such a state, then, a person spontaneously seeks to praise God and love one’s neighbour. Luther’s early troubled conscience needed a determination in the court of conscience and Pauline justification, when it dawned on him, provided Luther with the answer. The clarity, not to say singular nature, of the answer would obscure other theologies available in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, awareness of which would have softened the monochrome of his theological palette. For all the verve of his style and force of his argumentation, we see habits of thought repeated often, perhaps none more so than his negative view of human worth.

*Habitus of Grace*

Luther’s position is that ‘[i]nborn evil makes acts evil. That is the condition (*habitus*), i.e., original sin is the root of actual sins.’

Grace, in scholastic terminology, comprises in essence the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. It is, like the intellectual and moral virtues in a person, a *habitus* of the soul, making perfect all the latter’s faculties. The problem with the idea of a habit is that it suggests a constant practicing or the doing of acts which together form that habit. Though the scholastics distinguished between habits which are acquired in the latter way (*acquisitus*) and those which result only from the gift of grace and are qualified as infused (*infusus*)

the notion of *habitus* per se tends to the former understanding which is, from the perspective of the source of a habit’s efficacy, a human

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1197 See Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, translated by R.A. Wilson, in Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy, (series), Collins: London, 1972 [1964]: 154, with reference to *Romans* 5:5, ‘God’s love has been poured into (*infusa est*) into our hearts…’
work rather than divine.' With respect to Luther, then, even from the time of his first lecture series on the *Psalms*, he departs from the Aristotelian notion of *virtus*, or virtue, and sees in the term the original notion of power, and he determines that it should refer to God alone. A scholar like Aquinas operated with a different view of *habitus*; he took the *habitus* of grace to be of the essence of the soul, i.e., of the inner person, and that it gave that soul the power to perform good deeds. The *habitus* is a mental disposition that regulates all the actions of a person. For Luther, however, the soul *in situ*, which is to say, the human person, is what we have to talk about: grace affects the relationship of the person to God, and that person is never less than a sinner even when *iustus*, though she or he may also be made righteous *coram Deo*. Consequently, the power of the Lutheran person to do good cannot come from the core of that person but from God; the only righteous one is Christ, whom God ‘sent in the flesh’. Faith in God, then, is faith in the ‘anointed one’, whose grace alone saves.

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1198 This is expressed in such Irish proverbs as *cleachtadh a dheanam mdistreacht*, practice makes mastery; it is to this practicing that Aristotle’s *virtus* applies, rather than the *habitus infusus* that is intended by grace: no practicing of righteous acts, singly or cumulatively, merits salvation, which is always gift.

1199 See Luther, *Luther’s Works* 10: [First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1-75]; they date to 1513-1515.

1200 See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1a-2ae,49,3,c; Questions 49-89 treat of various aspects of *habitus*. A habit is a disposition towards some act, and it has, therefore, a double order: on the one hand it is ordered to nature and on the other to something that is ‘consequent to nature’ 54,2; it can be good or bad, virtue or vice 54,3; and, while a subject may have different habits like humours, bodily parts and limbs in one body, so several habits can belong to one (passive) power 54,1,r1. Because perfection, as the end of something, is necessary, so a habit, because it is a perfection, is also necessary, to a thing 49,4,sed contra. It requires many acts 51,3, even though the intellect (as ‘possible’, rather than ‘passive’) may be able, by some powerful proposition, to be convinced and give assent 51,3.

1201 Interestingly in terms of sociology, Pierre Bourdieu’s famous use of habitus derives from scholastic debates. Bourdieu’s usage directly stems from the discussion of *habitus* in Erwin Panofsky – and not that in Marcel Mauss. Though, eschewing metaphysical notions of the soul and its faculties, he gave the term a social reference. Panofsky, instead, placed his roots in the medieval discussions, especially Aquinas, and defined *habitus* as *principium importans ordinem ad actum* following the *Summa Theologica* 1a2ae,49,3,c. Bourdieu sees it as a system of principles that ‘generate and organize practices and representations’; they do not have to have either consciousness of ends or mastery of operation as presuppositions, see his *The Logic of Practice*, Polity: Cambridge, 1992: 53. See further Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, University of Chicago: Chicago IL, 2005: 226-230.

1202 Ebeling’s understanding is helpful here, though I differ slightly from him, see Ebeling, *Luther*: 156.
Saving Faith

Both Luther and Calvin reflect the thought of Paul, for whom, faith is at the heart of his understanding of humans’ relationship to God; it is intimately connected to *justificatio*, so much so that one might think it the one ‘work’ of humans that is worthy in the sight of God. When Luther appealed to Paul he was trying to understand the thinking of a fellow religious genius who also had been dramatically moved by a deep religious experience. Both geniuses tried to make sense of something each would say was overwhelming and ultimately inexpressible, something, in other words, which went beyond their abilities to explain or conceptualize. How each set about explaining and conceptualizing is more fundamental an issue for us than what each ended up actually saying. Faith, for Calvin, is ‘a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.’ This knowledge is assurance rather than comprehension and is not at all like opinion. Though assurance is normally the outcome of understanding or comprehension this is not the case with faith. In faith a person’s mind is raised above itself, precisely because the content is of heavenly things and the kind of knowledge that operates is itself higher than understanding of, say, the arts. Thus, in faith, though there is not full comprehension, yet there is assurance or certain knowledge. One’s heart and mind are illuminated by the Spirit. Calvin writes:

> For the Word of God is not received by faith as if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart...

Assuming that ‘mind’ is a synonym for understanding and that ‘heart’ is one for will, we see Calvin affirming how one is changed internally by the Spirit as the Word of God takes root in contemplating ‘God’s benevolence toward us’. For Calvin, this is a trinitarian formulation, which, nonetheless, powerfully point to the role meditation should play in a Christian formation of a *habitus* of grace. Only Christ can give that original obedience which

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1203 Calvin, *Institutes*: III.ii.7: 551.
1209 Here I follow that interpretation that Vos gives based on comparing Calvin’s language when explicating scriptural passages, see Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin: 7f. and 18.*
accords with grace-filled nature. It is, then, our faith in Christ that enables us to share in his perfect obedience to God.\footnote{Again we see ‘obedience’, like commandment, used in different ways depending on whether it refers to the prelapsarian or the postlapsarian situations.}

**Conclusion**

From the opening words of the *Institutes* it is clear that Calvin understands his task as coming to know both God and oneself better.\footnote{Calvin, *Institutes* I.i.i: 241f.} He condemned ‘the schoolmen’ for taking faith as belief and distinguishing formed and unformed faith\footnote{See Calvin, *Institutes*: III.ii.1: 542-544, III.ii.2: 544f., and III.ii.8: 551f.}, when for him faith is true knowledge, though even then and if faith could justify the sinner it could do so only fragmentarily; Calvin preserves an absoluteness of divine acting. This pro-intellectual understanding of faith is consistent with the tenor of his life, and is one of the things that sets him apart from Luther. Luther had experienced conversion quite powerfully, perhaps even twice in his life. In this Luther is to be compared with Paul and Augustine, as we have seen. However, none of these three religious geniuses had an experience of Christ *tout court*. Each was highly educated in matters theological and/or philosophically sophisticated beforehand and already knew something of Jesus. Each had a deeply sensitive attitude to life and was seeking to perfect a moral way of living. A long personal history predated the moment of revelation that each had. And much postdates them. In terms of fundamental theology we may say that successive religious geniuses, and in widely differing religious families, developed a dialectical understanding of perfection-imperfection, purity-impurity, graced-sinful, etc., as a consequence of their coming to terms with the human condition.

Because we are truly sinful, holds Luther, we cannot do good; it is only when we are cloaked with Christ that we become *iustus* and then capable of good; the *iustitia* here is that of Christ himself. Equally basing itself on textual evidence from the New Testament, the Roman Catholic position hinges on the innocence that grace brings: in doing good one shows forth that grace rules within, that one is in fact good, and, in consequence, God declares one just. Justification, we see, functions differently within different theologies that derive from different anthropologies. The clarity of the centrality of the Lutheran with respect to God’s redeeming grace of justification, possibly leading to either cheap grace or moral severity, is matched by the Roman Catholic position with respect to the witness for being good that is shown in doing good.

Different starting positions can lead and have led to different theologies (and buddhologies) but the very understanding of the human, always as least parasitic on the understanding of the
particular person who is expounding it, colours and determines the human understanding of the divine. How difficult it is to be alert to the interactions of memory, one’s self of self in the world, and imagination work together in constructing our view of self and world. Yet today, in conversations across the religious traditions, there is a new potential to develop a proper human or planetary dialogics precisely because the existing dialogue opens our eyes to our constructive potentialities. The language of grace, as seen in the scriptures, Augustine, Luther and Calvin, still binds otherwise separated Christians to the central debate concerning divine action and human response. In our earlier treatment of Shin Buddhism a dialectic of intrinsic and extrinsic grace may also be discerned, in spite of the separability of Christianity and Buddhism. In both worldviews something rather similar is being articulated. This articulation concerns the condition humaine and the gift of being emancipated from that unhappy state that others, perhaps some of us, have experienced. And this experience is felt as grace; theology names it and it has been named in Jōdoshinshū as shinjin. Faith in the power of Amida or God or Christ to effect fundamental change in a person has been repeatedly pointed to in our analyses, by all our key adepts. Buddhological thinking theorizes singular individuals called arhats and bodhisattvas, whose extraordinary virtuous and meditative achievements merit divine-like qualities, expressed finally in buddhahood, which are directed to the goal of releasing fools and sinners from their illusory bonds; out of compassion the bodhisattva or saint both acquires and uses merit. Neither Luther nor Shinran has time for merit, seeing it as a human attempt to achieve that which no human could achieve. The circumstances of Buddhological thinking gave Buddhism quite a different understanding of merit; here it becomes that other-power or tariki which alone can grasp the fool lost in the saṃsāric world and transfer her or him to the land of bliss, from where nirvāṇa is the next stage. Theology, on the other hand, theorizes God-in-Christ putting his virtue and merit at the service of fallen humanity in order to redeem it. Theology and Buddhology indicate the humanly unmeritable worth of what Christ and Amida Buddha offer; both indicate that all ‘we’ have to do is accept graciously the gift offered and not seek to justify it on the basis of anything we could possibly do. There will be collateral consequences such as praise, worship, ascetic practice, etc. But, these will be the response to grace and not its cause. While it is easy to say that there are parallels between such otherwise different religious systems as Buddhism and Christianity, it is another to claim that there are parallels so significant that dialogue between the systems becomes at least a theological exigency. In sum, we can agree with the Thomistic tag that gratia supponit naturam, grace builds upon nature or nature is the shere of grace’s activity. Putting the matter in this way reminds us that
the sphere of a buddha’s activity – the buddhaksetra – is the saṃsāric world of duḥkha, avidyā, trṣṇā and the destructive āsavas that store bad karma. At this juncture we find ourselves entering the terrain of the dissertation’s final chapter and to this we now turn.
Part IV

IMAGINAIRE OF GRACE
CHAPTER 6 IMAGINING GRACE

But precisely in this Western social climate of secularization and religious indifference, of the spread of science, technology and instrumental thinking in terms of means to an end, the question of God becomes the freest career to choose...In such a context God would then be experienced by believers as pure gift, even pure freedom; every day new; without any reason. God is not there as an ‘explanation’ but as a gift.  

Edward Schillebeeckx

The desire to surpass and go beyond the ideological and the imaginary is also part of the ideological and the imaginary.  

Bernard Faure

Introduction

The work of theological observation in the previous chapters is thematized in this chapter, not prescriptively, I hope, but somewhat imaginatively so that grace, as the fundamental category of theology, critically appeals and attracts us by its usefulness for theology. Some of that work risks being vitiated if, in the struggle to meet the more serious challenges of dialogue in today’s multi-religious and multi-cultural world, this core concept of God’s relationship with us is ordered incorrectly. Must grace be considered christologically in order for it to be meaningful? Even to presuppose that it must raises issues that demand a deeper resolution. Is a christologically founded grace the complete renewal of the sinful person such that we may speak of an ontological change from sinfulness to a ‘state of grace’, or is it something that rests upon the sinner, who still remains peccatus, enveloping her or him so that God sees only the outer, alien grace? Traditionally, if stereotypically, these images reflect, on the one hand, a Catholic view, and, on the other, a Protestant one, respectively. The reality is that both are theological construals: they imaginatively and creatively interpret reality according to their own lights, which shine with the energies available in their time and place, and from which

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some aspects are selected and others not. Each religious worldview argues that one should
believe and act in accordance with its understanding of reality on the basis that it has had truth
revealed to it, perhaps uniquely. Thus, Catholic thinking presupposes, on the basis of the God
who gives grace and the transformative quality that grace thereby possesses, that the recipient
cannot but be profoundly changed as a result of being gifted with grace. The Reformed
position is coloured more by the notion that the human person, utterly unworthy of God’s
grace, does not suddenly and as a consequence of her or his own effort or merit become
worthy in se; rather, the sinner is cloaked by the divine grace, embodied in Christ, and this is
what God sees and accepts as worthy. The duality of the divine and the human is firmly
maintained despite, almost in spite of, the incarnation. The problem with this, as with all
human construals, manifests itself when the construal is taken to be the truth, as if it becomes
real at the level of the divine.

The problems we deal with here arise in and from the Western constructions of grace and the
demands that modern interreligious and intrareligious dialogue make on theology. Though
analysable from Eastern and buddhological perspectives it is in and to our context that we
make our constructions; I do not deny that there are other construals for Christians in and of
the East who have long inhabited these ‘new worlds’ and see things differently. In its own
way, though, this dissertation seeks to learn from Buddhist ways of conceiving reality and, by
incorporating insights deriving from them, enrich its own more narrowly Western context.
Intentionally inclusively eirenic, my account seeks neither to deny essential insights of past
construals of grace by Pauls, Augustines, Luthers or Calvins nor to willy-nilly absorb
buddhological categories; it does seek to be able to go beyond conceptual limitations in earlier
treatments and take account of new worlds of meaning and discourse that developing contact
with religions like Buddhism, and with the wider social world, makes possible. It seems best
to categorize this accommodation and construal by the French word ‘imaginaire’, which I
borrow from Steven Collins and Michèle Le Doeuff.1215 As the word implies, there is a

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1215 Steven Collins, basing himself on Jacques LeGoff’s work, uses the term ‘Pali imaginaire’ to describe ‘a
mental universe created by and within Pali texts’, see his Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: 41, 72-89; the
use of ‘imaginary’ implies ‘fictive, unreal’, though the noun form in French can ‘refer to objects of the
imagination, the ensemble of what is imagined, without implying falsity; it can also refer to specific imagined
worlds, and so can be used in this sense in the plural’, while the English ‘imagination’ refers primarily to ‘a
faculty or activity of the mind; while it can also refer to the objects of that faculty, the domain of the imagined, it
is not usually used of specific imagined worlds, and cannot be used thus in the plural’, see 73. Also, Michèle Le
[1980]: the imaginaire that is present in ‘the theoretical enterprise’ is also part of that enterprise, as ‘imagery and
knowledge form, dialectically, a common system’, see 3-6 and 19, respectively.
certain freedom involved in the use of imagination, and an imaginaire can hold, as indeed the Christian and Buddhist construals of reality have held, diverse paradoxes and contradictions simultaneously. Therefore, in this concluding chapter I, first, make a review of the ground covered thus far. Second, I map, in the context of the social world to which both systems offer soteriological explanation, the contributions of theology and, especially, Buddhology, which constitutes the relatively new element for theology. Third, I explicate an understanding of grace as entailing modalities of awakening, freeing and trusting, in light of these contributions. Finally, I make a synthetic statement about the new imaginaire.

6.1 In Retrospect

Though I try to present both Buddhological and theological positions within their own terms of reference and in faithfulness to their respective traditions I recognize that there is no innocent place to start and that interpreting and marshalling of ‘facts’ necessarily occur by virtue of pursuing any programme. As well as discussing the problem raised for theology by an almost exclusively christologically structure when dialogue with other religions is undertaken. Indeed, interdenominational dialogue between Christians is sometimes negatively framed as old controversies are renewed; the controversies have related to how Christians have interpreted the action of God in the world, whether solely by divine decree or in cooperation with humanity (or at some point along a continuum between these two), i.e., the doctrine of grace. As grace concerns God’s work in the world I looked at the world to which I belong, namely, the so-called Western world, but from the critical and Buddhist perspective of David Loy, in particular. I also introduced the sociological thinking of Niklas Luhmann, whose singularly ‘high’ and abstract social theory, though Western, is critical of Western metaphysical thinking and of theology; elements of his theory have been appropriated by me so that I remain relatively critical of my own theological tradition, as well as its context, and simultaneously remain open to the possibilities raised for theology by dialogue with Buddhism, a religion that uniquely challenges the central claim of theo-logia, the reasonableness and necessity of talking about the divine. Recognizing the impossibility of treating all three equally I chose to concentrate on Buddhological explication as this offered a wholly other dimension for a theological enterprise; I did and do not thereby disparage the sociological, for at certain junctures its contributions have been of profound usefulness. From this basis I began, in chapter 2, to enter the worldview(s) of Buddhism; I proceeded on the basis that what I wish to communicate be considered by adherents of Buddhism to be authentically Buddhist. I examined some of the core elements of early Buddhism, taking each
of the four noble truths as a heuristic device to structure the account. This enabled me to treat
of the role of ‘suffering’ (Sanskrit: duhkha; Pāli: dukkha), i.e., the sense that the world is
awry, Buddhist cosmology, karma as the law of cause and effect, and pratītya-samutpāda
(Pāli: paticca-samuppāda) as the dependent (co-)origination of both the problem of our
delusion and its solution. The delusion, synonymous with ignorance (Sanskrit: avidyā; Pāli: avijjā),
which leads to rebirth and saṃsāric existence is that ‘I am truly a self-subsistent
being; the Buddha’s counter to this is his doctrine of no-self (Sanskrit: anātman; Pāli: anattā).
The solution is to free ourselves from entrapment in delusion and the roots of lobha, dosa and
moha and so become awakened – bodhi – to the true state of things. The method which the
Buddha teaches for achieving bodhi is meditation or mindfulness; we saw that there are two
principal types of mindfulness and that a special kind of knowledge or insight called wisdom
or prajñā (Pāli: paññā) was to be cultivated; in particular, the contribution of Mahinda
Palihawadana to a Theravāda notion of grace in terms of the path (Pāli: mūgga) to nirvānic
release was discussed. I outlined the key stages (Sanskrit: dhyānās', jhānās) in which the
meditator progresses along the path to perfection and final release into nirvāṇa (Pāli:
nibbāna). Though specific to the early traditions of Buddhism, as exemplified in the Pāli
tradition of South Asia, this presentation of the Buddha and his teachings is accepted by later
traditions as authentic, and, in this sense, therefore, serves also as a useful backdrop for the
succeeding chapter. Chapter 3, then, looked at a few developments in the history of
Buddhism that show reformatory and evolutionary tendencies. These include the doctrines of
śūnyatā, tathāgatagarbha and buddhadhātu, which I termed hypostases of the Buddha, and
concluded with an examination of the buddhology of Shinran Shōnin in which Shinran
develops the notion that humans, in this present and corrupt age (Japanese: mappō), are so
incapacitated that it is only by the merits of the bodhisattva Dharmākara, who becomes Amida
Buddha, that they have any possibility of being saved from saṃsāric existence. The logic of
Shinran’s buddhologizing is that humans are saved only by Amida’s ‘other-power’ (Japanese:
tariki). He came to this understanding from his experiences of personal inadequacy and from
his conversion from ‘the way of the sages’ to the ‘easy path’ of the nembutsu, which is the
expression of trust in Amida’s power to save. We note that Shinran’s understanding of
Amida’s soteriological efficacy has been compared with Martin Luther’s theology of
salvation through grace alone (sola gratia), and that even from the period of Christian
missions to China and Japan under Francis Xavier. 268

268 Also, with reference to the nonduality of Dharmākara or Amida Buddha’s compassion: for one to suffer is for
all to suffer and, mutatis mutandis, compassion for others is compassion for oneself. This reminds us of
Aquinas’s understanding of love: we cannot love others unless we truly love ourselves; and in another, it
Before coming to the theology of the Christian reformer, Luther, however, I presented in chapter 4 a short account of the theological understanding of grace in which the terms that inform later Christian understanding are located in some of their prior Jewish or Hebrew conceptualities. Though the gospel usages of grace are brief, they are counterbalanced by the more systematic treatment of Paul, the first great missionary of ‘the way’. In this, the so-called road-to-Damascus experience, i.e., Paul’s conversion, and his effort to source the operation of grace, i.e., divine justification or righteousness (Greek: dikaiosunē), in the story of Abraham’s faith(fulness), prior to any ‘work’ that Abraham did, develop in Paul a theology of divine action such that there is no work of humans that can possibly effect what already God gives as a gift (Greek: dōra) in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The grace of God transforms the sinful person from Adamic existence to life en Christō. This transformative power of grace is further explored in the theology of Augustine, the ‘doctor gratiae’ of Christian tradition. Augustine, too, had both a profound conversion experience and heightened awareness of human fallibility; though he ended by holding that, apart from the grace of God, all are damned, a massa damnata or massa perditionis, he offers the most influential treatment of how grace operates in people so that they are freed from their sins, do good and act freely; for him, the human person alone is not able to avoid sin and, being bound to sin, that person is made free only by the grace of God which accompanies – before, during and after – any and all good that we do. In chapter 5, the theology of grace took new form in consequence of the Reformation, in which the thinking of Martin Luther and John Calvin is pivotal. Both theologians essentialize the difference between grace and works; of themselves humans can do nothing at all to earn salvation, and it is only by God’s will and acts (of grace) that anyone at all is saved. Clearly, those whom God does not will to save are forever damned. In the often heated debating of the 16th century the doctrine of grace evolves towards a new clarity, even though positions became entrenched and neither side was very willing to concede merit to the other’s position. Thus, we come to those elements that help us to redraw our theology of grace.

resonates with St Bernard’s ‘miseria discimus misericordiam’, ‘troubles educate us into mercy’, a reference for which I am grateful to Sr Geraldine Smyth OP.

6.2 Cartography of Grace

In this section the three domains of theology, buddhology and the social are looked at in turn. In the language of cartography they are the contour lines which give dimension to grace; they provide the basis for our understanding of the modalities of grace.

6.2.1 Christian Theology

In the last two chapters we looked at aspects of the Christian theology of grace and its development. The affirmation that God is creator is held by some to mean that ipso facto humans are not free. For Augustine, on the other hand, human autonomy is not only not compromised by God’s existence it is entirely dependent on God for its freedom. The condition of the possibility of freedom is divine grace. But, the reality is that humans have through their first parent sinned, and given humanity’s inheritance of sin, the individual’s will is in dire need of divine support if it is to be free; and, the operation of God in the soul is the guarantee of human freedom. This is paradoxical, but it has a certain parallel in the way that the tathāgatagarbha doctrine sought to explain how a no-self comes to retain a causal connection over succeeding rebirths. Augustine’s explanation is that the ‘original’ sin is the consequence of human will; the human wills evil. Yet, how is it that someone in Eden, that is, the paradisiacal state of original righteousness, comes to such an evil will? Augustine’s construction of grace does not really answer this question, though it seems clear that, in terms of the absolute necessity of tariki for salvation, Shinran’s appeal to Amida parallels him with Augustine and Calvin. However, when both Calvin and Luther seem to take comfort in the view that the unrighteous will suffer damnation eternally, neither Augustine nor Shinran would agree. Even when the later Augustine developed a darker view of human sinfulness there is no rejoicing in the idea of anyone’s eternal damnation. Though there were developments in consequence of the debates of the Western Reformation, there were also quite negative opinions given and held, too. Thus, when the gospel was simply put – God justifies sinners by grace through faith in Jesus Christ – it became easy to demarcate dividing lines, say who was with and who against, and so begin a new distortion concerning God’s self-disclosure in the world.

Revelation

For theology, the equation, implicit or explicit, between revelation and salvation is highly problematic. In its historical expression it has led to exclusionary thinking: if we are saved in
Christ, as revelation teaches, you, without revelation, are surely not. Implicit in my thinking is a presumption that people in all sorts of situations, inside and outside of the Judeo-Christian conceptual framework, can and do experience the ‘soteriological imperative’; so, the problem becomes one of how the imperative can be otherwise understood to apply. What does this say about revelation and, in particular, that revelation of messianic salvation that the Judeo-Christian thinking espouses in different formats? What causes concern here is not that God either cannot or has not revealed Godself in a particular way to a certain — limited — set of people historically, but that there is a conceptual foreshortening of the notion of revelation itself. For if, as seems to be the case from our observation of early and Shin Buddhism that others, outside Western revelation-thinking, enjoy a sense of being saved from situations from which no human power could conceivably save them, then our understanding of revelation needs to be radically examined and re-interpreted. At the same time, we continue to ‘drink from our own wells’, too, for, as Karl Rahner reminds us:

Without prejudice to the fact that it speaks of a free and unmerited grace, as a miracle of God’s free love for all spiritual creatures, the statement that man as subject is the event of God’s self-communication is a statement which refers to absolutely all men, and which expresses an existential of every person.

Like grace, there is no revelation without the world. The Christian form of revelation is the person and work of Christ.

Christcentrism

However, the historical fact that all theology is made to revolve around the Christ-event is distorting, it seems to me, of even the doctrine of the incarnation itself. For all its moment and implications, holding to this doctrine requires a pre-understanding of divine action in the world. Having considered christocentric theology, especially as christomonism, to be inadequate for the theological task of dialoguing with a religion such as Buddhism I took as my starting point an understanding of grace as God’s self-disclosure. The wider implication of this is to deny that Christianity is ‘the one and only’ true religion. Instead, I see that all human searching for answers to the problems and questions of life, what we generally call

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1218 The principle of extra ecclesiam nulla salus founds this notion, and various modifications have been made to the principle to give it current legitimation; the point is that the principle because revealed could not be jettisoned.

‘religion’, is prior to any explicit knowledge of Christ. This is not to deny, for instance, that the divine sonship of Christ is not tenable, for theologically it has been for a very long time. What it does deny is the theological adequacy of remaining within that past tenability when the world to which theology speaks and of which it attempts to make sense has developed new contours, different boundaries and markers, a world, in other words, that needs new map-making skills, and these if for no other reason than that only thus can grace be more adequately grasped.

Graced Action

Part of the theological debate concerning grace has been the role that the individual person plays, or does not play, in salvation. Do the good deeds that I do – ‘works’ (Greek: erga) – earn me salvation? Is the decision to put one’s trust (Greek: pistis) in God an essential component of being saved? If it is, is it not then another work? If works and grace are unavoidable antinomies, paradoxes at the heart of theology’s attempts to understand divine working in the world, then buddhology’s own antinomies point not just to structural correlations between theology and buddhology but also to possible ameliorations of theology’s dilemmas. Grace comes to effect in human lives. Insofar as it is understood at all it is so by humans, and therefore in the ways humans understand. But, we also saw that knowledge alone was insufficient for progress along the brahma-cariya or holy life enjoined by the Buddha on his followers; paññā or wisdom was needed, that insight which comes with practices carried on over incalculable aeons. Our brief look at texts from the Tanak and the New Testament, especially, the hnn word-family and hesed, and their use by Paul as charis to describe divine working in the world, show s the early stage of a thematization of grace. Also, being and acting in a righteous or just way seems to be common in all periods of the composition of the Tanak; this has been the outcome of our study of some of the usages of sdq, which links with the Buddhist emphasis on sila and with the theology of Paul.

6.2.2 Buddhology

Just as there is a special understanding of paññā in Buddhism so there is a special path of salvation, one that is learnt from a Buddha and practiced by oneself. This seems to be

1220 Indeed, from the ‘scandalous particularity’ of the incarnation it would seem that God is not overly concerned with universal displays.

1221 For Aquinas ‘knowledge of divine things’ requires divine help, grace, see his introduction to the Summa Theologica 1, q1, a6, r: the study of sacred doctrine is wisdom (sapientia) ‘absolutely’; he cites Augustine approvingly; of itself, natural reason is unable to the task.

1222 Thus, the LXX for hesed is eleos ‘mercy’; and hnn is usually translated by elein ‘to have mercy’.

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equivalent to a doctrine of salvation by *erga* of one’s own. Whatever the changes and developments in buddhology, from century to century and from country to country, all Buddhists can accept the teaching of the Buddha concerning the four noble truths (Pāli: *cattāri ariyasaccāni*; Sanskrit: *catvāri āryasatyāni*), including the noble eightfold path (Pāli: *ariya atthangikko maggo*; Sanskrit: *āryaśatyaṅgukārga*). If we categorize early Buddhism as largely presenting a Buddhism of works, in which the person, who is truly *anatā*, strives by her or his own effort to attain nirvāṇic release then the later Buddhism of the Shin schools largely presents a Buddhism of *tariki*, salvation offered from outside the individual. Other conceptualities and debates crystallize around this issue of own-power and other-power. Thus, in discussing awakening or *bodhi*, different schools formed around those who held that it came gradually, i.e., by long, arduous practices, and those who held that it came suddenly as in the story of Huineng’s *bodhi* upon hearing a *gāthā* from the *Diamond Sūtra*.

Furthermore, part of the issue concerned one’s construal of inherent or original enlightenment (Japanese: *hongaku shiso*). This, as Stone and Tamura demonstrated, has been taken by many as ‘absolute non-duality’; we have seen this non-duality in the identification of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* that we associate with the Mādhyamika of Nāgārjuna; and, in early Buddhism, it is found in the doctrines of *anatā* and emptiness or *sūnyatā* (Pāli: *suhñatā*), which in Theravāda remained tied to *anatā* though it developed especially in Mahāyāna and Tibetan traditions. Throughout Buddhism’s long history, within its own imaginaire, we meet various mythical elements. Though buddhology makes many mentions of *devas* or gods, these are not equivalent to what monotheists understand by God; rather, they are super-human and have magical powers, yet they are not creators of the world; humans may become devas as part of their rebirths. The devas inhabit various types of heavens, some of which are celestial spheres some distance ‘above’ the earthly, and others are more like mythic realms or buddhological categories. Corresponding to these heavens are various hells, which are ‘below’ the earthly realm. Neither the heavens nor the hells are eternal, however, and rebirth is possible from one to another, although it is on earth that one has the possibility of attaining release from the cycle of rebirth. In this sense, then, these states correlate more to the theologian’s idea of purgatory and/or limbo (whether of the just or of the unbaptised). We saw that the imaginaire paralleled the cosmological and the psychological constructions of reality, so that fantastic elements can still be used, especially in the meditator’s path towards release from samsāric existence.

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1223 This is further illuminated in the contest that develops between Huineng and Shenhui, and the subsequent formation of the Southern and Northern Schools.
Early Buddhism teaches that the only effective way to find release (Pāli: vimutti) from the problem of dukkha is through ‘mental development or discipline (bhāvanā)’. The dukkha that goes with anicca or impermanence has its cause in thirst or craving (Sanskrit: trṣṇā; Pāli: tanhā) for pleasures, existence, or non-existence. With the extinction of craving and delusion nibbana arises, though what exactly this state is eludes analysis. It mainly seems to be constructed as an absence, and perhaps we should attribute little more it than this. Perhaps we should follow Miri Albahari and avoid giving a strong metaphysical understanding to the anattā doctrine: even this key notion of no-self may be but a cipher, something functioning for something else. In this scenario a correlation can be pointed to between this view of anattā and the losing of self in order to put on Christ that Paul teaches. Both, at least, point to the necessity to change from the present, illusional view of self and adapt a more true one, one attuned to the fundamental message. On the other hand, as we saw with the development of Buddhism, the nirvānic state is given greater definition by means of mythological elements and increased focus on the wondrous abilities of buddhas who do not cease from merit-making (Sanskrit: punya; Pāli: puñña) on behalf of the unawakened masses.

Karma

Having recognized that an external understanding of reality (nītattha) is to be distinguished from an internal understanding (neyyattha), and given that both Buddhism and Christianity are religions of a Tillichean ‘ultimate concern’, how are we to talk of the latter ultimately, i.e., as paramattha or ultimate truth, in comparison to the truth of things as they appear in a commonsense sort of way, i.e., as vohāra or conventional truth? Are humans dependent on some ultimate reality, which is usually termed ‘God’ by Christians? Or, are they independent, as is generally held in Buddhism – though not independent of conditions and causes as such? Baldly put, such questions beg further one’s understandings of ‘human’, ‘ultimate reality’, the interrelation of these, and how one conceives ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’. The findings of the Thai Buddhist scholar, Parichart Suwanbubbha, in her discussions of kamma and grace provide a helpful focus here. Suwanbubbha looks at both Buddhist resources that imply the idea of grace and Christian ones of kamma. First, with

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1225 This reprises Palihawadana’s discussion of grace in Theravāda Buddhism, see Mahinda Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’, in *Dialogue* NS IX: 1-3 (1982), which I discuss below.

reference to parallels of grace in Buddhism, Suwanbubbha discusses how grace is seen in the meditative process. In meditation, while one does not force a change on oneself, the process actually allows “the circumstances to develop in which the right natural change “flows in.” Such a flowing in parallels the Christian idea that grace cannot be humanly controlled, as if the individual person’s work could force God to do one’s bidding. Yet, it would be wrong to equate the two: the higher state that meditation seeks to achieve, while unforced, is nonetheless to be naturally developed or cultivated in the sense that the meditator’s volition (cetanā) has both causes (hetu) and conditions (paccaya). Suwanbubbha avers that, ‘Buddhists can have a sympathetic imagination about the idea of grace only in the moment of spiritual change when one has to let it develop naturally.’ The note of naturalness equates to recognition of achieving vimutti by one’s own efforts. Suwanbubbha, as we did, recognizes a buddha as one who can manifest supramundane power, i.e., when a person whose own kamma is already well advanced towards her or his bodhi comes into contact with a buddha, the result is immediate awakening in advance of whatever good merit had already accumulated. There is, perhaps, a parallel here with grace and God’s free election; nevertheless, were this person’s kamma not already sufficient, such a meeting with a buddha would not issue in immediate bodhi. Furthermore, the acts of kindness and compassion that a buddha shows to the unawakened are intimations of grace-like gifting. Suwanbubbha, however, would find it ‘preferable’ not to make such parallels. When Buddhist monks, the perfected ones, who practice meditation seriously and ‘accumulate supernatural powers’ or iddhis, and so can radiate these to others, who themselves have not asked for such virtues and powers, Suwanbubbha sees a parallel to the idea that Christians

127 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 245f.
128 See Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 246.
129 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 248.
130 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 246.
131 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 246.
132 A reference to lokuttara and the nava-lokuttara-dhamma, ‘nine supramundane things’.
133 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 248f. Suwanbubbha adds that prayers to a coming Buddha, i.e., Sriarayamattrai, are often offered precisely for easy attainment of enlightenment, Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 249.
135 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 250. Suwanbubbha treats this parallel as a aspect of a grace understanding of Buddhahood; however, the interests of our thesis indicate that it should receive a more overt and singular treatment.
are passive to grace in front of God. However, *iddhis* are not miracles in the sense that they have a context of ‘a field of merit’, result from effort and ritualized techniques (rather than ‘by means of direct salvation’), and exhibit a different understanding of ultimate reality. In other words, for Suwanbubbha, they do not have their origin in a divine being; she writes:

... miracles in Christianity derive from the powerful God, originate by God’s sovereignty, whereas Buddhist supernormal powers are the additional result of humans’ effort in a particular stage of practicing meditation. However, the Buddha does not admire these abilities and even warns monks of being aware of showing them since that would obstruct their further progress toward salvation.

It is instructive to see how buddhology looks at Christian thinking; we saw this with Palihawadana and we also see it in Suwanbubbha, who identifies parallels between grace and *kamma*. Suwanbubbha centres this on a verisimilitude between *kamma* and what certain Biblical passages express: *Matthew* 5:28, referring to *Proverbs* 6:25, shows how, in the question of adultery, Jesus ‘emphasises the importance of mind’; for, in thinking about committing adultery one engages in volitional activity and so commits adultery – in mind, speech, and action. In *Galatians* 6:5-7 Paul preaches that one should do good to all, which is the same as ‘Buddhist kamma that “one reaps whatever one has sown”’. In *Matthew* 7:1-2, *Luke* 6:38, *1 Corinthians* 3:8-9, 15:58, etc., ideas of the measure one receives depending on the measure one gives, labouring for one’s wages, abiding in the labour of the Lord, all reflect a relationship between ‘doing or performing good works and receiving rewards’.

Is there a parallel to merit-making, though, for we have seen much talk of merits in Buddhism? Interestingly, Suwanbubbha argues that there is no idea of ‘the accumulation of good works leading to salvation’. We have here the reformed theology of merits, which is that they cannot but fail to be salvific in and of themselves. Thus, notwithstanding *James* 2:14-26, which Suwanbubbha understands as no diminishment of the ‘doctrine of justification

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1236 Suwanbubbha, *Grace and Kamma*: 251, see also 250.
1242 Suwanbubbha, *Grace and Kamma*: 255f. She also refers to other passages, such as *Matthew* 5:11-12; 6:1-4, 14-15, 20; 10: 41; 16:27; and 20:1-16; for Buddhist reading these passages, they and Christians seem to share ‘a view of reality that every action must have the same degree of reaction’; Suwanbubbha, *Grace and Kamma*: 256.
by grace through faith, Buddhists do not perform good actions for the sake of reward, an idea that would entail there being someone who had the power to grant reward; and, further, for Christians, reward is not for the sake of a meritorious rebirth. For Suwanbubbha the conclusion is inevitable:

Human beings in Buddhism control their lives and depend on themselves by performing good through thought, speech and physical actions. Their salvation derives from their own effort; it is the salvation by work through wisdom or insight meditation to attain the highest goal. This is the essential difference between grace and kamma relating to the different characteristics of each religion, Christianity as the theistic and Buddhism as the atheistic religion.

Obviously, in Suwanbubbha we have a Buddhist steeped in the early tradition of Buddhism. There is much in later ‘reforming’ Buddhism that involves powers unquestionably beyond the capacities of humans to develop. Furthermore, I argue that in the early Buddhist imaginaire there is much that is at least ‘superhuman’, as even a brief examination of the table of the ‘31 Realms of Existence’ in chapter 2 illustrates. Another dimension of the Pāli imaginaire is that of giving or dāna. We saw in the story of Vessantara a buddha-to-be whose exemplary dāna included the giving up of vast riches, his children and, lastly, his wife. Preaching the dhamma, too, is beyond human calculation, and Suwanbubbha refers to it as possibly involving superhuman associations. However, for a discussion of the supermundane we return to Mahinda Palihawadana, whose work, at the end of chapter 3, specifically addressed the issue of whether there is a Theravāda Buddhist idea of grace.

Buddhological Grace

We remember that Palihawadana appealed to the distinction made by Buddhaghosa that yields not three but four aspects to the ‘Theravāda salvific process’, namely, sīla, samādhi and pāññā, where pāññā is distinguished into lokiya pāññā and lokuttara pāññā. In the first three

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1244 To back up this position, Suwanbubbha relies on John Calvin (Institutes: 3.17.11), see Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 257ff. Good works and rewards are from God’s grace, and they neither win salvation nor accumulate merit; hence, and despite the appearance of being a hidden kamma, they are not kamma. Suwanbubbha’s final point – not germane to our argument – concerns patron-client relationships in both Buddhism and Christianity, which she distinguishes on the basis of the former having ‘the kammic idea as its hidden factor’, see Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 260f.

1245 Suwanbubbha, Grace and Kamma: 277.

the context is the self-effort of the meditator-practitioner in the pacifying of defilements – Palihawadana here refers to ‘creative passivity’. In relation to grace the interesting point is that _lokuttara paññā_ or supermundane wisdom is not produced by mental efforts, though these certainly assist and, as it were, create the condition of possibility for arising of this special wisdom. The latter comes ‘naturally’ when the conditions are present, but not in consequence of self-effort. This is much like Pure Land’s understanding of Amida’s being present in the believer’s recitation of the _nembutsu_. In passing, we note that even the aspect of reciting the name of Amida Buddha is not wholly without precedent in the Pāli canon. In the _Cariyāpiṭaka-atṭhakathā_ by Ācariya Dhammapāla, each of the three types of bodhisattva could, in addition to fulfilling other conditions, attain arhathood ‘while listening to a four-line stanza from the lips of a perfectly enlightened Buddha’. Further, the Jōdoshinshū qualification to the fullness of the recitation finds an echo in Dhammapāla’s additional qualification to the listening, in the case of the first type of bodhisattva, ‘even while the third line is as yet uncompleted’; or, in the case of the second type, ‘even while the fourth line is as yet uncompleted’.

Distinct from Jōdoshinshū, however, is the requirement that the time allotted for a bodhisattva to attain Buddhahood cannot be foreshortened. Though it seems to be the case that such supermundane arising need not come there is joy (Sanskrit: _priti_; Pāli: _piti_) that it does. A total change is brought on that makes ‘a true psychical _mutation_’ which is qualitatively different from the old ‘self’ due to the annulment of ‘the vitiating ground of defilement’; the psyche’s _sankharas_ are in constant flux, as are its defilements, and it is precisely in this field of psychical processes that meditation takes place.

The new element that Palihawadana introduces into his analysis is that the Christian notion of God needs two concepts in Buddhism: ‘the uncaused ultimate reality’, which is surely _nibbāna_, and ‘the actively operating, self-sustaining cosmic law of causation’, which is surely _kamma_.

Palihawadana does not discuss, much less argue the point, as his concern is with the distinction between the efforts one makes to advance along the _magga_ towards _nibbāna_, which, though not itself an ‘actor’ is ever-present, and the arising of the _magga_, which is not

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1247 Dhammapāla, _The Pāramīs_: #xiv (66).
1248 The third type ‘has the supporting conditions to attain arhatship together with the six direct knowledges when the four-line stanza he hears from the Exalted One is concluded’, see Dhammapāla _The Pāramīs_: #xiv (66).
1249 This time is given as a minimum (‘four incalculables (asankheyya) and a hundred thousand great aeons (mahākappa)'); as a middle figure (eight incalculables and a hundred thousand great aeons); and as a maximum (‘sixteen incalculables and a hundred thousand great aeons’), see Dhammapāla, _The Pāramīs_: #xiv (65f.).
1250 Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 100; Palihawadana earlier treated of the defilements and the necessary separation of them from the effort to eliminate them, see 92, 96f.
produced by my efforts. These efforts do not, as it were, usher in contact with \textit{nibbāna}; rather, they are the penultimate state and when the defilements are pacified the conditions are set for the attainment of \textit{magga}; the ultimate state, instead, is when the meditator finally lets go of all effort, when ‘effort ceases to be, having exhausted its scope and having brought about the knowledge that it too is a barrier to be broken down’, that \textit{nibbāna} is realized, i.e., without self-effort, without it being the product of ‘my’ effort. This follows from his earlier discussion of how ‘effort of will’ does not bring on ‘the next development’, i.e., \textit{nibbāna}, which ‘comes naturally when the right conditions have appeared’.\textsuperscript{1252} This concern is with human – he specifically refers to the \textit{lokiya} or mundane religious sphere – effort in the sphere of \textit{kamma}; at the end he states: ‘the liberating contact with \textit{nibbāna} is made’ and this is so because it is ‘an ever-present factor’.\textsuperscript{1253} He has already deemed this ‘present factor’ as ‘a blessed event by any reckoning’\textsuperscript{1254} and ‘reality-beyond-the-world’\textsuperscript{1255} or \textit{lokuttara dhamma}. However, this sphere or reality beyond all that is truly mundane remains occluded and not thematized as a theologian might be wont to do; his reference to \textit{kamma} is significant, though we are not given his own position on it. There is a construction of profound change as naturally occurring, which is then explicated as natural, though excluding \textit{ex hypothesi} any non-natural postulate. Ultimately, then, \textit{nibbāna} operates for Palihawadana rather reductively as a mere factor – though he does acknowledge it as ‘transcendent reality’, instead of the goal of all Buddhist mental culture and meditational practice; when \textit{nibbāna} arises it does so naturally, which is to say by virtue of \textit{kamma}. This begs the question of his understanding of \textit{kamma}. His own references to \textit{lokuttara, paññā, nibbāna}, etc., as well as \textit{magga} itself all indicate elements that could be treated of in a natural way or in a supernatural way. Though I have let the texts speak for themselves it seems to me that there is more to the issue of whether there is grace in Buddhism or not. For instance, generating \textit{puñña} and the role of a buddha or of a bodhisattva in the salvation of others go beyond the possibilities of merely human existence. The ways in which one imagines the structure of transformative power and the acceptance of the principle that human effort alone is incapable of producing the ultimate state(s) of bliss have been called ‘natural’ by some Buddhists; they equally smack of ‘supernatural’ to some theologians.

\textsuperscript{1252} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 93.
\textsuperscript{1253} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 100.
\textsuperscript{1254} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 99.
\textsuperscript{1255} Palihawadana, ‘Is There a Theravada Buddhist Idea of Grace?’: 100.
Bodhisattva Way

A cornerstone of Mahāyāna is belief in helping others to bodhi, though Śākyamuni Buddha spent the latter part of his life doing the same. The bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna is of one who chooses not to enter nirvāṇa but remain in samsāra to help others; this has been called ‘the practice of vicarious duḥkha’. In the Lankāvatārā-sūtra there is mention of a particular type of bodhisattva, the ‘icchantika bodhisattva’, who cannot attain nirvāṇa because the icchantikas are precisely those who refuse to be led to nirvāṇa. They are the foolish ones, and we saw that Shinran thought of himself as one. Amida’s vow ‘grasps’ the icchantikas no less assuredly than grace takes hold of the sinner and turns that person’s life around. Indeed, all are icchantikas, poisoned by craving, hatred and ignorance and foregoing the ‘roots of merit’. Of ourselves, like Saul/Paul or Augustine, we cannot save ourselves, and grace, like Amida Buddha’s tariki, does so for us. In Christ, the sinless one, all sinners are saved by his atoning death and resurrection. Paul clarifies that once we are baptized into Christ’s death we rise with him, we benefit from his action and always in virtue of it; indeed, believers form such a bond with their lord that it makes them the sōma christou, the body of Christ, as Paul taught. In relation to Amida a similar uniting of saviour and saved is expounded. When Shinran speaks of the 18th of the forty-eight vows taken by the bodhisattva Dharmākara before his successful entry to buddhahood as the Primal Vow (Sanskrit: pūrva-pranidhāna; Japanese: hongan) he is referring to the bodhisattva vow of working for the awakening of all sentient beings; in this sense, it encapsulates all the forty-eight vows, which we generally refer to as Amida’s vows. It is formulated thus:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who sincerely and joyfully entrust [with sincere mind entrusting] themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name even ten times should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offences and abuse the right Dharma.

This vow encapsulates both the notion of entrusting (shingyō) and of ‘sincere mind (shishin)’. To entrust oneself to the bodhisattva is, for Shinran, one of the ‘three minds (Japanese: sanshin)’, which he takes from the Contemplation Sūtra. In itself, however, shishin contains all three minds, the other two being ‘deep mind’ (jinshin) and ‘desire for birth by transferring


1257 See chapter three of Ju-leng-chi’ieh-ching (Sarvadharmasamuccaya), translated by Bodhiruci, in Taishō 16: 527b, as cited in Takeda, ‘Pure Land Buddhist View of Duḥkha’: 186.

1258 1 Corinthians 12:27.
one’s merit’. In the Contemplation Sūtra the three minds are the believer’s required states of mind if birth in the Pure Land is to be achieved. However, in the mappō age, who can activate such minds, as Shandao had thought? Therefore, Shinran says, they must be interpreted in light of the Larger Sūtra, where the threefold shinjin, i.e., sanshin, or trust in the power of Amida’s vow to save all, is in reality the mind of Amida: the mind of the Buddha enters that of the deluded person and brings rebirth about by other-power (tariki), i.e., Amida’s own power. In this sense, the threefold mind is in truth but one (sanshin soku isshin) and that one is not ours but Amida’s. On the basis of faith (en pistei), too, says Paul, there is no more Paul but Christ: ‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me’.\footnote{Galatians 2:20. Also: ‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come’, 2 Corinthians 5:17.}

Non-duality

In the later Mahāyāna notion of emptiness or śūnyatā (Pāli: suññatā) everything is said to be empty, i.e., not having a permanent (sub)structure of its own. When some reflected on the doctrine of conditioned (co-)origination or pratityasamutpāda (Pāli: paticcasamuppāda) they concluded that, if all things arise conditioned by something else, and those things by others, etc., then there is nothing that truly arises of itself, and there is nothing that ceases to be; hence, the true state of affairs is that there is no-arising (Sanskrit: dharmānuttāna). These are expressions of non-duality in theology, too. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to say of Calvin’s doctrine of grace that it is non-dualistic. When arguing against the schoolmen on grace Calvin indicates clearly his own view on grace: grace and free will do not co-exist – there is only grace. Free will is rejected precisely because through it merits exist, and merits, which in Buddhism can be accepted within a non-dual framework, must not exist for they introduce the notion of erga and human striving, both of which are an affront to the sovereignty of God. While we might say, too, of Paul’s view of charis that, in uniting believer and Christ as the object of belief, it is essentially non-dual, we have to contend with the opposition that he often makes by setting grace over against works.

Skilfulness

Looking further into the matter of truth, we see that a cursory comparison of theological and buddhological thinking shows a radical divergence of attitude on the issue of what counts as ultimate truth. On the one hand, what appears as a self-conscious and unrelinquished concern with truth and its accurate expression characterizes theology, and, on the other, a formal
distinction between ultimate (*paramārthasatya*) and conventional truth (*samvṛtisatya*) has led to a buddhological relativization of all truth claims in Buddhism but especially in Japanese Buddhism. Theology has much to gain from adopting this buddhological distinction and employing it, in particular, in those contexts where apophatic and kataphatic are already distinguished. Behind the buddhological distinction lies a more broadly buddhological approach, one that we have already called upāyaic. In the latter, skilful means (*upāya*) permits many seeming disjunctions and contradictory positions to be held by Buddhists, whether they concern matters of teaching, practice or development. Where choices are made and criteria for them enunciated there is the practice of *upāya*. We saw the Buddha, in the *Kālāma-sutta*, engaged in typical reasonableness; he had found a large group of people who are confused, presumably by the competing claims of different forms of putative authority, and entering their own situation he seeks to lead them to a more profound understanding and to establish a basis for sound judgement. For anyone who lives in the way he has just clarified, it is clear, then, that they will be ‘self-controlled and mindful, with a heart possessed by goodwill, by compassion...by sympathy...by equanimity’.1260 In these ways one finds solace in following the teaching of the Buddha. Thus, neither belief in rebirth nor karmic justice is considered necessary or sufficient reason for practicing good habits of behaviour and relationship with others. The Buddha teaches that virtue consists in subduing the three traditional unwholesome roots of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. If it seems that the Buddha here is also giving licence to people to follow their own whims on a basis that he subverts the usual ‘authorities’ of reports, traditions, hearsay, collections of scriptures, logic or inference, etc., then we have to take cognizance of his later encomium to follow reports, traditions, etc. The criteria for correctly following authority or not are precisely ethical: profitability, praiseworthiness, praise by the intelligent, conduciveness to happiness. If these latter hold, then act according to the authorities and abide in them, he counsels. The hinge about which judgement turns is determined by whether one is misled or not by the authorities and that is determined by the criteria. In the sutta’s final verses the Kālāmas are converted not only to the way of thinking of the Buddha but enthusiastically request permission to become Buddhist; they do this in the formal way of taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Critical thought, then, is made integral to *paññā* or wisdom, for insight is gained sometimes through avoiding and sometimes through following hearsay, tradition, rumour, a sacred text, a surmise, an axiom, specious argument, bias towards the familiar, presumption over another’s ability, and even what the monk or spiritual adept says. In this approach

choices made do not have to become principles of exclusion or excommunication. This stands in contrast to choices (Latin: *haereses*) made by theologians: a dominating truth, sure that its conventions are ultimate, cuts off the putatively heretical. For instance, with Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), concern for ‘the truth’ is paramount. Implacably against relativism, he is fearful lest truth be sacrificed for a unification of religions that is ‘hardly possible within our historical time, and perhaps it is not even desirable.’ Ratzinger put it thus: ‘[h]owever important the apophatic element may be, faith in God cannot dispense with truth, with a truth whose substance can be articulated.’ This is not to say that Ratzinger holds to a positivist view of knowledge of God by humans. In explicitly responding to the possibility of such a charge he counters with an appeal to mystical theology; in other words, an invitation ‘to an infinite journey to a God who is always infinitely greater.’ However, on the precise point of grace, Ratzinger says, ‘to know God’s will is grace.’ This points a danger in the quality of knowing and the range of grace and who decides. A hermeneutic of humility should guide us when we talk of God’s will; a structural incorporating of *upāya* into theology would effect this. I think that the hermeneutical and scholarly sensitivity displayed by Calvin would have appealed directly to the Shinran of the *Kyōgyōshinshō.* In both Shinran and Calvin, as leaders of communities and scriptural scholars no less than as buddhologist and theologian respectively, there is a deep upāyaic sensibility; both explain faith in order that the believer should grasp what salvation really is.


1262 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World,* translated by Graham Harrison, with a Foreword by Scott Hahn, Ignatius: San Francisco, 1999 [1998]: 109. Ratzinger’s target is the idea of pluralism, one of the three types – the others being inclusion and exclusion – developed by Alan Race, see his *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions,* SCM Pres: London, 1983: 120-133. Race characterizes the different approaches that one faith may take towards another in relation, say, to salvation; the danger here is that heuristic devices may be subsumed into ontological principles: helpful methodologies may make poor epistemologies and poorer ontologies.

1263 Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant: 100.*

1264 Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant: 107; this is based on Gregory of Nyssa’s reply to Eunomius’s claim that God is fully understandable on the basis of revelation as already given.


1266 Though, Calvin’s austere view of divine sovereignty would not.
6.2.3 Social World

The naming of the ‘social’ as a distinct conceptual category is of recent vintage and I have made some use of Niklas Luhmann’s social theory to bridge some divides between theology and buddhology. His notion of observation has been used throughout and now I will appeal directly to ‘double contingency’, which in turn he borrowed from Talcott Parsons. Between cultures and societies and between religions boundaries are erected: theology and buddhology are separate worlds and so immiscible. However, boundaries, in a theory such as Luhmann’s, come to be seen not as external realities but as social constructions, markings and distinctions made in the observing (of observing) of reality; and if constructed then there is the possibility of reconstruction. A religion like Christianity, in light of the theory of double contingency, is able, once it comes into contact with another system like Buddhism, to interact in accordance with the contingency-reducing character of repeated contact. Reciprocal observation and communication are made possible in the transparency – ‘despite opaque complexity’ – of these interactions. In being bound by the experience of action and reaction, and reaction again and again, knowledge of (predictable or trustworthy) responses grows and begins to take a guiding (or cybernetic) hand. Thus, instead of ‘just’ knowing and making calculations about alter’s acting, ego comes to take decisions about the types of reactions it wants from alter. This is to exercise freedom. It is also to recognize that alter, too, is free to ‘play with’ ego. In this interplay one of the key elements that we have to name is trust, and buddhology has a lot to offer on shinjin. Though there is always the possibility of misinterpretation and distrust, trust itself, however, depends on the possibility of distrust for its own reality, which comes in the moment it rejects distrust in favour of trusting. As it is always contingent, that is, it could be otherwise, trust is freely given. Of course, trust takes risks, it builds on certain confirmations and is more successful when engaged by both ego and alter. If the latter ‘works’, then greater risks can be taken in the likelihood of their not being misinterpreted. We saw that Luhmann sees meaning (Sinn) in the distinction between potentiality and actuality. Because we cannot select every possibility presented to us we make choices, and the choices reproduce meaning, creating as they do ‘a horizon of further possibilities’.

1267 Luhmann, Social Systems: 111.
1268 I am grateful to Professor Peter Scherle for guiding me through the cybernetic paths of religious communications.
1269 Luhmann, Social Systems: 129.
communication’, and this is the result of an evolutionary development. Precisely because no one can pursue all the possibilities at once paradoxes arise and contingency comes to be seen as a necessity. For the meaning system that is theology this implies that we need to structure the necessity of contingency into the system and show how meaning, for theology, may also evolve from the possibility of communication with buddhology, as buddhology. Perhaps a new form of theological system will be generated by this communication; certainly a greater complexity will evolve as theology and buddhology interact, with each acting in relation both to itself and to the other, and each becoming a point of orientation both for itself and for the other. This is what Luhmann calls double contingency and I believe that, in its naturalizing of the process, it offers a ‘neutral’ way of understanding a possible communication between theology and buddhology.

Theology and buddhology’s environment is largely today’s globalized world, as the scale of the current economic collapse illustrates. Zygmunt Bauman calls ‘liquid modernity...a civilization of excess, redundancy, waste and waste disposal.’ It is like a ‘culture of disengagement, discontinuity and forgetting.’

We live in a second-order reality, constructed out of science and technology. Reality has become an unstable product of the spirit of the laboratory. This imbues science and technology more deeply than ever with the promise of salvation, as is surely nowhere so apparent as where both are damned and praised at once as poison and antidote.

Nonetheless, this world, ambiguous and fluid though it be, is, like a buddhaksetra, the sphere of grace. Among others, theologian and buddhologist develop various imaginative construals to ‘explain’ the world. When we observe the situation in which Paul preached the good news, or Augustine expounded orthodoxy, or Shinran consoled the foolish and passion-ridden like himself, or Luther and Calvin reformed the failures of their times, we see societies in great turmoil as ordinary people feel threatened by life’s precariousness in manifest ways. Yet, the imaginaires created out of Amida and Christ gave people hope and spiritual sustenance; for instance, when both Shinran and Luther renounced their monastic commitments, married, raised children and enjoined marriage to other religious, they effectively declericalized the religion of their day and made the lay state a recognized zone for religious practice and spiritual growth. Today’s situation will also provide material for the construction of coping strategies. If life seems to be a risky adventure and waste is threatening to swamp us then the

language of grace will subsume such characterizations; the grace of God comes to be seen, for instance, as both God’s risky adventure with creation and God’s excess (waste?) of love. Though the secularization theory tends to dominate the dialogue of theology and society in the West a faith that is somehow ‘free’ of the world is suspect. We see in Metz a theologian anxious to respond to the realities of modern social and political life, yet his frame of reference is not wide enough for the challenge of modern interreligious debate. Also, others focus on how Christ, the eschaton for the early Christians and pre-existent divinity for later incarnationalists, can be related to the reality of other faiths. Observing theology at work, however, shows us that we need help in these areas. Even if we lay aside the mythological aspects of the doctrine of the incarnation we still have to respond to the question of the finality of Christ. Alan Race, we noted, points to this problem. Having outlined the responses of John Robinson’s *Truth is Two-Eyed*, Norman Pittenger and John Hick, Race himself replies that the pluralist position is the best alternative: it is ‘the most positive Christian response to the encounter between Christianity and the world faiths’ for it preserves the ‘decisiveness’ of Christ for those to whom he is God’s light. The present dissertation, building on buddhological insight while retaining theology’s basis understanding of divine grace, contributes to the construction of a better alternative.

6.3 **Modalities of Grace**

With this mapping of grace we are ready to describe grace in ways that will avoid the often acrimonious and divisive debates in the history of theology, debates that, when appealed to today, can still give rise to acrimony and division. The latter are not consonant with grace itself, and so I prefer to discuss different qualities of grace that, hopefully, will be shared by Christians in various denominations and by others, not least Buddhists. Therefore, I speak of modalities of grace. By modality I do not mean a method for attaining some end, but, rather, a quality of form or mode; thus, of grace, there are various modal forms that seek to express essential traits of what the theologian calls the divine self-disclosure. I use awakening, freeing and trusting as key modalities of grace. From both buddhology and theology awakening, freeing and trusting emerge as core conceptualities and, thus, from the use and

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1274 Perhaps the incarnation is itself ‘the originator of the process of secularization’, freeing the world to itself, see Metz, *Faith in History*: 25.

1275 Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*: 120-133.

1276 Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*: 135f.

1277 See the debates concerning the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999) between the Roman Catholic church and the Lutheran World Federation.

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understanding that Buddhists make of these three, Christians may hope to expand their own conceptual horizons and come to a more nuanced appreciation of grace as the theological category for describing the divine-human encounter. In saying this I do not wish to say that a neat separation can be either made or maintained between the modalities; as we will see, they relate to one another, often in profound ways, and the description of one shades into another, and a certain arbitrariness in the distinctions below emerges. This reflects the unitive force of grace.

6.3.1 Grace Awakens

The first modality that I observe owes its expression to the notion of bodhi, the experience in which one awakens to the truth. I argue that in both theology and buddhology the heart of this experience is conveyed by conversion, whether conversio, the effect of tariki, or metanoetics. There is, it seems to me, in the modern notion of transgressing the boundaries of self so that one comes to conceptually ‘live in’ another space more than an intimation of the conversion experience in which a person turns around – convertere, to turn around – from a former view and way of life to take on a radically new one. A discourse of conversion is quite theological, yet in the life of the Buddha and in his effect on those who came to him, such as Pottapāda and Citta in the Dīgha-Nikāya, there is unmistakable evidence of people turning from one way of life and embarking on another, one that leads to understanding of the truth of things, i.e., dharma. Under the Buddha’s tutelage one may hope to awaken to things as they are (yathābhūtatā); later, in the Mahāyāna, this is given particular prominence in the doctrine of suchness or tathatā. A buddha is one who has awoken to reality as it really is (yathā-bhūtam). Two things are constitutive of this awakening: the awakened one both is freed from the round of suffering and teaches the way of release to others.1278 There is, then, in the idea of awakening to a new reality a turning towards others in their need for awakening; we have seen this in both the lives of arhats and the very conceptuality of being a bodhisattva. Great compassion marks the awakened person; similarly, agapē becomes the defining characteristic of the person who chooses to follow Christ; a ‘new being’ that is now pneumatikos embarks on a life that leaves the old leaven of sin and corruption behind, that looks after others, the widow and the orphan, and that leads others to God. The agapeic life is fulfilled in ‘prayer, fasting and almsgiving’, especially as experienced in the eucharistic meal of the community. In the karunā or compassion of a buddha there is the wholesome desire to end the dukkha of sentient beings. By means of deep meditation or dhyāna (Pāli: jhāna), in forms known as samādhi (concentration) and vipassanā (insight), the meditator practices

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1278 See Dīgha-Nikāya I: 49; Thus have I heard: 92. The former will be discussed more fully below.
methods of mindfulness that are conducive to bodhi, even though they do not mechanically, as it were, bring bodhi about; instead, they make possible the attainment of awakening. In meditative absorptions, presented as practiced over countless life-cycles, is another intimation that bodhi has a quality about it that is beyond calculation and control. It may take aeons to accomplish though, more rarely certainly, it may happen even to one who finds it difficult to remember simple passages from the scriptures, e.g., Culapanna. Accompanying it are acts of sīla or morality. Together with paññā or wisdom, sīla and samādhi constitute the major parts of the Buddhist path to achieving freedom from all that binds us to the wheel of saṃsāra. Via prajñā, then, the noble person sees the threefold truth of things: that there is dukkha, anicca or impermanency, and anatta or no-self. This wisdom is not mere knowing, especially when it is lokuttara, supermundane; neither is Christian wisdom, which is a virtue infused by divine agency; both point to higher states of understanding, which in ordinary terms may be ‘foolishness to the Greeks’ or, in kamma, ‘natural’.

The theologian attributes what exists to God’s creative activity, which is free and without human constraint, while the buddhologist sees that one thing is conditioned by others and those others by still more, and so on, without cessation. This principle of causality or conditionality is observed not only formally in the paticcasamuppāda but in the cattāri ariyasaccānī and the ariya atṭhāngiko maggo. However, there is also recognition that the reality that one awakes to is nibbāna, which the Udāna described as ‘unconditioned’. Little is or can be said of it positively save that it is the end of dukkha, the end of rebirth. Beyond stating that it is where ‘Christ sits at God’s right hand’ the Christian, too, has little concrete knowledge of what heaven is like. Nirvāṇa and heaven operate as ciphers for the freeing that accompanies bodhi and the wondrous quality of its effect.

6.3.2 Grace Frees

The second modality has been briefly referred to in the notion of freeing from the roots of lobha, dosa and moha and the deconstruction of the self, in all its egoism and self-will. If nirvāṇa is the ‘state’ for which one is freed, then the evil mūla are what one is freed from. Both these movements are observed in Christianity, too. The experience of conversion highlights this: the sinner leaves her or his old ways and enters a new path. The sinner is unable of herself or himself to accomplish this feat and has to rely on divine power, operating in Christ or through the Spirit. The radical challenging of a prior but increasingly deficient world-view by ‘new’ markings and distinctions becomes the motor of conversio. We have seen this played out in the life of the Buddha himself no less than in the lives of Paul.

1279 The decisive liberative factor is the wisdom that comes from insight, i.e., vipassanāpaññā.
Augustine, Shinran and Luther. Each, in his own time and socio-cultural world, experienced a profound dislocation of the very way in which each viewed his world. The Buddha, having tasted long of the pleasures of life and of their denial, finds his middle path between the two extremes and willingly spends the rest of his long life helping others to a similar realization or awakening. Paul, the former persecutor Saul, becomes the advocate for all he once denounced. Augustine, the unsatisfied seeker of wisdom, finally accepts the challenge to enter the religious world he so long avoided and become one of its greatest thinkers. Shinran, the monk who laboured for his own and others’ salvation, humbly, as a lay person, full of passions (bonnō) and foolish (bomhu), accepts as a gift the end of suffering now in this present life; he came to see that even the very practice (gyō), i.e., the nembutsu prayer, that had long sustained him and his master Hōnen was in reality the very gift of Amida. And Luther, the fearful monk seeking to work out his own salvation, likewise, finally accepts that he is saved precisely as the sinner he perceives himself to be. If, then, people like Paul and Augustine alert us to that critical moment in life when we leave our old ways and turn towards God in an act of conversion, others like Shinran point to the tariki-quality inherent in the conversio. Palihawadana reminds us that even at the moment when one comes to the stage of stream-attainment, after long efforts, the magga leading to bodhi does not arise in virtue of those efforts: though it arises it cannot do so at same time as one is removing mental defilements, which would corrupt it. In the scriptural accounts we see John the Baptist and Jesus urging people towards metanoia; the basileia tou theou is preached and simultaneously ushered in as Jesus forms his company of disciples. Much closer to our own day we see Tanabe Hajime developing a philosophy of conversion, around the religious notion of metanoetics. There is, too, another dimension to this freeing, and it is also reflected in the etymology of convertere. There is a sense of repeated turning (from versare, frequentative of vertere) which entails a keeping company with another; this is the origin of the word ‘conversation’. From a Buddhist perspective the one who helps me to convert is truly my friend (Pāli: kalyāṇamitta; Sanskrit: kalyāṇamitra).

**Conversio**

If in Buddhist religious experience we observe the centrality of bodhi as marking out the new, then in Christian conversio and the new life of faith that it inaugurates there is a comparable centrality. Shinran Shōnin described the ‘leap of faith’ from samsāric existence to the bodhi experience as ōchō (leaping crosswise). Apart from distinguishing the leap – ‘vertical’ – from accounts of it offered by others who followed the ‘path of the sages’, implying that they employed the jiriki of own-power to work out their salvation, Shinran links ōchō directly with
the *nembutsu* practice of reciting Amida’s name. Shinran, we recall, radicalized this once-human practice into one that is actually performed on the divine level, the level at which Amida acts in Amida’s buddha-land; for, the true worker of salvation is Amida, and it is Amida who ‘credits’ the otherwise hapless believer with merit obtained over impossibly long aeons. The once-human profound faith or *shinjin* is buddhologized by Shinran into Amida’s own ‘aspiration to bring all beings to the attainment of supreme *nirvana*’. Likewise, Shinran equates *shinjin* with core teachings, such as *buddhadhatu* and Tathāgata, from other dimensions of Mahāyāna. To his understanding, *shinjin* is ‘the heart of great love and great compassion’. The overt linking of *shinjin* and *conversio* is made in the experience of Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962). Tanabe was the leading philosopher in the imperial university in Kyoto during the lead-up to and during the Second World War. He went through a grave crisis at this time, had a conversion experience and, awakening to Amida Buddha’s ‘power of salvation’, became free of the trauma that engulfed him and Japan. Tanabe writes:

> At that moment something astonishing happened. In the middle of my distress I let go and surrendered myself humbly to my own inability. I was suddenly brought to new insight! My penitent confession — metanoesis (*zange*) — unexpectedly threw me back on my own interiority and away from things external.

Tanabe had already abandoned own-power and, instead, been turned in ‘a completely new direction through metanoesis: other-power (*tariki*) ‘induced me to make a fresh start from the realization of my utter helplessness.’ He speaks of having been ‘resurrected by *zange*.’ In another phrase, with strong Christian overtones, he says, ‘I no longer live of myself, but live because life has been granted to me from the transcendent realm of the absolute truth which is neither life nor death.’ He is well aware that what he has experienced and his account of it are significant. In the Preface to *Metanoetics* Tanabe clearly sets the context for

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1283 Tanabe, *Metanoetics*: I.
1284 Tanabe, *Metanoetics*: II.
1285 Tanabe, *Metanoetics*: III.
1286 Tanabe, *Metanoetics*: IV.
the reception of his work. His hope is that the work will serve the individual, the Japanese nation and, ultimately, all humanity. Tanabe wants to see beyond the roles he and his country have played. Though the resonances with theology and Western philosophical thinking resound throughout, for instance, he says of human freedom that ‘in its true sense is rooted solely in the grace of the absolute’, his explicit reference points are to Shinran and Jōdo Shinshū. He fruitfully suggests that metanoia corresponds to the gensō, which is that form of ekō or merit-making resulting in a bodhisattva returning to this world from the Pure Land to help others. Corresponding to it is oso ekō or the going toward the absolute or Pure Land. Tanabe’s thought follows a line that sees him move through a conversion experience. From naïve self-confidence and the break-down of rational-technical thinking Tanabe himself—and everyone else, he would hold—can move to a stage where the relative and the absolute achieve a mediated unity and we are ‘restored to life as coworkers of God or the Buddha.’ He writes:

Of course, if we identify the will of God with the love of God, and divine grace with the working of divine love, then grace, far from destroying human freedom, only draws it out.

In sum, for Tanabe, zange or metanoetics entails human repentance and conversion; from these comes transformation. Both his faith and his meditation practices guided Tanabe, so that their role is seen as vital, too. In Buddhism the notion of faith is central as it is in the Christian dynamic of conversion. It is not so much that one believes in Amida but that one believes I, too, wretched and a sinner, will become a buddha, through the power of Amida’s merits. In this sense faith is the self-gift of Amida. In theology, Paul, Augustine, Luther and Calvin see faith as grace, a divine gift. For them faith comes through and in Christ, and so theology comes to be centred christologically. Yet, the story of Amida shows us that faith comes from Amida’s tariki. Taking the giftedness of tariki as correlating with grace we see

1287 Tanabe has also been harshly criticized for his teaching, which some would hold helped to bolster the militarism of the Japanese elite, see James W. Heisig, ‘Tanabe’s Logic of the Specific and the Spirit of Nationalism’, in James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (eds.), Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism, in Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture (series), University of Hawai‘i: Honolulu, 1994: 255-288.

1288 Tanabe, Metanoetics: 4.

1289 Tanabe, Metanoetics: 57. This will tie in with more general Buddhist notions of the bodhisattva-ideal and the example and teaching of the Buddha himself in a way that links with Hinayāna, such that Shinran’s tariki comes to be seen as a natural—or, at least, not unnatural—outcome of more mainstream and fundamental Buddhism.

1290 Tanabe, Metanoetics: 190.

1291 Tanabe, Metanoetics: 82.
that faith is not necessarily ordered to Christ, but is something, from the human point of view, that relates directly and essentially to being gifted with freedom from whatever is deemed to bind us and freedom to embrace a more noble reality; this is a movement of grace.

Blissful Release
Another image for the freeing that a Buddha accomplishes is purification: a buddha seeks to purify a buddha-field or buddha-land: the buddha-ksetra as a sphere of activity. The bodhisattva Dharmākara, who becomes Amida Buddha, works to bring all into the lokadhātu or world-system of sukhāvati, i.e., the ‘land of happiness’ or pure land, though here one refers more precisely to Amida’s own ‘Pure Land’. For anyone who trusts in Amida, believing in the latter’s vow not to enter buddhahood until all have been saved, salvation is assured. In early Buddhism, too, there is the idea of the arhat as the person who is free from the fetters that bind to saṃsāric birth and rebirth; the arhat achieves āsavakkhaya or ‘destruction of the cankers’, and, at death, which is the dissolution of the body, is born in nirvāṇa. This is similarly expressed in the notion of amata (Sanskrit: amṛta), deathlessness, which is the ending of all rebirth. Release into amata is not contradicted by actions of a buddha for others’ benefit: when Māra, personifying all evil, appeared before the just awakened Buddha he tried to frighten and then tempt him; also, he tried to coax the Buddha to enter parinibbāna and thereby leave the world of humans to his, Māra’s, designs; the Buddha succeeded against him by calling the earth as witness to the veracity of what he had attained. The Buddha, then, like Jesus, successfully resists temptations of various kinds and holds firmly to the path he has embarked upon, remains fully awoken and now works for the good of the unawakened. There is no opposition between samādhi, vimutti or skilful action in the nirvānic state.

Though a person may not exercise freedom in an absolute sense there is a proper use of this notion when one is free from constraint and has possibilities for action. The question is not about some opposition between freedom and necessity though Calvin so expresses divine freedom – divine sovereignty – that he sees it necessary to defend double predestination. Roman Catholic teaching, i.e., modern Roman Catholic teaching, expresses the divine will for universal salvation, which entails the possibility of someone freely rejecting the offer; nevertheless, the teaching does not specify that any given person is certainly in hell or suffers ultimate damnation. Of course, adrift and poisoned the religious seeker longs for direction and remedy. For one the leader and healer is a buddha, for another Christ. Grace leads us on a journey in which we traverse, crosswise (Japanese: おちょ) as Shinran would say, spaces that otherwise seem impossible and, yet, are experienced.
6.3.3 Grace Trusts

Trust and assurance are inextricably linked in the notion of faith. We have seen this operative in the theology of Christ atoning for us and in Amida’s boundless merits put at the service of saving all. For anyone who trusts in Amida, believing in the latter’s vow not to enter buddhahood until all have been saved, salvation is assured.

In early Buddhism, too, there is the idea that to see a buddha, like listening to his teaching of dharma, is propitious and can lead to deep faith. It is one of the distinctions of Shinran’s buddhology that he shows that bodhicitta (Japanese: bodaishin) entails a radical change in the direction of one’s life, like metanoia; but, in the days of mappō when we are incapacitated spiritually, Amida awakens bodhaishin within us as shinjin, which may come in a single moment. Shinjin, that is, great faith, results when Amida appears before the believer and ‘grasps’ her or him; also, Amida will not abandon this grasping. Analogously, the faith of the Christian believer is the fruit of God’s election of that person to salvation and the beatific vision. Here we again appeal to the work of Palihawadana. When he treated of the natural development of the steps along the ‘salvific process’ Palihawadana commented: ‘[a]lthough the Buddha is shown here to be trusting to a natural development all the way as far as the supreme inner change, it would not be consistent with the spirit of the Buddhist teaching to say that one had only to be “virtuous” and all the rest would naturally follow.’ The sense of this sentence, many of the terms employed, including ‘Buddha’, ‘trusting’, ‘supreme inner change’, and the context of the meditator, i.e., at the final stage of non-effort when nibbāna comes (gift-like), all could be interpreted otherwise than ‘natural’, and are by theists. It should be recognized that Palihawadana is really holding faith with his own tradition; he is expressing faith in kamma as the ultimate cause of one’s attaining the magga. The second point concerns a use Palihawadana makes of the word ‘historical’ when discussing grace in the short second section of his paper. He writes:

The central issue seems to us to be the realization that human beings are in a state of spiritual weakness and are not able to take a leap out of this “in order to be healed and...in order to carry out works of supernatural virtue.” But in point of historical fact, people have indeed taken that leap. The grace notion gives a theistic explanation of this experience.

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1292 See Shinran, Mattōshō #7; Collected Works of Shinran I: 532.
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The seeming opposition here is between escape from weakness, whether by Buddhist or Christian, I assume, that may be classed human on the one hand and supernatural on the other. Nevertheless, there is a recognition of a leap of faith. This leap cannot be made solely by the effort of the believer; something beyond and greater than the person is required even where trust is evident: *kamma*.

We saw that in the Hebrew scriptures there is ready link between what we have taken to be prototypical terms for grace and justice. Ideal and praxis unite as they will in Buddhist following of the noble eightfold path (Sanskrit: *āryāstāṅgamārga*). We recall, though, that Luther castigated Catholics for giving a place to works in the divine salvific scheme of things, for this was to show a lack of trust in God. Luther requires that for a person to be saved she or he should have faith in God, or Christ and this absolutely. The faith-works debate also occurred in China and Japan, as we may surmise from the accounts of the exile of Hōnen and Shinran. Whereas Shinran is famous for his ante nominem *sola gratia*, Hōnen is for the room he leaves for *gyō*, work or religious practice. Theologically, though, Shinran shows greater consistency: saving faith is itself Amida’s gift and the trusting that one experiences is that of Amida acting within oneself. And yet there is still a requirement, seemingly so simple, in reality so difficult to hold, that one accept the offered grace. There is here an act of trust here that often fails, as Shinran recognized. To hold that salvation depends only on faith in the one who actually saves, whether God or Amida, as Luther and Shinran did, raises the question of morality. Why be moral in the way we live if God (or Amida) is going to save anyway? Did not Paul say that where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more (*Romans* 5:20)? When John Agricola developed antinomianism and followers of Shinran argued likewise, Shinran and Luther were forced to respond, for they did not consider faith in such an antinomian way. For both, there is a reciprocity of faith and action, so both demanded moral behaviour of believers on the grounds that this would express true faith in salvation.

Finally, there is a social dimension to trust. Besides belonging and the feeling of dependency that pertain to social trust humans also have a capacity for belief in the validity of people’s judgements, which is the sense of sincerity. When the Buddha said that people should test what he said we was distinguishing between this sincerity that he evoked and what *dhamma* should command. How, though, am I to test all the data in respect of *nibbāna* and

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1296 Interestingly, on the next page, he also uses ‘historical’, this time in relation to Buddhaghosa’s treatment of the meditator on the way to liberation: though such a meditator may be very rare in Theravāda and though there may well be no one prepared to follow this path yet the discussion itself has value, see 95. His use of ‘historical’ seems to trump any purported superiority-claim by grace over nature; at the least, his use begs the question of what is the natural or what the historical.
paticcasamuppāda? In fact, faith governs our trust in the Buddha. In ordinary conversation – another conversio – and in dialogue there is the condition of the possibility of conversion; that dialogue occurs affirms that communication is possible because it is actively communicating across boundaries; and, as a structure of trust, it forms the basis for how we imagine future cooperation, integration and structural change. In ‘religious’ language it is the beginning of faith and love

6.3.4 Prevenience of Grace

Suffering and duḥkha as existential realities link Paul, Augustine, Luther, Shinran and Tanabe. So, also, does their concern for others, who are likewise enmeshed, though often with the understanding that they suffer because they live in certain social contexts, the making of which they are powerless to generate, modify or end. The religious adept or genius works ‘out of compassion’ for them and thereby proves, if needed, that the human in the world may be badly wounded by duḥkha or sin but is not lost. Jesus’s love for sinful persons leads him to die on a cross, and the divine offer of salvation ‘in his name’ is expressed as saving grace. Grace, from Augustine to the Reformers to many today, is better encapsulated as gratia praeveniens, by which we mean that God’s grace accompanies all free acts of a person in response to God. For a human to accept divine favour, render thanks, do good, reject evil, be converted, etc., God must give that person the necessary (degree of) grace. We saw how Shinran came to a similar understanding of Amida, who utters the saving nembutsu that forms on the believer’s lips. Likewise, religions posit a universal ambit of action, though they may differ on the question of the human response to the ultra-human action. For instance, though Lutheran and Arminian might agree that there is a universal offer of saving grace, gratia salvifica, and agree that it is possible for humans to resist and reject this grace, the Calvinist would deny that humans can successfully resist the divine will (or have a cooperatio between God and humanity). However, despite the austerity of his religious imagination Calvin also allows for the seed of divinity in the human heart even when corrupted.

In another, highly suggestive construction of the social world we also discerned a crucial argument for theologico-buddhological engagement, namely, Luhmann’s notion of double contingency. We noted the link between Luhmannian contingency and freedom; the liberum arbitrium makes choices which add to existing complexity even as the actual choice helps reduce it. The situation grows more complex when one introduces another ‘system’ that operates like ‘mine’: for, the contingency of my system interacts with that of the other; and the other’s contingent actions interact with mine. This interaction is not (just) at the level of

1297 This is well-expressed in the Latin tag, vulneratus non victus.

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formal dialogues, but at the formative, constructive, systemic level. Put more concretely, the theologian’s constructions that arise from interaction with buddhology and *mutatis mutandis* the buddhologist’s with theology will decisively affect that theologian’s theology. I would argue that this is to be welcomed, not feared; it offers conceptual possibilities for mutual enrichment. And this is not an innovative proposal; it has, in perhaps less obvious ways and over much longer time-frames, always been happening. The theologian’s awareness of the interplay between Hebrew mindset(s) and those of the Greco-Roman world is an obvious case in point.

In their contemporary resonance the notions of ‘lack’ and ‘waste’ may help a modern generation, not necessarily excluding ourselves, to see the world in a different light. So, we may say that certain people can speak of grace as willful waste, from God’s point of view, in the sense that it is utterly generous, holding nothing back but giving way beyond what could be expected. Grace, then, comes as superabundance, like the cup foaming and spiced ‘that runneth over’. Both terms, then, are conceptual tools. They are embedded in modern discourse and may be ‘heard’ when skilfully used in a new theological register; they enable us to examine, in a somewhat fresh and original way, the doctrine of grace, the modern world to which any doctrine of grace must seek to make a positive contribution, and a possible theological construction of grace for people today. They are useful in that they are existential and of social relevance; further, they are suggestive in the context of the styles of theological and buddhological language that, we argue, need updating. With them are the correlates of ‘sufficiency’ and ‘superabundance’, which also feed into the modern imaginaire.

In Buddhism I find a notion of gifting that correlates with grace as divine self-gifting. In looking at how Shinran defines the great faith that is *shinjin* I see a conceptuality that correlates more closely with grace than with what theology calls faith. This helps us. Culturally, our Western, dichotomous thinking lends itself to understanding grace as coming from without, from heaven; culturally, too, Eastern, non-dualist thinking lends itself to understanding giftedness as coming forth from within reality, integratively as it were. And yet, when we come to the buddhology of Shinran, which takes the activity of Amida to its logical conclusion such that salvation is possible for foolish people only by the *tariki* of Amida, the immanentizing direction of Buddhist thought yields, in Amida Buddha, to a concretized transcendent character comparable with Christ wholly God and wholly human. For all its differences from theology there is a comparable hypostasizing of divine-like gifting in buddhology.
To presume that the truth is knowable and at hand, and that humans can constructively build it up, is a present danger for the theologian. There is in the West what George Lakatos and Mark Johnson\textsuperscript{1298} aptly call ‘the myth of objectivism’. The myth expresses the view that human reason is able to give us ‘knowledge of things as they really are.’\textsuperscript{1299} Correlatively, we may posit a myth of subjectivity\textsuperscript{1300} that would account for much of what Buddhism came to oppose. That is, the Buddhist tries, by controlling the waywardness of human thinking through deep meditation, to cut through the false images we construct of our human subjectivity, in particular the reification and absolutization of the ‘I’, and create the optimal conditions for the ‘natural’ arising of bodhi. Truth, or the dharma, may be knowable but when it comes it is often both after supreme effort and as a sudden flash of insight.\textsuperscript{1301}

Without rejecting rationality or knowledge, there is an essential importance of imagination to be recognized.

6.4.1 Imagination

We need this imagination to help us put theology and buddhology into fruitful dialogue; though they seem so contradictory to one another I have tried to show that in existential issues there is much that allows for dialogue; perhaps it is time to seen them more as contraries. To observe two things as contraries is not equivalent to seeing them as contradictories.\textsuperscript{1302}

Therefore, as we make our observations, marking one thing as relevant and, in consequence, avoiding or ignoring the other part of the distinction, we are engaging our imaginations even in the act of observing and describing. Imagination is, Denis Donoghue argues, ‘the name we give to the mind when it is prepared, if feeling requires it, to see everything change except itself.’\textsuperscript{1303} In other words, there is in consciousness a self-awareness by the imagination that is

\textsuperscript{1298} See George Lakatos and Mark Johnson, \textit{Metaphors We Live By}, University of Chicago: Chicago and London, 1980.

\textsuperscript{1299} Lakatos and Johnson, \textit{Metaphors}: 195.

\textsuperscript{1300} I use this expression in order to avoid conflict with that other myth Lakatos and Johnson also utilise, ‘the myth of subjectivism’, see Lakatos and Johnson, \textit{Metaphors}: 188f.

\textsuperscript{1301} I find Lakatos and Johnson’s notion of ‘imaginative rationality’ both instructive and appealing.

\textsuperscript{1302} Paul O’Grady makes this point in his discussion of Paul Williams’s conversion from (Tibetan) Buddhism to Roman Catholicism, where Williams, using John Paul II to support his point, sets up a dichotomy between ‘objectivity and subjectivity’, see his review article, ‘From Lhasa to Rome: Williams’s \textit{Unexpected Way}’, in \textit{Contemporary Buddhism} 4.2 (November, 2003): 159-167: 165f.

vital. While it is at work, imagination relates to three ‘enterprises’ of the mind. First, in looking at forms present to the mind it regards them naturally, taking them in their suchness, we might say. Second, it credits itself with virtually the complete construction of ‘reality’ and ‘the natural world’, such that very little credit is given to the forms presented to the mind. Third, in this act the imagination negates; as Donoghue expresses it, negation is ‘a linguistic marvel by which the mind repudiates its dependence upon objects.’

If we transpose Donoghue’s discussion from the realm of the artist to that of the theologian and buddhologist we may observe all three types at play in various ways. Buddhism rather obviously constructs, in its notions of samsāra, avidyā and duḥkha, an imaginaire of profound delusion, and so plays to imaginative negation; yet, on the other hand, it also constructs an imaginative conceptuality of absolute interconnectedness in the notion of pratītyasamutpāda, and this offers a very different construal of ‘reality’. Perhaps, too, nirvāṇa is the ultimate buddhological construal for a ‘positive’ understanding of the dharmaḥṭatu. In an Augustinian theology there is evidence of the first type, for in the natural things of the world the young Augustine is drawn to things in the world about him that seem beautiful, then to beauty which in turn, he avres, draws him to God. However, there are other elements such as the doctrine of original sin, and the massa damnata, which he taught later in his life, that evidence a negative view on the world. The neutral Christian observer might see much in my presentation of early Buddhism in particular that could be explained by the second type, wherein the mind is basically the construer of what is real. Might not the neutral Buddhist look upon what I have said about God, grace and original righteousness as equally mind-constructed, ideologies masquerading as deep analysis. It would seem, then, that the three types are helpful until one is prepared to subject one’s own construals to critique, at which point the boundaries seem porous and apt for breakage. With an unavoidable circularity, however, the imaginative consciousness as self-aware imagination offers the possibility of meta-critique and the overcoming, or at least naming, of the destructive poisons or malum in life. For such an imagination, however, the type of thinking offered in buddhology is vital, if not necessary.

The danger of my use of imaginaire is that it may constrain, in a new way, consideration of other conceptualities. This risk is contained, however, by adapting a distinctly upāyaic approach and treating the new like a raft, which serving once to bring one to the side of the great river is no longer necessary. The imagination is made to work for the achievement of theology’s end, which is deeper knowledge and wisdom (prajnā-like) of the divine mystery

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1304 Donoghue, The Sovereign Ghost: 40-44.
that, once creating and still interacting with creation, makes Godself present to us as grace. Without grace nothing of ordinary knowledge suffices. Buddhology’s end is not hearing the dharma preached but, rather, the experience called bodhi, for this is what is necessary and sufficient for attaining nirvāṇa to. Parallel to this we may argue that it is not faith in the crucified Christ that is necessary and sufficient for salvation but grace; for, if such a faith were necessary then no non-Christian will be saved, and, if it were sufficient then all are saved regardless. Theology and buddhology can be Procrustean beds, stretching one dogma and foreshortening another. An interplay of both may help to avoid the problem, for awareness of the dimensions of the human condition that each system highlights alerts us to the paradoxes and antinomies of life that are shared, and those that are not, across religious universes.

6.4.2 Social Imaginaire

Today, sociology offers theology in the West a creative dialogue; it seems to deliver what Schleiermacher sensed from the cultured despisers who are formed by a functionally differentiated society. Social change has also developed cultural studies and theory as a fruitful field for research; in recent decades, people move between cultures and classes in a way that earlier people could not have imagined. The social ‘realities’ make clear that culture is not some fixed, God-given life-form; instead, it is something that can be theorized about, and new configurations become possible. Within the debates about social change and the ‘culture turn’ another change is observed, viz., our understandings of the human person and of society, which are being developed in new imaginaires. The story of a human life, a biography, is increasingly portrayed as self-constructed today, and this should be a warning to us to be critical of such portrayals as they are imaginatively created, too. Also, church and theology are human constructions; if they are imaginatively (re)constructed they may release their potential, as Enda McDonagh says, to serve the divine construction of God’s kingdom.¹³⁰⁵ In ethics, too, we see potential¹³⁰⁶ but great need, too, as people try to relate responsibly to modernity’s latest scientific discoveries: yet, though ethics in the world of the objectified sciences is like a bicycle brake on an intercontinental aeroplane, those very sciences are themselves far from offering salvation to humanity.¹³⁰⁷ Perhaps, as Beck says,

¹³⁰⁵ See Enda McDonagh, Vulnerable to the Holy in Faith, Morality and Art, Columba: Dublin, 2004: 64.
¹³⁰⁷ The imagery is Ulrich Beck’s, see his Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk: 119.
hazard ‘compels the return of faith.’\textsuperscript{1308} Adopting the language and images of the social world and upāyaically adapting them the theologian tries to make sense of today’s world for today’s people, even as Paul, Augustine, Luther and Calvin, the Buddha and Shinran sought to do in their world and for their people.

In the imagery of risk and lack, of waste and want(ing), then, I seek to express in contemporary argot something of the risk God takes in creating and renewing, saving and sanctifying; a gift of divine selfhood is offered in the risk of rejection; for those who, touched by the risk, sense the presence of giftedness and grace and respond in conversion or metanoesosis, the possibility arises of awakening to grace’s source. This awakening is experienced as freedom and power, and the faith that characterizes the act is seen as itself an integral part of the grace given. We should not be afraid of the charge of unwarranted acquisition of alien thought-forms: specious syncretism can be avoided if there is a recognition of the fact that syncretism has long operated, and been legitimated, in doctrinal development; in early Buddhism the Buddha is seen to take the positions of various people who come to him, so long as the dharma is preached; in Buddhism’s progress into China, Korea, and Japan, on the one hand, and to Thailand, Burma, Laos, etc., on the other, not forgetting different forms of Buddhism integrating with the Bon religion in Tibet, very different types of buddhology emerged, for instance, Tantra and Chan (Japanese: Zen). We do not expect absolute correlates between theology and buddhology; we are satisfied pro tempore with what Jacques Scheuer calls ‘une relative convergence’.\textsuperscript{1309} Not all will go smoothly, though we may expect interesting developments. For instance, Mase-Hasegawa, in tracing her life as a Christian and Japanese woman, feels that she has been trying to make Christianity, which is ‘a Western suit that does not fit’, into one that does, ‘like a Japanese kimono’.

Building on Tanabe’s notion of metanoia as involving human repentance, conversion and transformation\textsuperscript{1310} she writes: ‘[o]nly through metanoia, can past hatred be buried because it recalls how sinful we are and forces us [to] acknowledge that we can trust in and hope for God’s salvation.’\textsuperscript{1312} As systems of hope and trust religions are necessary. Yet, Ulrich Beck, \textit{Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk}: 115.


\textsuperscript{1310} Mase-Hasegawa, ‘Searching for Identity amid Neighbors’: 91.

\textsuperscript{1311} Mase-Hasegawa, ‘Searching for Identity amid Neighbors’: 92.
in another sense, we become truly religious only when we abandon the necessity of the (other’s) map and become cartographers in our own right. The abandoning of outward supports seems to come as a conversion-experience, whether suddenly or gradually, though it is arguable that it is both gradual and sudden, just as walking along the same strand road daily one suddenly sees, as though for the first time, the beauty of the crashing waves; the conditions were right and awareness arose, gift-like yet also naturally. Confronted by the unexpected, thus awakened in some way, that which once was only noise and irritation, like a system’s environment, now becomes so integral to ‘me’ that no longer am I the ‘old me’ but instead a ‘new me’, created out of what was always there and out of something new that has come gift-like, a grace. Perhaps, after experience and thought, I may come to see that everything, ‘the good, the bad and ugly’, is graced. The experience of being converted, then, brings a change from map-reader to cartographer, a constructive phase. And because it is constructed it should not be less than resolutely social: having looked at Paul, Augustine, Luther, etc., we see individuals who, constructing a new view of the world from the intensity of their conversion-experiences, did not forget all that preceded them.

6.4.3 Imaginaire of Grace - Ultimate Grace

What we observed in the accounts of both Buddhism and Christianity were religious worldviews and imaginaires that did not spring up context-less. What I demonstrated the situation to have been in earlier times is what I argue obtains still: theologies grow out of certain socio-political contexts. Today, our theologies, whether we will it so or not, have their context; the theologian’s task is to reflect on that context, on the theologies that have been handed down as an inalienable heritage, and then fashion anew a theology (or, better, those theologies) as adequately as possible to meet current exigencies. This duty is not simply a historically observed exigency that arises from the so-called nature of things; it is also a theological one. For, talk about the divine can never be other than in human talk, and the divine, if our reflections about it have anything of worth to them, communicates to us as humans; for this reason theologies like those of Calvin and Barth, for all their worthy efforts to preserve the sanctum of God’s otherness, lack awareness that God is less in need of theological justification than is the suffering and confusion of human beings. This is the anthropological fundamentum of theology. Here what we have learnt from certain buddhological categories comes to our assistance. What buddhology teaches us is that the contingency of all speech and thought has to be built into the logic of that buddhology – or theology – itself; our world is conventional, what we hope for may be ultimate; and, while in
this world, we should skilfully build distinctions that serve our understanding and not restrain or constrain it. This type of thinking is what I am explicitly arguing for in my usage of ‘construal’, ‘construct’, ‘imaginaire’, ‘system’, etc., but especially in the adjective ‘upāyaic’. It is not that theology can put into words the ultimate that is God or the divine; rather, theology has something to say about the human condition in light of the positing of the divine or the ultimate. Clearly, theology operates in this latter light; but, perhaps buddhology, too, operates with a light of its own, one that is not ultimately explicable in terms of the ḍhammā of quotidian life; it is part of my thesis that the theological understanding of grace requires incorporation of the buddhological. The task is to reflect on the world that confronts humanity and clarify how we unconsciously, if necessarily, distort what lies before us. Nevertheless, in faithfulness we awake to reality and we are thereby freed from what has been poisoning us. We, with a Buddhist kalyāṇamitta, awaken to the reality of karmic existence and to the reality of unconditional compassion for humans that is powerful enough to bring sinners and fools into the land of bliss and the sure hope of attaining nirvāṇa. The outcome is a sense of joy or bliss. Through one’s one act of faith in Amida; in this moment of awakening, in which one entrusts oneself completely to the hongan of Amida, one is freed of karmic attachments because the other-power, so grace-like, enters ‘me’ and effects change from within, like the Pauline ‘putting on Christ’. Here, too, there is an outcome; for awareness of one’s karmic existence brings one to have a sense of repentance. A third element here is the immediacy with which faith is attained; in this way, Jōdoshinshū points to the presence of ‘sudden enlightenment’ in shinjin. But, the danger is that we reify the notions we use, whether, faith, fear, incarnation, grace, etc., and it is, as it were, the stock-in-trade of the theologian and philosopher to deconstruct such notions, or what Joseph O’Leary terms ‘this substantializing mindset’. What is highlighted here by O’Leary is that the resulting deconstruction is not the ultimate truth, but, rather, ‘is itself a conventional means’; and it is a conventional means because of what we may call an efficacy deficit. That is, there is no guarantee that the notions and ways of thinking that have been formulated point to what O’Leary calls ‘ultimacy’ actually succeed in their mission. Thus, he can be severely critical of the issues that plagued the launching of the Joint Declaration on Justification, with which we began our explorations. O’Leary continues, ‘the words lose their electrifying clarity and immediacy, and the conventional language is now sensed to point to a pseudo-

134 See O’Leary, ‘Religions as Conventions’: 418; he writes there that a ‘conjunction of certain words and a certain historical period may be a powerful vehicle of ultimacy.

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ultimate, and to hold the spirit back in postures that no longer correspond to its present existential possibilities. That fate seems to have overtaken the bulk of talk on God and creation, sin and grace, so that, for example, the Lutheran-Catholic consensus on justification appears as an exercise in rearranging archaic ideas, no longer real enough to be worth fighting about.’ In sum, the ‘namings of ultimacy’ conventionally represent the otherwise unimaginable ‘pure ultimacy’.

6.4.4 Ultimate Grace

Buddhological thinking places great emphasis on distinguishing conventional thinking from ultimate thinking, conventional truth from ultimate truth. Though as theologians we talk of grace as divine self-disclosure and though we may suppose that we know of what we talk, the reality that is God, i.e., creator, redeemer and sustainer of all that is, is incomprehensible to finite beings. The certainty we sometimes bring to our discussions of the divine sometimes lacks perspective and humility before the divine. Buddhology, I believe, offers theology assistance at precisely this juncture. Perhaps the critical issue separating buddhology and theology in terms of grace is not the lack of it in one and its presence in the other but, rather, how one understands the source of grace. So, to allow for diversity of opinion my focus has been more on recognizing what I latterly call the modalities of grace at work in buddhology and theology. I began with a critique of grace as reified object for it becomes an obstacle to the reality of grace as gift; I end with a view of grace that continues the motif of gift. On the one hand, grace is ‘simply’ God’s self-communication, and, on the other, dialogue with buddhology has brought out the dynamic of giftedness beyond the capacity of all immanent reality to explain. Of course, the idea of God can lead to hierarchy and domination of others according to how closely one places oneself to the divine. However, when we allow loving-kindness, mettâ, or love, agapê, to characterize our relationship with the unconditioned or ultimate then the result is more likely to be action for justice according as one is moved to help others in their dukkha. Trusting in the power of the ultimate to effect what we feel incapable of ourselves we begin the process of conversio: faith, one of the core notions of theology, deepens, as we saw in the thinking of Shinran on Amida’s shinjin.

Encounter with buddhology should restore a healthy relativism concerning our absolutes, which, when examined, may turn out to be but ‘conventional realities’ illegitimately promoted to ultimate reality, while the evidences for divine giftedness may be demoted to all-too-conventional propositions. There is, furthermore, the necessity to cultivate the conditions that
will be more conducive to establishing the kind of wisdom-based insight that is already to be gleaned from buddhology. This entails the bhāvanā of the Pāli canon: the culture of developing samādhi meditation and vipassanā leading to paññā (Sanskrit: prajñā) or wisdom. Such practices have an established place in Buddhism; Western Christianity may have much to gain by learning these meditative techniques. Grace, if it is consciously attended to as a theory and possibility, is not experienced as a knowledge like that which derives from the senses (eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc.), including mind-consciousness. Rather, it is like valuing, loving, being responsible, acting freely; its sphere of operation, then, is ‘higher’ than that of mundane decision-making in that the whole of a person, with consequences of an ultimate nature, is entailed. Indeed, this level of consciousness decides the whole of one’s biography, purpose in creation, destiny before God. For a Buddhist, knowing at this level would require special preparation and practice in a culture of meditation before a hoped-for samādhi might naturally come, and the possibility of bodhi be realized. Traditionally theologically speaking, this is the conversio of the soul, a symbol for the true-nature of a person congruent to a Buddhist’s buddhadhātu or a Pauline putting on of Christ. Finally, have the contributions of Loy and Luhmann, as exemplars of buddhological and sociological thinking in chapter 1 been enough for the theologian? It might seem that that is the tenor of my argument, but, and this is to return to the very first position of this work, viz., that divine self-communication is a given, this would be to identify a further lack in a human hermeneutics of wholesome living. Of course, no human construction can prove either that there is God or, if so, that God acts in the world in ways full of grace. Though it will surely fail to give us the full truth, the ultimate truth of buddhology, we can hope in its contribution to better thinking about ourselves, the world and God and better living accordingly, that upāyaic thinking helps to clarify our modes of thought and living. However, once one postulates the possibility of a grace-gifting divine reality and accepts that possibility as real (fides) and begins to live (conversio) one’s life in ways (iustitia) that accord with the grace

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1315 In saying that the highest Buddhist state can be attained naturally I do not deny that, in divine action generally, there is a naturalness, see Dawn DeVries and B.A. Gerrish, ‘Providence and Grace: Schleiermacher on Justification and Election’, in Maríña, Jacqueline (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher, CUP: Cambridge, New York, Melbourne et alia, 2005: 189-207: 195.

1316 The West that he analysed was and is a market-place, an economic system of global proportions that promised a secularized salvation. In other words, the economy had become the true religion of the West; but, if it had, it failed miserably to meet the spiritual needs – Loy’s ‘lacks’ – of people; I little imagined, on beginning this dissertation, how prescient he would prove to be.

1317 Luhmann, in his system-environment distinction as constitutive of any system (including the ‘I’), offered a theory of communication, as noted in the first chapter, that has continued to help us to keep distinctions in place.
given for perfecting oneself (gratia), then divine righteousness (dikaiosunē) in the world becomes both a possibility (spes) and proleptically manifest in acts of loving-kindness (agapē).

Coda
To think that one’s own language is the supremely valid one is to plant the foundation stone of tyranny and exclusion. However, to speak with another’s language – or, at the least, to speak the one in a variety of modes or dialects – is to diversify and embrace otherness, and consequently enrich one’s own biography and experiences, for what we touch demands keen observance, new awareness, fresh response. What applies here to each individual is no less applicable to our buddhologies and theologies. Thus, in overcoming the hegemony of one language’s self-reference and submitting to the demands of another way of thinking as required in learning another language, we move somewhat beyond current markers and confines. Beyond the immanence of what one is born into – whether of language, worldview, or religion – each person has the possibility of going beyond these boundaries and limits, though the initial immanence is absolute minimum without which neither limited nor expanded experience is possible. Our very contingency grants us the possibility of freedom. When enabled to come into contact, theology and buddhology, mutually contingently, affirm this. Then, the risk or chance of error may become the mark of ultimate truth’s unfailing presence. Giftedness comes round the corner to greet us, unexpectedly and not unnaturally, and takes us, as it were, by delight. At a time when Buddhism and Christianity cannot but encounter one another, each, if wise through its foolishness, will upāyaically and graciously interact with the other. Finally, having sought here to move beyond the given immanence of my own language, world and theology, in order to learn something of buddhology as ‘another language’ and of its world; I hope thereby to have moved, if not quite to transcendence, then at least beyond immanence.
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