



STATEMENT DB-565-4

**TIBETAN BUDDHISTS:
Exiled from Their Homeland, Extolled in the West
(Part Four in a Four-Part Series on Buddhism in North America)**

by J. Isamu Yamamoto

Summary

After the Chinese communists annexed Tibet and severely oppressed the Tibetan people, thousands of Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, fled their homeland. Many came to the West, bringing with them their religion, which is the focus of their cultural identity and which they have imparted to a growing number of Westerners.

Like the other branches of Buddhism, Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism traces its roots to the teachings and life of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Meanwhile, having adopted elements of Bon, the indigenous religion of Tibet, and Tantrism, an Indian metaphysical system, Tibetan Buddhism has developed into an exceptionally distinctive form of Buddhism.

David Young and I served the Red Cross together in the 1960s — a time when many of us in our college years were struggling with political and social issues while searching for meaning for our lives. It was during those years, but prior to our meeting each other, that David became a Tibetan Buddhist and I became a Christian.

As an African American, David grew up in a black Baptist church, but he felt his religious upbringing inadequately equipped him for the struggles he would face as an African-American adult. After a couple of white college students befriended David, they shared their newly found faith in Tibetan Buddhism with him. This Asian religion intrigued David. He identified with a people who were being oppressed by another people. He was fascinated with the emphasis on world peace preached by the Dalai Lama. But most of all, he was captivated by the unity and love he saw among different races within this religion — something he hadn't seen in Christianity.

Consequently David converted to Tibetan Buddhism, moved into the home of his Buddhist friends, and discarded his Christian faith. Meanwhile, he became active in the Red Cross, where we became good friends — each zealously trying to win the other to his new faith. I would go to the religious meetings at his home, where he introduced me to his Buddhist friends and where I listened to Buddhist teachings. He would go to Christian camps with me, where he would meet my Christian friends and hear the gospel.

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David possessed a razor-sharp mind, had a gift for making people feel comfortable in his presence, and was strikingly handsome. It was easy to like David, and it was natural to want him to return to Christ.

David and I talked a lot about our dreams and ambitions. We related how racial prejudice had affected us and what kind of women we would someday like to marry. But we always came back to the teachings of the Buddha and Christ, neither of us budging from what he believed. In time our lives drifted apart until we finally lost contact with each other.

Someday I hope to see David again. Hopefully this meeting will be in God's kingdom.

HISTORY OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Hidden in the land some call Shangri-La, isolated by the towering Himalayan Mountains, lies the remote country of Tibet. Here Buddhism has flourished in a form quite distinct from the other schools of Buddhism.

The earliest accounts of Buddhism in Tibet date back to the seventh century A.D., after Songtsen Gampo unified Tibet into a single nation and became its first king in 625. Prior to this time, Tibet was a land of separate tribes, and the prevailing belief was the ancient Bon religion — a mixture of shamanism, magic, and primitive nature worship. The Tibetans initially did not welcome Buddhism.

Only after Buddhism in Tibet had absorbed some of the occultic features of Bon did the Tibetans accept the religion as their own. Tibetan tradition states that Buddhism first came to ancient Tibet while Lhato Thori was ruler — a figure many historians regard as legendary. One day, tradition maintains, a casket fell from the heavens and landed at Lhato Thori's feet while he stood on the roof of his palace. Buddhist books and a model of a golden pagoda (a Buddhist temple in the form of a tower) were in the casket, and within the books were written six syllables: *Om Mani Padme Hum*, which became a sacred prayer of the Tibetans. The translation of the syllables is "Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus," or simply "Hail to the Buddha in our Hearts." Tibetan Buddhists believe that the continuous chanting of these syllables will deliver a person from the cycle of rebirth and send that person to nirvana at death.

Historical records present a clearer understanding for the emergence of Buddhism in Tibet. After Songtsen Gampo began his reign, he married two princesses, one Nepalese and the other Chinese. Both were devout Buddhists and both exercised tremendous influence over the king. Songtsen Gampo subsequently built Buddhist temples, sent Tibetan scholars and youths to surrounding countries to study Buddhism, and imported Buddhist teachers. Furthermore, he moved the capital from Yarlung to Lhasa ("God's place"), which is located in south central Tibet north of Bhutan and became the center of Tibetan Buddhism.

Trisong Detsen succeeded Songtsen Gampo to the throne and his policies further secured Buddhism in Tibet. He instituted the first monasteries in Tibet, and he continued to import Buddhist masters, one of whom was Padmasambhava, who brought the doctrine of Tantric Buddhism from India. The Tibetans quickly adopted his teachings, and soon he became revered and honored in Tibet as the "Precious Teacher." The syncretism of the ancient religion of Bon, the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism, and the Tantric practices of Padmasambhava developed into Tibetan Buddhism (also known as Vajrayana Buddhism or Tantric Buddhism) as we know it today.

In the 11th century, two Buddhists had tremendous influence on the development of Buddhism in Tibet. One was Pandit Atisha, a Buddhist scholar from Bengal who came to Tibet in about 1042. He founded the Kadampa sect, which later evolved into the Gelukpa order, the official sect of the Dalai Lamas. The other was Milarepa, a Tibetan saint whom some compare to Saint Francis. Milarepa was called "Cotton-clad" because he wore only a cotton garment. A poet and an ascetic, his life is said to have exemplified compassion and renunciation.

In 1071, the Sakya order was established in Shigatse, a town in southeast Tibet west of Lhasa. This Tibetan school went further in combining Tantric mysticism with the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism. In this sect, monks were

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not required to be celibates. Thus a religious hierarchy was secured among certain families as the post of abbot (monastery head) was passed from father to son.

In the 13th century Godan, a descendant of Genghis Khan, invited the leader of the Sakya sect in Tibet to come to Mongolia to devise a writing system for the Mongols. The interaction between these two peoples had the twofold effect of implanting Tibetan Buddhism within the Mongol dynasty and installing the Sakya sect in political power in Tibet. Later, Kublai Khan declared Tibetan Buddhism the national religion of his empire and selected Phakpa, the leader of the Sakyas, as his spiritual advisor.

After the Ming dynasty in China overthrew the Mongol rule in Central Asia in the 14th century, the Chinese emperors extended the same patronage toward Tibet as the Mongols. As the Mongol dynasty collapsed, however, the power of the Sakyas also dwindled. Religious and economic corruption had plagued the Tibetan government under the Sakyas. The people clamored for reform, and a brilliant scholar answered the call. Tsong Khapa (1357–1419) preached reform and unity. He founded the Ganden monastery, and his disciples became known as the Gelukpa or "those who follow the virtuous way."

One of the important reforms of Tsong Khapa was his decree prohibiting marriage among his followers. This policy terminated the transmitting of political and religious power from father to son. It also struck at the blatant immorality among monks and nuns who had glorified sexual union as a "tantric" experience. He instituted high academic standards in monasteries for any spiritual advancement. He did much to reform Tibetan Buddhism.

Tsong Khapa was succeeded by Gedun Truppa, and it was after Gedun Truppa died that the distinctive Tibetan Buddhist system of incarnations from lama ("superior one") to lama was instituted. The Tibetans believed that since Gedun Truppa had attained Buddhahood and therefore was liberated from rebirth, he had chosen to transmigrate (reincarnate) to another human body to reassume leadership over the Gelukpa.

In the 17th century, Sonam Gyatso, head of the Gelukpa and supposed incarnation of Gedun Truppa, visited the court of Altan Khan in Mongolia. As a result, Altan Khan was converted to Buddhism, and soon proclaimed Tibetan Buddhism the national religion of Mongolia. He conferred the title of Dalai Lama on Sonam Gyatso. *Dalai* is a Mongolian word that means "ocean." Thus, the rendering of Dalai Lama is "ocean of wisdom."

In 1642 Ngawang Lobsang became the fifth Dalai Lama. The establishment of the Dalai Lama as the religious and political head of Tibet became complete when he came into power.

From the 18th century into the early 20th century, Tibet was a protectorate of the Manchu dynasty in China. During this period, the Dalai Lama was the titular head of Tibet. After vying European powers sliced China into several pieces like a melon, Tibet once again enjoyed self-rule. The British, however, conducted bloody military expeditions into Tibet in an attempt to wrestle it from China. Finally, after the 1911 revolution in China, the Dalai Lama negotiated a peace treaty with the British and declared the independence of Tibet.

From 1911 to 1950, Tibet experienced relative peace because of the protection of the British. Thubten Gyatso, the 13th Dalai Lama, guided Tibet for 21 of those years. Again corruption had become rampant within the religious and political systems of Tibet. Thubten Gyatso fought to reform both religion and government. "The active reformer moved into many areas," states Laura Pilarski. "He revised scales of taxation to assess the rich more adequately; revamped the penal system, abolishing capital punishment and all severe sentences involving mutilation except for treason; and introduced a few school reforms."¹ In December 1933, Thubten Gyatso died, but not before warning his country that unless the Tibetans learned to protect their land it would soon be conquered. His words became a tragic prophecy.

Although Tibet emerged from the turmoil of World War II unscathed, turbulent years of political instability within Tibet starting in 1933 were a prelude to a civil war that began in 1947. Since the current candidate for the Dalai Lama

was still a child² and Tibet was led by a weak regency, Tibet lacked a forceful and dynamic leader in a precarious time when the country had lost its British protection and when the communists took control of the Chinese government.

Fearing an invasion from China, the Tibetans prepared to send "delegations to visit India, Nepal, Great Britain, and the United States to seek official recognition of the country's independent status, along with some help in keeping out the Chinese. These delegations, however, never left Lhasa because of the negative response from the countries approached. No nation, not even India, wanted to push Tibetan claims against Chinese ones."³ Finally, the Chinese communists invaded Tibet on October 7, 1950.

On November 17, Tenzin Gyatso, at the age of 15, was installed as the 14th Dalai Lama. A month later he removed himself to the Sikkim border and out of personal danger so that, if the Chinese were successful in their military drive toward Lhasa, he could flee to India and thereby take "the heart of the people with him."⁴ In May 1951, China annexed Tibet. The Dalai Lama then decided to return to Lhasa to comfort his people. The Chinese initially tried to convert the Tibetans to communism through peaceful propaganda, but the Tibetans resented having their ancient customs disturbed by a new belief system.

Finally, in March 1959, in one of the most dramatic episodes of contemporary history, the Dalai Lama fled his country when he realized that he could better serve his people outside of Tibet. Disguising himself, joining other members of his family who had taken different paths to the same point, traveling on yakskin rafts, crossing lofty mountains and treacherous rivers and valleys, the Dalai Lama reached the border of India safely after 15 days.

"Since 1959 the Chinese rulers have completely destroyed the main springs of Tibetan civilization," say David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, renowned scholars of Tibetan culture and history. Indeed, "religion as a creative cultural force and as the center of life in every village and every house in Tibet is no more."⁵

Meanwhile, thousands of Tibetans have fled their country and joined the Dalai Lama in exile. It is in him that they hope one day their culture, their country, and their religion will be restored. "The Dalai Lama has become one of the most visible religious leaders in the world," says John Powers in *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. "Since receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, he has been in great demand as a public speaker, and he is widely recognized as a leading figure in international efforts to promote human rights. Thus the national catastrophe of Tibet has had at least some positive results, although this fact in no way diminishes the tragedy of the Chinese invasion, nor does it diminish the shared suffering of the Tibetan people."⁶

TIBETAN BUDDHISM IN NORTH AMERICA

Chogyam Trungpa and Tarthang Tulku are the best-known Tibetan Buddhist masters to have come to North America. Both were accorded the title Rinpoche, which means "precious master," and both fled Tibet after the Chinese invasion.

Chogyam Trungpa was born in northeastern Tibet in 1939. Like most Tibetans, his family was poor. At the age of one, however, monks from the Kagyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism took him out from poverty and trained him to be a leader in their order, one of the four major orders in Tibetan Buddhism. He fled from Tibet in 1959.

During his exile, Chogyam Trungpa studied at Oxford University. In 1967, he founded the Samye-Ling Meditation Center in Scotland. In 1970, he established the Tail of the Tiger Community in the Green Mountains of Vermont. A year later he started his well-known Karma Dzong Meditation Center in Boulder, Colorado, and in April 1987 he passed away.

Trungpa's constant theme was that he was a friend to his students and not a guru. He believed teachers should not force their egos upon students. Thus, his instruction was usually individual and personal. To most, he taught a

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simple meditation, while to his advanced students he taught the traditional Tibetan meditational techniques. "In explaining Buddhist meditation," writes Emma McCloy Layman, "Chogyam Trungpa states first that it differs from the meditation of Christianity...in not involving a concept of some 'higher being' with which one tries to communicate."⁷

In contrast to the humble beginning of Chogyam Trungpa, Tarthang Tulku was born to the royal family of Gellek in eastern Tibet. He is regarded as one of the 30 reincarnated lamas of the Tarthang Monastery. Before the Chinese invaded Tibet, he had become an abbot of a monastery of the Nyingmapa branch of Tibetan Buddhism, another of the four major orders. In 1959, he also escaped the communist Chinese.

The first stop of his exile was Sikkim (then a protectorate of the Republic of India). In 1962, the Dalai Lama commissioned him to teach at Sanskrit University in Benares, India, because he was skilled in the Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, and English languages. Finally, in 1968, he came to the United States where a year later he established the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center in Berkeley, California. This center was the first of its kind, founded specifically to train Americans. In 1973, he founded the Nyingma Institute, also located in Berkeley.

In 1975, Tarthang Tulku received 900 wooded acres in Sonoma County of Northern California. There he built a monastery that he named Odiyan Tibetan Nyingma Cultural Center, a place of retreat for both Tibetans and Americans. Odiyan is a name taken from the Indian city where Padmasambhava supposedly was born. It is the first Buddhist monastery in North America designed in the traditional Tibetan style.

Tarthang Tulku tries to maintain a close relationship with all his disciples. In turn they regard him as their spiritual guide and teacher, a Buddhist master who is bringing the culture and religion of Tibet to the West.

A striking difference between the philosophies of Chogyam Trungpa and Tarthang Tulku is their positions on Tibetan culture. Chogyam Trungpa said in his popular book, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, that the effort to appear Tibetan or to practice a Tibetan lifestyle is a hindrance to spiritual development. On the other hand, Tarthang Tulku encourages his students to develop an appreciation for the Tibetan culture and has himself done much to preserve the literature, art, and religion of Tibet.

One of the better known Westerners to have become a Tibetan Buddhist is Lama Anagarika Govinda. In his quest for "the true religion," he studied the major religions. After he chose Buddhism, he wrote, "At the outset of my study I had felt more or less convinced of the superiority of Christianity (though not of the Christian Church), but the further I proceeded the more I found myself in agreement with Buddhism, until it became clear to me that Buddhism was the only religion I could follow with the fullest conviction."⁸

Many Westerners have come to the same conclusion as Govinda. Although far fewer Westerners have converted to Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism compared to Zen and Nichiren Buddhism, those who have possess a deep commitment to their new faith.

In one respect the communist invasion of Tibet has had a bright side for Tibetan Buddhists. Probably the Tibetan Buddhists would never have left their isolation in the Himalayas on their own. The forced exile of so many Tibetan Buddhists has added another tributary to the mainstream of American religions.

"A few years ago," says John Blofeld, "tragedy struck Tibet sending its people fleeing in thousands across the frontiers. Since then, the Lamas have come to recognize that, unless their homeland is recovered within a generation, the sacred knowledge may decline and vanish. Hence they are eager to instruct all who sincerely desire to learn."⁹

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

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Sometimes identified as the *Vajrayana* ("diamond") Vehicle, Tibetan Buddhism is often classified as a school of Mahayana Buddhism. Because it is so different from the rest of Buddhism in doctrine and practice, and because it monopolizes certain regions and peoples, however, Vajrayana Buddhism can reasonably be considered a Buddhist philosophy in its own right — in a class with Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism.

The Vajrayana was born in India probably in the seventh century A.D., although followers of this vehicle would argue a much earlier date of birth. The Vajrayana later became the religion of Tibet and Mongolia. It soon was recognized as Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism. Tibetan Buddhists liken the Vajrayana to a diamond because they consider both to be precious, changeless, pure, and clear. Says Lama Anagarika Govinda, "The *vajra* is regarded as the symbol of highest spiritual power that is irresistible and invincible. It is therefore compared to the diamond, which is capable of cutting asunder any other substance, but which itself cannot be cut by anything."¹⁰

Even more syncretistic than the Mahayana, the Vajrayana absorbed the Tantrism that had made inroads into Hinduism. Since Tantrism is such a vital element of its doctrine, Vajrayana Buddhism became known as Tantric Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhists claim that early Buddhism contained Tantric tendencies dating back to the first century A.D., and that the Hindus borrowed Tantric ideas from Buddhism. Most scholars, however, assert that Tantrism was a fruit of Indian Hinduism.

What is Tantrism? In the sixth century A.D., a number of spiritual books appeared in the religious circles of Indian life. They were referred to as *Tantras*. The word *tantra* relates to weaving. Thus, the theme of Tantrism is the interwovenness, interdependence, and oneness of all things. Tantrism is a mystical belief system that incorporates magical procedures in the attainment of paranormal powers. In Tantric Buddhism these powers are employed in the quest for Enlightenment.

Practitioners of Tantrism use the mind, speech, and body in their meditation. Technical aids are *mantras*, *yantras*, and *mudras*. Tantric Buddhists attribute considerable importance to the mantra as the audio technique of meditation. They believe that the sacred syllables of a mantra have the power to penetrate the Absolute and communicate with divine spirits, or rather the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.¹¹ Their most sacred mantra is *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

The yantra is the visual technique of meditation. The most important visual aid is the mandala, which displays an intricate pattern of symbolic figures. The Buddhist mandala reveals to the meditator secret forces that emanate from within his or her own consciousness through the figures of peaceful and wrathful deities, or rather the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. The mandala is at once a symbolic representation of the human body and of the entire universe.

The mudras are bodily gestures that accompany meditation. The hand gestures are particularly significant. The positions of hands and fingers distinguish the identity of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas from one another, each representing a distinct spiritual quality.

The total dedication to the quest for Enlightenment through the use of Tantrism is known as the Short Path. The Short Path employs techniques to reach Enlightenment much more quickly through far fewer lifetimes than would be otherwise accomplished through Mahayana practices. Since spiritual aids in Tantrism are so powerful and dangerous, Tibetan Buddhists urge that they be used only under the instruction and guidance of a trained lama or yogin. In short, Tibetan Buddhists enlist special Tantric techniques such as mantras, yantras, and mudras to attain Enlightenment.

Another significant doctrine that Tibetan Buddhism absorbed from Hinduism — related to Tantrism — is Shaktism, a belief system that worships the divine power of the consort of a particular god. Translated into the Vajrayana doctrine, Shaktism attributed each Buddha and Bodhisattva with female counterparts. The Tibetan gods became the symbol of *upaya*. *Upaya* is love and compassion; it is the active, male principle. The Tibetan goddesses became the symbol of *prajna*. *Prajna* is knowledge; it is the passive, female principle. The union of *upaya* and *prajna* became the spiritual symbol for achieving nirvana.¹²

The more a Tibetan Buddhist is engaged in Shaktism, the more he takes this concept literally. Many other Tibetan Buddhists regard this important doctrine as a symbolic expression of the oneness of body and spirit and the union between supreme bliss and wisdom. They disdain any reference to Tibetan Buddhism as being a form of Shaktism. For them, upaya and prajna must unite in order for a person to attain Buddhahood, but that person must not abuse this principle by engaging in sexual promiscuity.

"To illustrate this point," says the Dalai Lama, "when the Buddha taught the various higher tantras, he did so while appearing as the principal deity of the respective mandala in union with consort. Therefore, practitioners must also, in their imaginations, visualize themselves in the divine aspect of a deity in union with consort."¹³

Other Vajrayana Buddhists consider the union of upaya and prajna to mean sexual union. They believe that sexual union between a man and a woman during sacred rituals will accelerate the attainment of Perfection.

TIBETAN BUDDHISTS IN THE WEST

Tibetan Buddhists actually comprise two groups: Tibetan nationals and their descendants, and Westerners who have chosen Tibetan Buddhism as their faith.

After communist China conquered Tibet in 1951, about 100,000 Tibetans fled their homeland because the communists had treated the Tibetan people with extreme cruelty. Initially the Tibetan exiles went to India, but many of them have since come to the West. These exiles include both religious leaders, such as the Dalai Lama and other lamas, and the laity. It is important to understand, therefore, as missionary Marku Tsering points out, that "Many Tibetan Buddhist peoples see Buddhism as a rallying point for cultural survival. An individual who seriously considers religious change becomes open to charges of treason and social betrayal."¹⁴

Meanwhile, a number of Westerners not only have converted to Tibetan Buddhism, but also have adopted Tibetan customs — such as dress, food, and even speech patterns. Some, such as Lama Anagarika Govinda, have become lamas themselves.

EVANGELISTIC SUGGESTIONS

Since the communists have ruthlessly tried to exterminate the Tibetan culture — particularly their religion — for nearly half a century, it is important for Christians to understand why Tibetans are extremely resistant to what they perceive as Christian attacks against their religion and cultural identity. On the one hand, we should be careful not to offend their cultural sensibilities; we must show them respect and politeness when articulating the gospel to them. On the other hand, we should not be so cautious in our attempt not to upset them that we ignore presenting the gospel altogether.

As with Southeastern Buddhists, Christians will be more effective in their evangelism of Tibetan Buddhists if they try to learn as much about Tibetan culture and religion as they can beforehand. Tsering makes the following astute comment about Christian missions to Tibetan Buddhists in Asia: "Missions conducted in ignorance of key Buddhist beliefs about suffering, sin, and redemption can run afoul of unintended meanings."¹⁵ This statement is also true of evangelism of Tibetan Buddhists in North America.

As for Westerners who have become Tibetan Buddhists, most assume that they already know the teachings of Christianity and believe it to be inferior to Buddhism. In fact, however, they usually have an understanding of the gospel that has been distorted by Western culture. If possible, give them a red-letter edition of the New Testament and encourage them to read the words of Jesus in a modern translation. If they are truly searching for the truth, the Holy Spirit will open their eyes when they read and consider Christ's words.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In his book *The Power of Compassion*, the Dalai Lama says, "One religion obviously cannot satisfy all of humanity. Under such circumstances, a variety of religions is actually necessary and useful, and therefore the only sensible thing is that all different religions work together and live harmoniously, helping one another."¹⁶

Jesus, however, said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36).

Whose statements sound more loving, peaceable, and compassionate? Understandably, the words of the Dalai Lama sound more pleasing to our ears. But like the succulent peach that I mentioned in the first article in this series (a peach that looked fine on the outside but was rotten on the inside), things are not necessarily what they appear to be.

The Dalai Lama and many other Buddhists invite Christians to be tolerant of their beliefs, just as they seemingly are with ours. If that means treating them with dignity and kindness, then as Christians we should not hesitate to do both. But if that means being silent about the ultimate issues of life, then as Christians we need to strive to persuade them that salvation can be found only in Jesus Christ.

In 1975, I was speaking on Buddhism at Cornell University. After my talk, a woman in her late 40s approached and related her story to me. Although I have forgotten her name, I will always remember her story. When I first noticed this woman, I thought she had wanted to upbraid me for being a narrow-minded Christian. The way she was dressed and the expression on her face gave me the impression that she was a white Westerner who had embraced Eastern mysticism. But I was wrong.

She had grown up in an affluent home in which her family considered themselves to be Christians, but rarely attended church. After losing her only child in an auto accident and her husband to another woman, she sought meaning for her life by examining different religions. This search eventually led her to a Tibetan monastery in California.

At first the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism fascinated her. But as the members of this Buddhist community became increasingly critical of the life and teachings of Christ, she became more and more uneasy. After several years in this monastery, she finally realized that it was an illusion to believe that Buddhism was tolerant of other religions.

She became disillusioned and wanted nothing to do with *any* religion. But when problems with her health worsened, her fear of death compelled her to think about God. Because Buddhism had taught her to detach herself from her sufferings by realizing that all things are impermanent, and because this view of suffering had not brought comfort to her, she decided to seek answers concerning her sufferings by reading the Gospels.

In short, it was like scales falling from her eyes. After decades of dealing with personal suffering through her own efforts, she cast her burdens on Christ and finally enjoyed a peace that strengthened her soul. This woman shared her faith in Christ not only with me but also with those who objected to my declaration that only in Christ is there salvation. This woman did what Jesus asks all His followers to do.

"Whoever acknowledges me before men," said Jesus, "I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

Shortly afterward, this woman passed away. Thank God, Jesus will acknowledge her, as well as each of us who acknowledge Him as Lord, before our heavenly Father.

NOTES

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¹Laura Pilarski, *Tibet: Heart of Asia* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), 90.

²After the Dalai Lama dies Tibetan lamas use oracles and omens to help find the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama. Positive identification is made when the child selects objects having belonged to the previous Dalai Lama.

³Pilarski, 101.

⁴*Ibid.*, 106.

⁵David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet* (Boulder, CO: Prajna Press, 1980), 268, 273.

⁶John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Pub., 1995), 186.

⁷Emma McCloy Layman, *Buddhism in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976), 99.

⁸Lama Anagarika Govinda, *The Way of the White Clouds* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1970), 72.

⁹John Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970), 9.

¹⁰Govinda, 61.

¹¹Bodhisattvas are beings who seek Enlightenment but delay Buddhahood (or extinction) in order to save others first with their own merits.

¹²The union of *upaya* and *prajna* is personified in Tibetan art, such as the illustration of the ecstatic embrace of the *Yabyun* (Father—Mother) figures, or the statues depicting the divine union between *Demchog* (highest bliss) and *Dorje Phasmo* (transcendental knowledge).

¹³Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *The World of Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 97.

¹⁴Marku Tsering, "The Tibetan Buddhist World," *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, July 1993, 150. ¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶The Dalai Lama, *The Power of Compassion* (San Francisco: The Aquarian Press, 1995), 84.