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An analysis of the interaction between zazen and meditation in the Catholic tradition

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**An analysis of the interaction between  
*zazen* and meditation  
in the Catholic tradition**

Thesis submitted by  
Yvette Lorraine Harrington

For the award of Doctor of Philosophy  
Institute of Theology and Liberal Arts

St. Mary's University, London

February 2022

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## **i Abstract**

Different forms of Buddhism have migrated to Great Britain and there is a great deal of curiosity about them. Catholics, not just in Great Britain but throughout much of the English-speaking world, have shown much interest, particularly since the second Vatican Council.

*Zazen*, a form of meditation that is practised in Zen Buddhism, is of interest to a growing number of Christians. As a non-Christian practice, however, is *zazen* in harmony with Catholic teaching as set out in magisterial documents?

The thesis addresses two key questions:

(1) To what extent is Zen Buddhist spirituality compatible with Catholic thought and tradition?

(2) To what extent do magisterial documents enable a Catholic to participate in the meditation methods of a non-Christian belief system, in this case, Zen Buddhism?

The thesis responds to these two questions by reflection on scholarly literature, the study of magisterial documents and the conducting of a series of one-to-one interviews with both Christians and Zen Buddhists. I had originally intended to carry out these interviews in person but the beginning of this stage of my research coincided with the onset, and subsequent spread, of the coronavirus outbreak. The interviews were, therefore, conducted instead through on-line conference platforms such as Zoom.

At the heart of this thesis is a theological analysis of three issues of contemporary interest. These are 1) the nature of *jukai* and its overlap with Catholic sacraments of initiation 2) Zen Buddhist-Catholic interreligious relationships: dialogue and dual belonging, and 3) Contemplative prayer *vis á vis zazen*.

The research is original and not only addresses a subject that is of current interest but does so in a way that distils complex theological issues into a topic of relevance to all those interested in the relationship of Catholics and non-Christian prayer.

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**Title of degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

**Title of thesis:** An analysis of the interaction between *zazen* and meditation in the Catholic tradition

**Date:** February 28, 2022

## **ii Acknowledgements**

My PhD journey has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life. It has been truly rewarding, full of surprises and – at times – enormously challenging, particularly when I was grappling with complex theological issues and the resulting tangle of differing opinions cluttered the path to an easy conclusion.

As one door closes another opens, or, at least, that is the maxim. For 30 years, I have worked as an editor and journalist in corporate communications. Now I will combine this experience with the theological knowledge and research skills acquired during my PhD study to steer my career in a new and exciting direction.

It sounds trite to say that I am indebted to my supervisors, Professor Peter Tyler and Dr. David Fincham, for taking me under their wings but I can think of no more appropriate a phrase to illustrate my gratitude for their support, the benefit of their experience and their extensive knowledge. Our regular supervision meetings were mostly eagerly anticipated times when I looked forward to sharing new developments of my research without either of them nodding off to sleep. And, dare I say it, the meetings also contained a good measure of humour!

I am deeply grateful to all the people who so willingly agreed to be interviewed for chapters four and five of this thesis. I have spoken to many wonderful people around the world – people who gave their time so generously and for no other reason than to contribute to my research. Lengthy as the list is, I name them all here: Sr. Yoshiko Aoki R.S.C.J., Dr. Ellen Birx, Dr. Kim Boykin, Ray Cicetti, Dr. Christopher Collingwood, Fr. Michael Holleran, Thomas Yuho Kirchner, Mike Leutchford, Fr Professor Declan Marmion S.M., Fr. Greg Mayers C.Ss.R., Archbishop Dr. Kevin McDonald, Sr. Marlene Milasus O.S.B., Meido Moore, Dr. 'Myotai', Migaku Sato, Sr. Madeleine Tacy O.P., Jiryu Mark Rutschman-Byler and Yuko Yamada.

I thank my niece, Eleanor Hussey, for her time and creativity in producing the map of Japan at the beginning of this thesis. There were numerous revisions to this map but she gladly incorporated comment after comment from me until I was happy with the final version. Her endless patience is something to behold!

I am blessed to enjoy numerous friendships in different corners of the world and these are relationships that I treasure. I will not name them all individually because I do not want to unintentionally exclude anyone and cause offence, but you know who you are and I am filled with gratitude for our friendship. I am particularly grateful to Gret and John Woodason for the interest they showed in my subject and for their support during my research.

I am also grateful to have grown up in a secure family unit, something that is not always available today. As a child, I lived in Australia for two years and, because of the distance to the nearest school, my mother taught us all at home. Academically, it clearly gave me a good start in life and provided a firm foundation for where I find myself today.

I began my higher education at a community college in Cranford, New Jersey. One of my modules was English literature, taught by a Professor Allen Ashby, and we sat on old couches with the springs poking through the fabric. During our classes, we talked about life and living and I wondered if we would do any writing. We did write – lots of it and I discovered a love for it. Allen was amazing: unorthodox

in his teaching style yet completely achieving his objective as a teacher. He inspired me and sparked in me an excitement over the written word. He recognised, long before I did, that I had a career ahead of me in journalism. I hope our paths will cross again one day.

.....and, finally – bizarrely, perhaps – I have left to last the person most deserving of my thanks. My husband, Deacon Lawrence Murawski, is the most supportive and most generous person I could have hoped to have at my side. When I first broached the idea of me continuing onto achieving a PhD, he responded with his American ‘can-do’ attitude. “Go for it,” he said, without hesitation, and so I did, with gusto. There he was all the time, lifting me up when I was down, giving me hope when I doubted and filling me with a bolshy confidence when I was uncertain. Not once did I hear a complaint about the times when my desk lamp glowed well into the quiet night and I barely looked up from my keyboard when he spoke to me. It is to him that I rightfully dedicate this thesis. My PhD journey’s over now, Larry. Come on ... let’s crack open a bottle of Taittinger.

Yvette Harrington, B.A., M.A., Ph.D.,  
February, 2022



### **iii Abbreviations**

- BCE Before the Common Era
- DH *Declaration of Religious Freedom Dignitatis Humanae.*
- DI *On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church Dominus Iesus.*
- DP *Dialogue and Proclamation, Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*
- DS *On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian Donum Veritatis.*
- DV *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum.*
- ES *On the Church Ecclesiam Suam.*
- LG *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Lumen Gentium.*
- MC *On the Mystical Body of Christ Mystici Corporis Christi.*
- NA *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate.*
- OF *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation: Orationis Formas.*
- RM *On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate Redemptoris Missio.*
- WL *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian reflection on the "New Age".*

## iv Map of Japan

Japan is an archipelago comprising four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. There are also numerous smaller islands. The country is densely forested and mountainous, with hot springs and geothermal activity. Because of its geographical position, there are frequent earthquakes, although most are minor tremors.

With just under 10 million inhabitants, Tokyo is not only the country's capital, it is also its largest city. Kyoto, location of many of the country's temples, is a much smaller city, with 1.5 million residents.

There are shrines and temples throughout Japan and the ones shown here are only a small selection, most of which have been mentioned in this thesis. These are broadly either Shinto, the indigenous religion, or one of the Japanese Buddhist sects, including Zen, the focus of this thesis.

Included on the map are three sacred peaks: Mt. Fuji, subject of numerous pieces of art and pilgrimage site; Mt. Koya, the home of Shingon Buddhism; and Mt. Hiei, centre of *Tendai* Buddhism.



Not to scale

Map reproduced courtesy of Eleanor Hussey

## v Explanation of key terms used in this thesis

*The key terms below relate to the Zen Buddhist school. Some of the terms may also be used in other schools of Buddhism, where they sometimes have a different interpretation.*

*Dharma:* (Sanskrit; Pāli, *dhamma*): The Buddhist teachings.

*Dhyāna* (Sanskrit; Pāli, *jhāna*): Transliterates to Zen in Japanese and Chan in Mandarin.

*Dokusan:* One-to-one meetings with one's teacher, similar to spiritual direction in Christian circles but with a greater focus on guidance on improving one's *zazen* technique. *Dokusan* is an integral part of *zazen* instruction. The word itself tends to be associated with the *Sōtō* tradition.

*Inka:* The final seal of approval, granted by a Zen master, that a student is now a *Dharma* heir and can initiate his own lineage.

*Jukai:* A Japanese word that means to receive the precepts, or ethical rules. Ju = to receive, kai = the precepts. This ceremony is sometimes regarded as one's entrance into Zen Buddhism, but it depends upon the school and the *sangha*.

*Kenshō:* An initial experience of awakening, representing the gateway to greater *zazen* practice to deepen the insight.

*Kinhin:* Walking meditation, usually undertaken for short periods of time between episodes of sitting meditation.

*Kōan:* A type of riddle, often in the form of a short story relating to the life of a famous Zen master. *Kōan* are associated with the *Rinzai* Zen tradition, although they may also be used in the *Sōtō* Zen tradition and the contemporary sects. *Kōan* are assigned to a *zazen* student to aid enlightenment.

*Ōbaku:* A sub-sect of the *Rinzai* school which originated in Japan but has retained a Chinese culture and many Chinese traditions.

*Rakusu:* a garment, often sewn by the wearer, usually made in preparation for one's reception of *jukai*. It is worn over one's neck and is a shortened version of the *kesa*, or monk's robes.

*Rinzai:* One of the two main Zen Buddhist schools in Japan. It was brought from China to Japan in 1190 by the monk Eisai. The other school is *Sōtō*.

*Rōshi:* A Japanese word that literally means old (Zen Buddhist) master but has taken on a new meaning and can be interpreted differently, depending on the sect. Generally, in the West, the term has become a title to denote a teacher who has achieved a certain level of training and can carry out certain functions.

*Samadhi:* (Sanskrit) A meditative state in which the mind is without thoughts and images and subject and object merge. It is part of the final step in the Eightfold Path.

*Sangha:* A specific community of Buddhist followers or practitioners.

*Sanzen:* This is a *Rinzai* word for the one-to-one exchanges with one's teacher, referred to as *dokusan* in the *Sōtō* school.

*Satori*: Enlightenment – this word is sometimes used interchangeably with *kenshō*, but it differs from the former in that *kenshō* is the initial experience of awakening.

*Sesshin*: An intensive Zen Buddhist retreat typically lasting between a few days to a week, where most of the day is spent in *zazen*.

*Shikantaza*: A form of *zazen* commonly practised in the *Sōtō* tradition, sometimes referred to as ‘just sitting’, the English translation.

*Sōtō*: One of the two main Zen Buddhist schools in Japan. It was brought to that country from China by Dōgen in 1127. The other main school is *Rinzai*.

*Sutra*: The Buddhist scriptures, usually based on conversations of the Buddha or his disciples.

*Teisho*: *Dharma* talk, given by a teacher, often carried out during *sesshin*.

*Zazen*: Seated meditation, traditionally undertaken in the lotus position.

*Zabuton*: A large flat cushion onto which one places a *zafu* in order to carry out meditation.

*Zafu*: a small cushion upon which one sits during *zazen*.

*Zazen*: Literally, ‘sitting meditation’.

*Zen-ji*: A Zen teacher.

*Zendo*: A meditation hall, where *zazen* is carried out. Participants sit in two rows, one either side of the hall. In a *Rinzai* community, people sit facing each other, while in a *Sōtō* hall they face the wall.

# - PART I -

## IN THE BEGINNING ...

### **Introduction and overview of Part I**

Buddhism originated in an area on the border of India and Nepal, and is one of the world's oldest religions, predating Christianity by some 500 years. Its founder is Siddhārtha Gautama (Sanskrit; Pāli, Siddhattha Gotama), later to become known as the Buddha, the 'awakened one',<sup>1</sup> who grew up as a prince but abandoned his privileged life to embark on a spiritual search. The Buddha acquired disciples, and they took his message across India, although by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Buddhism had virtually disappeared from the land of its birth.<sup>2</sup> However, Buddhism was prospering in other areas of Asia. It had already spread into China and beyond via the trade routes around the time of the birth of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> In the third century, Buddhism entered Sri Lanka and the country became an esteemed learning centre of Buddhist thought.<sup>4</sup> In the eighth century, monks travelled north to establish the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet.<sup>5</sup>

The 'planting' of the Buddha's teaching across different cultures in Asia, established three main streams of Buddhism. Theravāda, or 'Southern' Buddhism, is found mainly in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. The Theravāda tradition's scriptures are preserved in Pāli. A second stream, Mahāyāna, or 'eastern' Buddhism, is prevalent in China, Korea and Japan.<sup>6</sup> Mahāyāna scriptures are preserved in Chinese. The third stream, Tibetan

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<sup>1</sup> Siddhārtha Gautama was born into the Shakya clan so is occasionally referred to as Shakyamuni, a Sanskrit name meaning 'Sage of the Shakyas'. I talk in greater detail about the Buddha's life in Chapter One, section 1.1.

<sup>2</sup> Gethin, R., (1998) *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 257

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 253.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 276. Gethin points out that an initial wave of Buddhist thought entered Tibet in the seventh century through the two wives of King Srong-bstan-sgam-po (d.649), one of whom was Chinese and the other Nepalese. However, it was not until the monastery bSam-yas was established a century later that Buddhism really began to become imbedded in the cultural landscape. See Gethin, 266.

<sup>6</sup> Korean and Japanese forms of Buddhism descended directly from the Chinese Tripitaka and therefore share some commonalities. However, they later developed local variations. See Gethin, 257.

Buddhism, is sometimes referred to as 'Northern' Buddhism, and it is found chiefly in Tibet and Mongolia. Scriptures are preserved in Tibetan.<sup>7</sup>

There are wide variations in the practice of each expression of Buddhism, but they all draw their teaching from Siddhārtha.<sup>8</sup> At its most fundamental, this teaching centres upon suffering or *dukkha* (Sanskrit; Pāli, *dukkha*), a condition that every human being will face during his or her lifetime.<sup>9</sup>

One of the reasons why Buddhism has been so successful in travelling to other countries is its ability to prosper alongside local customs and indigenous religions.<sup>10</sup> As one example, it is not uncommon for Japanese Buddhists to worship at a Shintō shrine. They might also marry at a Shintō shrine but be buried in a Buddhist ceremony. The most remarkable spreading of Buddhism, however, has been in the West, especially in the time since World War II. This thesis will not examine Buddhist meditation practice as a whole because there are vast differences between Buddhist traditions, making the subject extremely broad. Instead, my study will focus on how *zazen*, a form of meditation practised in the Zen Buddhist<sup>11</sup> tradition, has influenced Christian prayer.

The impetus for this thesis was my unpublished paper *Contemporary Spirituality and its Influence on the Christian Retreat Experience: UK and Ireland*. This paper revealed that a high number of Christian retreat house programmes in the UK, and virtually every Christian retreat house in Ireland, are influenced by some element of contemporary spirituality.<sup>12</sup> This finding was supported by a survey that I carried out of 106 Christians,<sup>13</sup> which revealed that some respondents were

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<sup>7</sup> Gethin, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Gethin, 59-60

<sup>10</sup> Gethin, 128-129. As well as the Japanese example, Gethin also points out that there are similar incidents of dual attachment in the Buddhist countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and Tibet.

<sup>11</sup> Zen Buddhism is an outgrowth of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which mingled with Taoism when it moved from India to China. I will be discussing the development of Zen Buddhism in more detail in Chapter One.

<sup>12</sup> By contemporary spirituality, I am referring to prayer practices and spiritualities that have gained popularity in the West during the past 50 years. These include walking the labyrinth, centring prayer, eco-spirituality and meditation methods originating from non-Christian faiths.

<sup>13</sup> Of the 106, 90 were practising Catholics, 13 were church-going Christians of other denominations; two were Christians but not regular church-goers; and one person did not specify religious allegiance. See Harrington, Y.L. (2016) *Contemporary Spirituality and its Influence on the Christian Retreat Experience: UK and Ireland*, Birmingham, England: Maryvale Institute, 44.

interested in elements of contemporary spirituality, including meditation techniques from non-Christian religions.

These survey results led me to investigate what guidance exists to assist Catholics when they are considering adopting prayer practices and elements of spiritualities that have been ‘imported’ from non-Christian traditions. While the combining of Zen Buddhism with Christianity is topical, there is an absence of published material that examines the interaction between *zazen*<sup>14</sup> and the Catholic tradition of meditation, and then evaluates the relationship from a doctrinal point of view.

This thesis, which is the result of original research, will focus on *zazen* and the place it has taken in the spiritual lives of present-day Catholic Christians, particularly since the time of World War II. However, to arrive at this point I must first explore two chronologies: that of the evolution of Zen Buddhism and that of the development of Christian-Zen Buddhist dialogue. I do this in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I review books authored by a wide variety of people who are, in some way, connected to the subject of this thesis. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology that I will undertake during my enquiries. In Part II, I conduct a series of one-to-one interviews with people who speak from both a Christian and a Zen Buddhist perspective. These interviews are spread over Chapters Four and Five. Part III contains an analysis of three themes that grew in significance during the interview process: *jukai* (Chapter Six), Zen Buddhist-Catholic relationships (Chapter Seven), and contemplative prayer *vis à vis zazen* (Chapter Eight). Chapter Nine is a summary of my findings and conclusion.

I conclude this introductory chapter with some points that I would like to make about various terms that I have used in this thesis. These terms have different interpretations and could, therefore, cause confusion without clarification on how they have been used.

1) My first point concerns the word ‘religion’, particularly in connection with Buddhism. Some people deny that Buddhism is a religion at all, and class it as a

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<sup>14</sup> The Japanese word *zazen* literally translates to ‘sitting meditation’ and it is a key focus of Japanese Zen Buddhism. It is usually undertaken in the cross-legged ‘lotus’ position, with the right foot resting on the left thigh and the left foot resting on the right thigh.

philosophy. The reason for this appears to be a consensus in some circles that, to qualify as a religion, there lies an implicit belief in God. It is true that the Buddha did not comment on God so one might call Buddhism agnostic, but belief in a supreme deity is not necessarily a pre-requisite for the classification of a religion. Buddhism is a highly developed belief system with sacred writings, a world-view and a code of conduct. Buddhism is the world's fourth largest religion, encompassing about six per cent of the world's population.<sup>15</sup> It is no more relevant to dismiss Buddhism as a philosophy than it is to do so with a clearly theistic faith.

2) In this thesis, I am using the word 'spirituality' in a broad sense and in a way that might include non-Christian faiths. In his book *Spiritual Theology*, Jordan Aumann (1916-2007), a former director of the Institute of Spirituality at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, explains that the word 'spirituality' refers to behaviour that stems from one's religious or ethical values.<sup>16</sup> This definition could, therefore, apply to both Christians and non-Christians.

3) The next point I wish to make concerns usage of the word 'meditation'. Unlike *zazen*, where one stills the mind, Catholic meditation is usually discursive, that is, reasoned, and involves pondering a mystery of the faith, extracting its meaning and then absorbing this learning into one's life. The key feature of this type of meditation is discursus. It is possible to move from meditation to another type of prayer, such as affective prayer, contemplation or even for the mind to wander onto non-spiritual subjects, but when discursus ceases, so does meditation.<sup>17</sup> Subjects for meditation could include events from the lives of Christ, Mary or the saints, a supernatural truth, the sacraments, liturgical themes and the Mass.<sup>18</sup> When I refer to Christian meditation in this thesis, I am, therefore, suggesting a filling of the mind with an aspect of belief. I rarely use the word 'meditation' in a non-Christian context (even though the Japanese term 'Zen' is a transliteration of

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<sup>15</sup> See [spiritualdirection.com](http://spiritualdirection.com) [accessed October 30, 2021].

<sup>16</sup> Aumann, J., (1980) *Spiritual Theology*, London, England: Continuum, 17. Aumann (1916-2007), was a former director of the Institute of Spirituality at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome and authored eight books on spiritual theology.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-319

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.



the Mandarin 'Chan') because 'meditation' in a Zen Buddhist context differs from the Christian practice and understanding.

In some circles, the word 'meditation' is commonly used today as a method of relieving stress or boosting one's well-being. In this thesis, the word 'meditation' is not being used in that context.

4) The word 'Zen' is a Japanese transliteration of the Mandarin '*Chan*' (meaning 'meditation') which, in turn, is derived from the Sanskrit word for '*Chan*', *Dhyāna*.<sup>19</sup> I wish to make a number of comments regarding the word 'Zen' because it has become a broad, rather vague, 'catch-all' phrase. In fact, it was not always clear in the reading I undertook exactly in what context the author was using the word 'Zen'. Sometimes, for example, 'Zen' was used as a synonym for meditation. At other times, the term 'Zen Buddhism' was replaced by 'Zen' for simplicity. I have also seen 'Zen' used on its own, to avoid associating it with a religion. In other cases, 'Zen' was used to convey a wider, less specific interpretation of the word. In my own writing, I have avoided using the word 'Zen' when I mean '*zazen*' and have not shortened 'Zen Buddhism' to 'Zen'.

There are expressions of Zen Buddhism in use in various countries in the Far East. The word 'Zen' is sometimes retained in those countries and has not been translated into an equivalent in the local language. Thus, one sometimes sees the term 'Korean Zen' or 'Vietnamese Zen' and so on, and this implies an adaptation of the Japanese expression to local customs and expectations in those countries. The word 'Zen', in this thesis, always refers to the Japanese expression.

5) Next, the noun 'mysticism' (and its adjective 'mystical') has also been used in this thesis and its meaning can be subject to individual interpretation. For a definition, I have again turned to Jordan Aumann, who wrote a chapter on mystical experience in *Spiritual Theology*. One of the first tasks Aumann tackled in writing the chapter was to define mysticism as there was no common understanding and, because of this, the subject had often been the cause of controversy. Aumann says there are wide variations in definitions provided by

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<sup>19</sup> Foreign nouns, such as '*Chan*' and '*Dhyāna*', have been italicised throughout this thesis. The word 'Zen' originated in Japan and thus, one might expect this also to be italicised. However, unlike its Mandarin and Sanskrit alternatives, Zen is very much in use in everyday language in the English-speaking world.

current-day authors, but they all agree on two points: 1) that mysticism is an awareness of God at work in the soul and 2) that mysticism is experienced through the activation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This activation is passively experienced and cannot be achieved through the will of the pray-er.<sup>20</sup>

6) My next point concerns the nouns 'Christian' and 'Catholic'. These have often been used interchangeably in this thesis as it is not inaccurate to refer to a Catholic as a Christian. However, a Christian is not necessarily Catholic as the person could be a member of any one of a number of other Christian denominations. To be precise, I have occasionally used the term 'Catholic Christian' but I find the expression clumsy, particularly when used repeatedly so I have limited its usage.

7) I have included diacritical marks on Japanese words because they denote a long sound when placed above a vowel and to omit the long sound can change the meaning of the word. Because I have included diacritical marks on Japanese words, I have also done so with the Pāli and Sanskrit words.

8) The word '*kōan*', used liberally throughout this thesis, is not a diphthong (which is how native English speakers tend to pronounce the word) but two separate syllables.

9) The syllable 'ji' (when written 寺) means temple, such as Mampukuji (萬福寺). To be absolutely correct, when writing this in English, one does not, therefore, need to use the word 'temple' afterwards. In Japanese, one would simply say Mampukuji as 'temple' would be redundant. However, for clarity, I have used the word 'temple' when referring to temple names, even though it is tautologous.

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<sup>20</sup> Aumann (1980), 123. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Background to the current situation

### 1.1 Chronology

I will start with the chronology of the development of Zen Buddhism because, while it entered the spiritual radar of the Westerner little more than a century ago, some scholars believe that the seeds of it may go back to the time of the Buddha himself.<sup>21</sup> However, in the absence of written evidence, and the spoken word often accompanied by legend, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Zen Buddhism was born.<sup>22</sup> One widely reported account is that the seeds of Zen Buddhism began to bud when Siddhārtha held up a flower, but only his disciple Mahākāśyapa (Sanskrit; Pāli, Mahākassapa) appeared to understand and demonstrated this comprehension with a smile.<sup>23</sup>

There are historical texts pertaining to the life of the Buddha, but the ones that related to his early life are not always reliable because written records were not made until long after his death. There are also legends that are associated with the life of the Buddha and separating these from fact is difficult. However, some of the more dependable evidence does support that a man did exist in north-eastern India between the sixth and fifth centuries, BCE.<sup>24</sup> Precise dates surrounding the Buddha are uncertain, but some texts have pinpointed his birth and death to be 566-486 BCE. This timespan was originally calculated by piecing together dates and information from Pāli texts.<sup>25</sup> A further complication

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<sup>21</sup> Wu, J.C.H., (2003) *The Golden Age of Zen*, Indiana, United States of America: Wisdom Books, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Suzuki, D.T., (1927), *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, London, England: The Buddhist Society Trust, 163.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, P., (1989), *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, London, England: Routledge, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Saunders, E.D., (1977) *Buddhism in Japan*, Connecticut, United States of America: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Gethin (1998), 14. Gethin also pointed out that more recent scholars date the death of the Buddha as closer to 400 BCE than 500 BCE. In *The Life of the Buddha*, Hammalawa Saddhatissa reported that the Buddha was born in 560 BCE. Saddhatissa does not specifically state the year of the Buddha's death but writes of a conversation between Siddhārtha and his cousin/disciple Ānanda shortly before his death in which he states he was "past 80". This would put the Buddha's death at 480 BCE. See Saddhatissa, H. (1976) *The Life of the Buddha*, London, England: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 12 and 82. Dates of other people in the life of the Buddha tally with the earlier estimate of the Buddha's birth and death dates.

regarding dates are the different calendars that have been in use but, to my knowledge, all the authors I have quoted have been using the Gregorian calendar. There is, then, little dispute that the Buddha did once live and that he was born in Uttarakosala, in northeast India, on the Nepalese border, to Śuddhodana<sup>26</sup> (Sanskrit; Pāli, Suddhōdana) a Brāhman, and his first wife, Māya, and was named Siddhārtha.<sup>27</sup> The child, or *Bodhisattva*, as he was called until his enlightenment,<sup>28</sup> was raised by his aunt – Māya’s sister – as his mother died a week after giving birth. Although little has been written about his actual upbringing, Siddhārtha had a privileged life, having lived in palaces and having been assisted by servants. Some biographers say that Śuddhodana kept the *Bodhisattva* at home, grooming him to be a king, giving him everything that he could want so that he remained attached to worldly life. At 16, he married Yaśodharā (Sanskrit; Pāli, Yasodhara) who later bore him a son.<sup>29</sup> As with other aspects of the Buddha’s life, many of the details are vague, and this includes his marriage – or marriages – as he may have had more than one wife.<sup>30</sup>

As already pointed out, Siddhārtha spent much of his early life within the confines of a palace, but on four occasions he was able to make a brief foray into the world at large. Each time, he witnessed an event that would play a key role in shaping his future. On the first, second and third outing, he saw, respectively, a withered old man, a sick person, and a corpse, at which he realised that no-one can escape aging, sickness and death. On his fourth outing, he encountered a religious man, an ascetic, and Siddhārtha was impressed by his serenity. At the end of these Four Meetings – as his outings became known as – Siddhārtha was shocked by what he had seen and wanted to leave his pretentious world. He concluded that the key to the suffering he had seen laid in pursuing a life not unlike that of the holy man he had witnessed on his fourth outing. Shortly after

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<sup>26</sup> Dates are not always available for some of the less well-known people who were part of the Buddha’s life.

<sup>27</sup> Saunders (1977), 21-22

<sup>28</sup> In schools outside of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the term ‘*bodhisattva*’ refers to the Buddha prior to his awakening. The Mahāyāna school teaches that enlightenment is possible for all people so the meaning of *bodhisattva* has been broadened to anyone awaiting awakening. See [www.britannica.com/topic/Mahayana](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Mahayana) [accessed February 10, 2022].

<sup>29</sup> Harvey, P. (1990) *An Introduction to Buddhism*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Saunders (1977), 23.

the Four Meetings, Siddhārtha became a father and, having fulfilled his responsibility of continuing the bloodline, fled from his palace.<sup>31</sup>

Choosing the life of an ascetic, Siddhārtha embarked on a deep spiritual search, in which he passed from teacher to teacher, taking instruction from them. His first was a Brāhmanic sage called Ārāda Kālāma (Sanskrit; Pāli, Ārāla Kālāma) (died circa 531 BCE) but his teachings did not give him the answers he sought concerning suffering. He then became acquainted with King Bimbisāra (c543-491 BCE) of the Indian kingdom of Magadha and they formed a close friendship. The altruistic Bimbisāra was so impressed with what he saw in the *Bodhisattva* that he offered him half his kingdom. Siddhārtha had been brought up in palaces and knew that earthly riches would simply be a hindrance to his mission. He engaged another teacher, Uddaka Rāmaputta (Sanskrit; Pāli, Udraka Rāmaputra), from whom he learned advanced meditation but he remained dissatisfied and, once again, moved on, except this time Siddhārtha was accompanied by a small group of disciples.<sup>32</sup>

The asceticism practised by the group was challenging, but it failed to fulfil the *Bodhisattva's* growing discontentment. One day, he recalled an earlier event that took place in the garden of his palace. This event, a meditation, incited a feeling of deep calm and serenity, and the *Bodhisattva* became convinced that such a state of being could be the key to the answers he sought. Acquiring this meditative state, however, would first require nourishing his weakened body so, breaking his fast, the *Bodhisattva* had his fill of milk-rice. This caused the disciples to abandon him as they thought their master had given up. His stomach full and his body nourished, the *Bodhisattva* sat himself under a tree and vowed not to move until he received awakening.<sup>33</sup> There followed a period of spiritual battle with the celestial tempter Māra and, after resisting all the temptations he put forward, Siddhārtha received his long-awaited awakening and freedom from suffering.<sup>34</sup> The Buddha re-united with the disciples with whom he had shared an ascetical life and instructed them in the way of achieving freedom from suffering.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>33</sup> Gethin (1998), 22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

The Buddha spent the years after his awakening instructing groups he encountered on the path to the ultimate cessation of suffering. About 45 years after his awakening, the Buddha became ill and died.<sup>35</sup>

During the first century CE, Mahāyāna Buddhism made a monumental, historical spread from India to China and so began the laborious job of translating the volumes of Pāli and Sanskrit into Mandarin.<sup>36</sup> By the fourth century CE, Buddhism was well established in China, having spread in the country geographically, culturally and across all classes, in many cases supplanting the indigenous religion, Taoism.<sup>37</sup> However, it was an Indian monk called Bodhidharma (470-534 CE)<sup>38</sup> who is generally credited with the founding of *Chan*, an outgrowth of the imported Mahāyāna Buddhism influenced by the Taoism that already existed in China.<sup>39</sup> After the Buddha, Bodhidharma is the most important figure in the life of the Zen Buddhist but knowledge of his life, like that of the founder's, is lacking in concrete facts and shaped by legend. While there is certainly an absence of solid evidence about Bodhidharma's life and his activities, he almost certainly did once exist.<sup>40</sup> Because of Bodhidharma's position as the first Zen Buddhist patriarch in China and the founder of *Chan* in that country, I shall pause here to briefly examine his life and the particular perspective with which he approached Buddhism.

Presumed to have been born in southern India, Bodhidharma was the son of a Brāhman king. It is uncertain exactly why, but he decided to leave home and became a travelling preacher. Unlike others before him, he did not labour on flat scripture or dry theory but carried with him the spirit of the Buddha and an active spirituality.<sup>41</sup> Eventually, Bodhidharma took his teaching to southern China

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>36</sup> As I have already pointed out in the introduction to Part I of this thesis, the scriptures of Mahāyāna Buddhism are preserved in Mandarin Chinese.

<sup>37</sup> Dumoulin, D. S.J. (1963) trans Peachey, P. *A history of Zen Buddhism*, London, England: Faber and Faber, 69.

<sup>38</sup> The dates of Bodhidharma's birth and death vary, depending upon the source. The timeline 470-534 CE used in this thesis was provided by Saunders, see page 208. In *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, author Red Pine estimates his birth at 440. Pine writes that in his book *Transmission of the Lamp*, author Dao-yuan says Bodhidharma died in 528. See Pine, R. trans. (1989) *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, New York, United States of America: North Point Press, ix and xiv.

<sup>39</sup> Dumoulin (1963), 270.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>41</sup> Suzuki (1927), 181.

and soon after his arrival had a disastrous meeting with the Emperor Wu (502-550 CE), a Buddhist scholar, to whom he zealously asserted that there was little point in building temples and reciting the sutras. Following this meeting, the monk fled the area and settled in a monastery in another part of the country.<sup>42</sup> Bodhidharma became known as the ‘wall-gazing Brāhman’ because he allegedly spent nine continuous years in meditation at this monastery, causing his legs to wither away and drop off. Legends aside, Bodhidharma formed an important bridge between the Mahāyāna Buddhism of India and the new Chan of China.<sup>43</sup>

There is no concrete information concerning where Bodhidharma spent the latter years of his life. Some believe that he returned to his native India but others say that he went to Japan.<sup>44</sup> Prior to Bodhidharma’s death, he passed *Dharma* transmission onto a successor, Dazu Huike (c487-593 CE), making him the second Chinese patriarch of Zen Buddhism.<sup>45</sup> Bodhidharma is remembered as being the founder of *Chan* in China, but he might be equally recalled for a now-famous, four-line stanza that sums up his philosophy, but which he almost certainly never composed. The stanza is as follows:

Outside the scriptures, a special tradition;  
Not depending on books and letters;  
Pointing directly to the Mind of man;  
Having seen the Essence one becomes a Buddha.<sup>46</sup>

There is very little about Bodhidharma’s teaching that has been published in English. A rare exception, however, is Pine’s *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*,<sup>47</sup> which is printed in English but each page is accompanied by a Mandarin Chinese translation.

It is through the Buddhist monk Dōshō (628-700 CE) that *Chan* began to infiltrate Japan, where it became known as Zen, a transliteration of *Chan*. Dōshō was, in

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<sup>42</sup> Dumoulin (1963), 68.

<sup>43</sup> Conze, E. (1980) *A Short History of Buddhism*, London, England: George, Allen and Unwin, 88.

<sup>44</sup> Suzuki (1927), 191.

<sup>45</sup> Bodhidharma was the first Chinese patriarch of Zen Buddhism. As with Bodhidharma, there is some ambiguity over the exact dates of Huike’s birth and death. In *Buddhism in Japan*, Saunders lists two timespans: 484-590 CE and 487-593 CE, see page 209.

<sup>46</sup> There are variations of this stanza. This one is translated from the Chinese by Eliot, C. (1935) *Japanese Buddhism*, London: Edwin Arnold, 4<sup>th</sup> impression, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 160.

Reproduced by Williams, P. (1989) In *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 113.

<sup>47</sup> Pine, R. trans. (1989).

fact, Japanese but he had been living in China and studying Yogācāra, a system of philosophical thought that is related to Mahāyāna Buddhism, under a Chinese teacher, Hsüan-tsang (602-664).<sup>48</sup>

*Chan* flourished in China for two or three hundred years after Bodhidharma's death. However, by the ninth century, just two schools survived the repression of religious activities in the mid-800s CE.<sup>49</sup> These two schools, both established in the ninth century CE, are '*Lin Chi*' (Japanese, *Rinzai*, or 臨在), founded by Lin Chi Yixuan (died, circa 866 CE) and the *Ts'ao-tung* (Japanese, '*Sōtō*', or 外), founded by Ts'ao-shan (840-901 CE). Both were originally two of the 'five houses of *Chan*', a name given to the *Chan* traditions that originated during China's *Tang* period. The other three houses, each of which had its own ethos, traditions and devotions were *Guiyang*, *Fayan* and *Yunmen*. Each of the five houses varied in its teaching, and around 100 years separated the establishment of the first house from the last.<sup>50</sup> During the *Song* dynasty (960-1279 CE), these three houses were absorbed into the *Lin Chi* tradition.

The smaller of the two surviving schools was the *Lin Chi* tradition, formally brought to Japan from China by the monk Eisai (1141-1215)<sup>51</sup> whose promotion of Zen Buddhism re-aligned it as an independent Buddhist sect. Eisai's youth was spent studying *Tendai*<sup>52</sup> Buddhism but when he was in his late twenties he travelled to China and was impressed with the *Chan* centres he visited. While in China, he saw evidence of Buddhism but only *Chan* prospered. He concluded that the discipline in *Chan* could rescue Japanese Buddhism from further decline. He subsequently returned to Japan and in 1191 built the first *Rinzai* temple, Shofukuji, in the city of Hakata, Kyūshū.<sup>53</sup> *Rinzai* is characterised by *kōan*, a type of riddle that aids the person towards enlightenment. As well as solving *kōan*, shouting and use of the *kyosaku*<sup>54</sup> are features of the *Rinzai* sect, intended to

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<sup>48</sup> Dumoulin (1963), 138.

<sup>49</sup> Gethin (1998), 263.

<sup>50</sup> Dumoulin (1963), 122.

<sup>51</sup> Eisai's life is further discussed in Chapter Eight 'Contemplative prayer vis-à-vis zazen', section 8.6.

<sup>52</sup> The *Tendai* sect is of Japanese Mahāyāna Buddhist origin and reveres the teaching of the Lotus sutra.

<sup>53</sup> Saunders (1977), 220.

<sup>54</sup> A *kyosaku*, sometimes called '*keisaku*' is a stick about a metre long and flattened at one end. It is used to strike the shoulders of people suffering from sleepiness during *zazen*, to revive them. The



mentally catapult the person into sudden enlightenment. *Rinzai* became particularly popular among the Samurai, which led to its reputation as a spirituality fitting for a general.<sup>55</sup>

The larger of the two surviving Zen Buddhist traditions in China at the time was *Ts'ao-tung*, formally brought from China to Japan by the monk Dōgen (1200-1253). He became a patriarch in a new expression of Zen Buddhism in Japan: the *Sōtō* school.<sup>56</sup>

Towards the end of Japan's Muromachi period (1393-1573), a time when the arts flourished, interest in Zen Buddhism declined as the focus and emphasis on cultural pursuits had the effect of extinguishing spirituality.

The arrival in Japan in 1654 of the Chinese *Lin Chi* priest Yin-yüan (1592-1673) heralded the establishment in that country of the *Ōbaku* tradition,<sup>57</sup> and this helped to re-invigorate the interest in Zen Buddhism. Yin-yüan's original intention was to stay in Japan for a few years, minister to the expatriate Chinese *Lin Chi* community in and around Nagasaki, and then return to China. However, his disciples hoped he might remain in Japan and become an abbot within his own *Rinzai* tradition but friction developed and this led to the planting of a new sect, *Ōbaku*.<sup>58</sup> Yin-yüan, or Ingen, as he was known in Japan, acquired land near Kyoto and built Mampukuji temple, which, to the current day, remains the *Ōbaku* sect's head temple. The tradition's Chinese heritage is reflected in the design of the temple, liturgical garments, pronunciation of characters in the Sutras and in the choice of musical instruments used in ceremonies. The sect's Chinese roots are also reflected in the monks' use of a common eating bowl from which they take their portions using chopsticks. A further distinctive feature, although not

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*kyosaku* is also sometimes referred to as 'the encouragement stick', to remove connotations of punishment.

<sup>55</sup> Conze (1980), 114.

<sup>56</sup> Unusually, Dōgen also received training in the *Rinzai* school but he became frustrated with the focus on solving *kōan*. In Chapter Eight, section 8.6, I include a brief biography of Dōgen, which suggests a dissatisfaction with *zazen* practice in the *Rinzai* school and discusses his subsequent transition to the *Sōtō* school.

<sup>57</sup> Some scholars treat *Ōbaku* as a separate Zen Buddhist school. However, most consider it part of the *Rinzai* tradition out of which it grew.

<sup>58</sup> Baroni, H.J., (2006) *Iron Eyes: The Life and Teachings of Ōbaku Zen Master Tetsugen Doko*, New York, United States of America: State University of New York Press, 6 [e-book].

necessarily Chinese, is the veneration of Amida, the Buddha spirit in one's daily life.<sup>59</sup>

While the establishment of the *ōbaku* tradition gave the downward trend of Zen Buddhism in Japan a brief respite, the effect was only temporary. In fact, the *Rinzai* tradition, considerably smaller than its *Sōtō* counterpart, soon became in danger of extinction until Zen master Hakuin (1685-1768) salvaged it from almost certain obsolescence.<sup>60</sup> As a prolific producer of Zen Buddhist art and calligraphy, Hakuin used his considerable creative talent to reach ordinary men and women and bring them a fresh, new spirituality. In fact, Hakuin's art caught the interest of the western world long after his death when curiosity in Zen Buddhism soared during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, books about Hakuin in foreign languages began to appear and his work was exhibited outside Japan.<sup>61</sup>

## 1.2 Christian-Zen Buddhist dialogue

It was during the dip in interest in Zen Buddhism in the Muromachi period described above that Christianity entered Japan through the Society of Jesus (Jesuit) priest Francis Xavier (1506-1552),<sup>62</sup> who arrived by ship in Kagoshima, southern Japan, in 1549 with a small group of Christians. The fledgling Society of Jesus was the first religious order to be established specifically for missionary work, and its members had promised to be available to the Pope wherever the need was greatest.<sup>63</sup> King John III of Portugal asked Pope Paul III for a priest to evangelise in the Portuguese colonies of the East so Ignatius of Loyola, first superior of the Society of Jesus, nominated Xavier. In 1540, Xavier left for Goa,

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<sup>59</sup> Saunders (1977), 252-253.

<sup>60</sup> Yoshizawa, K., and Waddell, N. (2009) *The Religious Art of Zen Master Hakuin*, California, United States of America: Counterpoint, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 2. In Chapter Two, section 2.2.3, I point out that Zen master Miyamae Shinzan (1935-) merged the teachings of Ekaku Hakuin (1685-1768) with those of Yotaku Bankei (1622-1693) to form a new lineage.

<sup>62</sup> Spaniard Francis Xavier was one of the first seven members of the newly formed Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) religious order. He, along with Ignatius of Loyola and five others took their vows in 1534. Xavier travelled to large parts of Asia on evangelisation missions. He became ill and died in 1552 on Shangchuan Island in China. He was canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622.

<sup>63</sup> Dougill, J. (2012) *In Search of Japan's Hidden Christians: A Story of Suppression, Secrecy and Survival*, Vermont, United States of America: Tuttle Publishing, 12.

arriving there in 1542.<sup>64</sup> While in the Indian sub-continent, Xavier received word that the Japanese were an educated people who were ready for conversion.<sup>65</sup> These were the events that led to Xavier and his group's arrival in Kagoshima. The missionary activity in Japan was pioneered by the Jesuits, and for some time, they were the only Christians in the country until they were joined by other religious orders,<sup>66</sup> such as the Franciscans and Augustinians in 1602.<sup>67</sup> Xavier remained in Japan for two years before moving to China, leaving fellow Jesuit Cosme de Torres (1510-1570) as his successor. Xavier was accompanied by de Torres when he first arrived in Japan.

During the early years of the Jesuits' presence in Japan, they formed friendships, freely preached the Gospel and were successful in gaining converts. However, the missionaries (including Xavier himself) were often the cause of controversy and outcry over doctrines such as the uncompromising, hard-line teaching on hell.<sup>68</sup> While preaching in the city of Yamaguchi, for example, Xavier maintained that those who died before converting to Christianity would go to hell. To a religion that paid homage to its ancestors, Xavier's words were scandalous.<sup>69</sup> Over time, the Christian presence became too powerful and in 1587, all foreign missionaries were expelled from the country. In 1614, Christianity was banned.<sup>70</sup> Thus began a period of persecution, driving Christians underground and – in some cases – leading to shocking deaths. The crucifixion of 26 martyrs in Nagasaki in 1597 is one of the more well-known examples, but there are others. After 1633, Japanese citizens were forbidden to travel abroad and foreign contact was severed, except for some Chinese and Dutch merchants trading through Nagasaki.<sup>71</sup> Ports did not officially re-open to trade until the Treaty of Kanagawa was signed on March 31,

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<sup>64</sup> See [www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Francis-Xavier#ref8051](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Francis-Xavier#ref8051) [accessed February 6, 2022].

<sup>65</sup> Dougill (2012), 14.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>68</sup> Saunders (1977), 244.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> See [www.britannica.com/topic/Kirishitan](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Kirishitan) [accessed October 12, 2019].

<sup>71</sup> See [www.britannica.com/event/Tokugawa-period](http://www.britannica.com/event/Tokugawa-period) [accessed October 15, 2019].

1854, which had the effect of establishing trading contact between the United States and Japan.<sup>72</sup>

Xavier and his successors' missionary work in Japan was an important development in the identity of the Catholic Church in that country, and volumes have been written on the subject. However, the focus of this thesis is on the modern-day Christian-Zen Buddhist experience so I am now going to advance in time to an event that took place less than 50 years after Japan emerged from more than 200 years of closure to the outside world. This event served as the pre-cursor to a series of other occurrences that were – and still are – an influence on the religious landscape of the English-speaking world.

Towards the end of the 19th century, a delegation of six Buddhists from Japan set out for Chicago, where they were representing their country at the first Parliament of the World's Religions. The Parliament, held from September 11 to September 27 in 1897, was an assembly of colossal proportions and comprised representatives of the world's faith traditions. As well as delegates from the Christian world, representatives from non-Christian, monotheistic and polytheistic faiths added to the religious diversity. The event was staged towards the end of the Chicago World's Fair, a grand cultural exposition of pavilions and exhibitions from countries around the globe, timed to coincide with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World.

In the years immediately prior to the Parliament, Japan had been emerging from an insular, retrogressive culture and was now beginning to modernise itself and open its borders to the West.<sup>73</sup> Buddhism in Japan had been undergoing renewal and the six delegates were part of a movement that steered and shaped this revival. There had been some earlier reticence among the Japanese leaders about the country's representation at the Parliament because its staunchly Christian organisers saw the event as an evangelisation opportunity.<sup>74</sup> However, for the

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<sup>72</sup> Commodore Matthew Perry originally sailed into Tokyo Bay in July, 1853, accompanied by United States Navy ships. His mission was to deliver a letter from the president of the United States concerning the re-opening of trade between the West and Japan. He returned in the spring of the following year, again accompanied by Navy ships, to receive the country's answer. See <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/opening-to-japan> [accessed October 13, 2019].

<sup>73</sup> Harvey, 284.

<sup>74</sup> Snodgrass, J. (2003) *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition*, The University of North Carolina Press. ProQuest Ebook Central,

Japanese Buddhist delegates, the Parliament and the Fair provided an excellent platform on which they could present their country as a progressive nation, equal to the West, and promote Buddhism as a spirituality well-suited to a modern era.<sup>75</sup>

Among the Japanese delegation was a Zen master and abbot by the name of Soyen Shaku (1860-1919).<sup>76</sup> Apart from a two-year stay in the then Ceylon, a Buddhist country of the Theravāda<sup>77</sup> tradition, this was Shaku's first trip outside Japan. Shaku gave two short talks at the convention, one titled "The Law of Cause and Effect as Taught by the Buddha", delivered on the eighth day, and one titled "Arbitration Not War" on the sixteenth day.<sup>78</sup> While Shaku's talks failed to make a grand overall impression,<sup>79</sup> one delegate was inspired enough to seek him out. That person was Paul Carus, philosopher and acclaimed author in the popular press for his work *The Gospel of Buddha*.<sup>80</sup> The meeting between Shaku and Carus would play a major part in triggering what was to become the West's long fascination with Zen Buddhism.

Later, Shaku wrote to Carus, endorsing his Zen student, Buddhist scholar and philosopher Daisetz Suzuki (1870-1966) as a translator and recommended that he travel to California to study under the author. Suzuki's subsequent 12-year internship with Carus served as a springboard for the dissemination of Buddhism in the United States.<sup>81</sup> Suzuki went on to become a highly knowledgeable teacher of *zazen*, a prolific writer and an authoritative speaker in his own right. He became especially popular in the post-World War II years and is regarded as being the single most influential transmitter of Zen Buddhism to the West.<sup>82</sup>

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<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/smuc/detail.action?docID=413428>, 2 [downloaded April 9, 2019].

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>76</sup> Soyen Shaku was a temple abbot of the *Rinzai* tradition.

<sup>77</sup> Theravāda is the school of Buddhism that is mainly practised in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

<sup>78</sup> For a full transcript, in English, of Shaku's talks, see *The World's Parliament of Religions*, edited by J.P. Barrows volume II (1893) Chicago, United States of America: Parliament Publishing Company, 829-831 and 1285.

<sup>79</sup> Snodgrass (2003), 10.

<sup>80</sup> Carus, P. (1896) *The Gospel of Buddha*, London, England: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>82</sup> Heisig, J.W. et al, editors (2001) *Japanese Philosophy: a sourcebook*, Hawaii, United States of America: University of Hawaii Press, 214. Available through <https://>

In 1905, Shaku returned to the United States and stayed for eight months. He was frequently asked to give talks and lectures about Zen Buddhism – the first Japanese to teach on the subject in the United States. At the end of his stay, Shaku asked Suzuki to translate his lectures so they could be published in the form of a book. Suzuki, however, did much more than translate. He edited the lectures, condensed them where necessary, re-wrote parts, added information where required and re-presented the text in a way that would be suitable for an American readership. The book was initially called *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*<sup>83</sup> but it was later renamed *Zen for Americans*<sup>84</sup> – a much more appealing title for the intended readership.

In 1959, Shunryu Suzuki (1904-1971), a 55-year-old Zen master (unrelated to Daisetz) arrived in San Francisco as the resident priest at Soko-ji, a *Sōtō* Zen temple in San Francisco's Japantown. As was often the case, Suzuki had grown up in a temple and was the abbot's son. Suzuki was ordained a monk at 13 and later received training in the *Rinzai* tradition, supplementing his *Sōtō* pedigree. Within three years of his arrival in San Francisco, young Americans without a Zen Buddhist background began joining Suzuki for *zazen* sessions.<sup>85</sup>

### **1.3 Expansion of Zen Buddhism**

Having explored the development of Zen Buddhism and its interaction with people from the West, it is not difficult to see how the groundwork had been laid for the flowering of a new kind of spirituality. It is not that Zen Buddhism did not exist outside of Japan before the middle of the last century, because it certainly did among Japanese immigrants and Japanese-Americans. However, what began to unfold, for the first time, was that Zen Buddhism started to attract the widespread attention of 'white' Americans and indigenous Europeans.

During the first half of the last century, several influential Japanese moved to the West, where they disseminated Zen Buddhism to a keen audience. However, this

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ebookcentral-proquest.com.stmarys.idm.oclc.org/lib/smuc/  
reader.action?docID=3413562&ppg=152 [accessed March 9, 2019].

<sup>83</sup> Shaku, S. (1906) *Sermons of A Buddhist Abbot*, Chicago, United States of America: The Open Court Publishing Company.

<sup>84</sup> Shaku, S. and Suzuki, D. (1913) *Zen for Americans*, Chicago, United States of America: The Open Court Publishing Company.

<sup>85</sup> [https://global.Sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/activity/temples/sfzc\\_1.html](https://global.Sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/activity/temples/sfzc_1.html) [accessed April 10, 2019].

began to change during the middle of the century, with fewer Zen masters having to travel to spread Zen Buddhism. As the world began to open up to foreign travel, westerners began making the journey east to study with Zen masters in Japan. They then took their learning back to their countries and set up a *sangha*<sup>86</sup> of their own. The Zen masters among them passed *Dharma* transmission onto others in their home countries, creating a new generation of American and European Zen teachers. Thus, the task of bringing Zen Buddhism to the West – once the impulse of the Japanese native – was now passing to the foreign visitor.<sup>87</sup>

One must also not overlook the influence that World War II had on piquing Americans' curiosity about the country they had just fought against. Even though some interaction between the United States and Japan had taken place during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the latter was still a mysterious nation to much of the world. It is true, there had been some immigration of Japanese but this was mainly to California and Hawaii, and involved relatively small numbers of people. However, at the outbreak of World War II, Americans came face-to-face in combat with people from a nation they knew little about. Japan – its people, its customs, its culture – would have been alien to most Americans and, to be fair, to much of the world as it had been a closed society for more than two centuries. In the post-war years, Japan opened up to foreign influences, particularly from the United States, which occupied the country for seven years after the war ended. Japan, with its clash of centuries-old customs combined with a post-war infatuation with the West, did much to arouse interest in the country around the world.

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<sup>86</sup> A *sangha* is traditionally a monastic community of monks or nuns, although a more modern understanding is that it can be any group of *zazen* practitioners who meditate together.

<sup>87</sup> In Chapter Two, I review books written by Robert Kennedy, S.J. and Elaine MacInnes, both of whom spent a number of years in Japan. Neither travelled to Japan specifically to learn *zazen* but they became attracted to it during their residency, dedicated time to the practice and became teachers. When Kennedy returned to the United States, he established the Morning Star Zendo in Jersey City where he continued to teach *zazen*. Kennedy has also passed on *Dharma* transmission to a number of westerners. See <https://morningstarzendo.andnowicansee.com/home/> [accessed July 17, 2022]. When MacInnes left Japan she was posted to the Philippines where she was asked to teach *zazen* to prisoners. This was the beginning of a long, international ministry in prisons. See [www.globalsistersreport.org/column/q/spirituality/q-sr-elaine-macinnnes-teaching-others-art-zen-meditation-45756](http://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/q/spirituality/q-sr-elaine-macinnnes-teaching-others-art-zen-meditation-45756) [accessed July 17, 2022].

## 1.4 The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

The spread of Zen Buddhism into the western world coincided with a new openness towards other cultures among Catholic circles. At the heart of this receptivity was an epoch-making event in the life of the Catholic Church: the three-year process known as the Second Vatican Council. One of the key outcomes of this council was the importance of dialogue. Up until this time, relationships with non-Catholics had not been regarded as a high priority. However, the Council now made inter-faith dialogue not only important but integral to the life of the Catholic Church.<sup>88</sup> The thinking was that, by forming relationships around the world, the Church might fulfil a role that no other faith tradition could accomplish.<sup>89</sup> The Church's emphasis on dialogue encouraged Catholics to engage with people from other faiths.

The interfaith dialogue aspirations of the Second Vatican Council combined with other factors during the middle of the last century, such as large-scale immigration, political events, the aftermath of World War II, lifestyle advances, international commerce, a global economy, mass tourism and developments in technology. All these deepened in people a curiosity and began a process of opening up the world in a way that had never been possible before.

The revolution in thinking towards dialogue with other religions was encapsulated in magisterial documents published during this time. Of the 16 documents that were published by the Second Vatican Council, elements of two of them are included in Part III of this thesis. *Lumen Gentium the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*,<sup>90</sup> promulgated on November 21, 1964, is a 'Constitution', which requires the absolute, unqualified acceptance and agreement of the faithful.<sup>91</sup> The second document is a Declaration, *Nostra*

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<sup>88</sup> McDonald, K. (2014) *The Gift of Dialogue*, London, England: Catholic Truth Society, 6.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Pope Paul VI (1964) *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Lumen Gentium*. [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) [accessed November 20, 2019].

<sup>91</sup> *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, Brunelle, J.M. (April 27, 2015 issue) see [www.hprweb.com/2015/04/lumen-gentium/](http://www.hprweb.com/2015/04/lumen-gentium/) [accessed January 3, 2022].



*Aetate*.<sup>92</sup> *Ecclesiam Suam*<sup>93</sup> is also being examined but it is not a Council document. It is simply an encyclical that was published during this time.<sup>94</sup>

The key role the magisterial documents play in this thesis cannot be over-emphasised as such publications contribute to the official teaching of the Church.<sup>95</sup> The statements magisterial documents make and the issues they address reflect Sacred Tradition and draw upon scripture, as well as other trusted sources, such as patristic theology, and literature produced by the Church Fathers and doctors of the Church. These documents will be examined to determine to what extent Catholics might engage in ways of praying that are 'imported' from non-Christian religions. I will return to these documents in greater detail later in Part III of this thesis.

## 1.5 Zen Buddhism and the Christian world

With Zen Buddhism's growth in the United States and Europe, it was inevitable that this new spirituality would reach Christians looking to revitalise their own prayer lives. For all kinds of reasons, the Catholic may well become curious about the faith traditions of people they encounter and may even question whether prayer practices, particularly from the East, could be of benefit.<sup>96</sup> In the Catholic world, there are lay people who practise *zazen* regularly and there are well-documented examples of Roman Catholic priests and religious sisters who have

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<sup>92</sup> See Pope Paul VI (1965) *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate*. [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html) [accessed October 1, 20]. As a Conciliar document, *Nostra Aetate* is binding as it reflects the will of the Church.

<sup>93</sup> Pope Paul VI (1964) *On the Church Ecclesiam Suam*, [www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_pvi\\_enc\\_06081964\\_ecclesiam.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_pvi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html) [accessed September 2, 2021].

<sup>94</sup> McDonald, 5. There are other magisterial documents that will be examined in Part III, but they were published outside of the Second Vatican Council timeline. *Ecclesiam Suam* is an example. While this encyclical was published towards the end of the Second Vatican Council, it is not a Council document and the teaching it contains is not binding.

<sup>95</sup> There are three levels of teaching proclaimed by the Magisterium. The highest level is an infallible doctrine that is considered to be divinely revealed. The second level is closely linked to Revelation and the faithful are required to accept such truths. The third level comprises ordinary truths about matters of faith that one is obliged to accept. See *DS*, para 23 [accessed November 25, 2019].

<sup>96</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1989) *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation: Orationis Formas*. See [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc19891015\\_meditazione-cristiana\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc19891015_meditazione-cristiana_en.html) [accessed August 11, 2017], n.2.

become teachers and Zen masters, as I will describe shortly.<sup>97</sup> Christians who practise *zazen* say that it has much to offer anyone wishing a more contemplative prayer life. Robert Kennedy, a Jesuit priest who received authorisation to teach *zazen* from fellow American Bernard Glassman in 1992, followed by *inka*<sup>98</sup> in 1997, is of this opinion.<sup>99</sup>

The Sanbōkyoden, a Zen Buddhist outgrowth established in Japan in 1954, has particular significance to the Roman Catholic Church because its westernisation combined with its lay lineage has made it particularly appealing to Christians. This is not to imply that Sanbōkyoden, or Sanbō Zen International, as it became known as in 2014, is the only western-influenced Zen Buddhist sect to have been established. It certainly is not, but I have chosen to highlight it here precisely because of its growth in the West, the example it provides of a ‘new’ Zen Buddhism that has found a home in the West and its particular attractiveness to Christians.

Numerous Sanbō Zen centres have been established during the past half-century in the English-speaking world, in some other Asian countries and throughout Europe. Notable, high-profile members have included the Japanese-German Jesuit priest Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle, S.J. (1898-1990); the Filipino-American former Jesuit priest Ruben Habito (1947-),<sup>100</sup> American secular priest for the diocese of New York Michael Holleran (1963-),<sup>101</sup> Indian Jesuit priest Ama Samy, S.J. (1936), Canadian religious sister Elaine MacInnes O.L.M. (1924-),<sup>102</sup> and the German Benedictine Willigis Jäger O.S.B. (1925-2020). There are many others – in fact, according to Robert Sharf, Distinguished Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California, most of the foreign members of Sanbō Zen authorised to teach belong to a Catholic order of some kind. Such students of *zazen* have been

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<sup>97</sup> My literature review, Chapter Two, and the interviews in Chapter Four include some Christians, both lay and ordained, who practise *zazen*.

<sup>98</sup> In the White Plum, *inka* is the final seal of approval that a student is now a *Dharma* heir and can initiate his own lineage. In the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools, *inka* has slightly different emphases.

<sup>99</sup> Kennedy, R.E. (1995) *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*, London, England, and New York, United States of America: Continuum International Publishing Group, 32.

<sup>100</sup> Habito's book *Healing Breath* (Massachusetts, United States of America: Wisdom Publications [kindle book]) is reviewed in Chapter Two, section 2.1.3.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Holleran is interviewed in Chapter Four, section 4.5.

<sup>102</sup> Elaine MacInnes's book *Zen Contemplation: A Bridge of Living Water* (Ottawa, Canada: Novalis, St. Paul University) is reviewed in Chapter Two, section 2.1.8.

in a good position to pass on their learning to the rest of their community upon return to their home countries.<sup>103</sup>

The origins of the Sanbō Zen sect can be traced back to Daiun Harada (1871-1961), an ordained Zen Buddhist and university professor who had received training in both the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* traditions. Harada combined elements of these two traditions to speed his students – both Japanese and foreigners, lay and ordained – towards *kenshō*,<sup>104</sup> which he felt was within the grasp of any sufficiently motivated person. Hakuun Yasutani (1885-1973), became a student of Harada in 1924, experienced *kenshō* two years later, finished *kōan* study in 1938 and received *inka* from him in 1943. By this time, Yasutani had written books and soon after began to set up lay-led *zazen* groups throughout Japan. One of these groups evolved into the Sanbō Zen sect. Continuing the emphasis on lay involvement, Yasutani's heir, Kōun Yamada (1907-1989), had no monastic background and was never ordained a Buddhist priest. He built upon his teacher's commitment to make *zazen* available to both lay Buddhists and non-Buddhists. From 1971, Yamada began giving regular *zazen* retreats in the United States, the Philippines, Germany and Singapore, attracting many foreign students, along with Christian monks and priests.<sup>105</sup> Some of Sanbō Zen's most prominent members left this organisation to establish their own centres. These include Robert Aitken (Honolulu Diamond Center), Philip Kapleau (Rochester Zen Center)<sup>106</sup> and Hakuyu Maezumi (White Plum Asanga). All have been instrumental in bringing Zen Buddhism to the West, including the Catholic world. The Sanbō Zen journey begins with an introductory course on the basics of *zazen*, held over a period of around six weeks.<sup>107</sup> This is then supplemented with short retreats called *sesshin*. The focus of the *sesshin* is on achieving a *kenshō* experience, or seeing into one's own nature, a small, yet significant step on the

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<sup>103</sup> Sharf, R.H. (1995) *Sanbōkyōdan: Zen and the Way of the New Religions*, Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 22/3-4, 439 [accessed April 25, 2019]. Sharf refers to *Sanbōkyōdan* in his journal article as it was written before the sect was re-named.

<sup>104</sup> *Kenshō* is an awakening experience that acts as the gateway to *zazen* practice.

<sup>105</sup> Sharf (1995), 422.

<sup>106</sup> Kapleau's flagship work, *The Three Pillars of Zen* and its 'companion volume' *Zen: Merging of East and West* are included in my literature review, see Chapter Two, section 2.2.1.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

enlightenment journey.<sup>108</sup> Beginning students taking part in *sesshin* would also be expected to work on their first *kōan*, usually ‘*mu*’<sup>109</sup> because it is the most elementary of these riddles.<sup>110</sup> After the first *kenshō* and the solving of ‘*mu*’, subsequent *kōan* become easier to master and the process is much faster. The focus in Sanbō Zen is very much on *satori* and *kenshō*, and these are certainly a key part of the experience, but they are not the fundamental platform in the training of Zen Buddhist monks that modern authors purport them to be.<sup>111</sup>

Sanbō Zen dispenses with excessive, burdensome doctrine, heavy reading, sutra study and, in fact, anything that might obscure one’s path to enlightenment. With access to a teacher, it is possible to process all the *kōan* in five years. After this, the practitioner may proceed quickly to a level in which he is permitted to teach and, ultimately, even receive *Dharma* transmission.<sup>112</sup> All this can be undertaken during the course of a person’s day-to-day life. It is not difficult to see why the Sanbō Zen tradition is attractive to consumer-minded, cash-rich, time-poor westerners intent on a fast-tracked journey to the end-goal: enlightenment. One could look at Sanbō Zen as *zazen* without much of the Buddhist ceremony, although this is not an entirely accurate summation as members sometimes take part in ceremonies, such as *jukai*.<sup>113</sup>

The Sanbō Zen journey to become a Zen master may seem lengthy to a westerner, but it is a considerably shorter, simpler and less complex process monks undertake in a traditional *Rinzai* or *Sōtō* monastery. This would involve years of learning obedience to one’s superiors, training in the correct code of conduct for different areas of the monastery, in-depth study of classic texts and long periods

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>109</sup> Beginners in Zen practice are usually first assigned the *kōan* ‘*Mu*’. It is the first *kōan* in *The Gateless Gate* (Yamada, 11) and reads: “A monk asked Joshu in all earnestness: ‘Does a dog have the Buddha nature or not?’ Joshu said: “*Mu!*”.

<sup>110</sup> Sharf (1995), 429-430.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>113</sup> The *jukai* ceremony is described in further detail in Chapter Six ‘The nature of *jukai* and its overlap with the Catholic sacraments of initiation’. Several of my Christian interviewees also discussed *jukai* in-depth in Chapter Four. These include Michael Holleran, section 4.5, Kevin McDonald, section 4.8, ‘Myotai’ section 4.10, Migaku Sato, section 4.11 and Madeleine Tacy, section 4.12. Two of my Zen Buddhist interviewees in Chapter Five also discussed *jukai*: Ray Cicetti, section 5.1, Meido Moore, section 5.4.

of intense *zazen*. Reaching the stage of a *Rinzai* or *Sōtō* Zen master in Japan can take in excess of 15 years.<sup>114</sup>

## 1.6 Key initial questions to be addressed

So far, I have explained the development of Zen Buddhism from its Buddhist roots in India to its budding in China and, later, its flowering in Japan. I have discussed how Zen Buddhism then moved from Japan to the West and, in doing so, how it has succeeded in attracting Christians. I described how one sect, Sanbō Zen, has had particular appeal to those in the West. I have also raised the subject of the Second Vatican Council and a new desire within the Catholic Church to engage in dialogue with other faith traditions. Finally, I have explained why I believe a thesis on this subject is necessary.

Two important questions, both extremely pertinent in the Church today, have now arisen that I plan to answer in this thesis. These are:

- To what extent is Zen Buddhist thinking compatible with Catholic culture and tradition, particularly as disseminated through magisterial documents.
- To what extent may a Catholic participate in the meditation methods of a non-Christian faith?

My research is focusing on magisterial documents but Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition are also important to my enquiries. The magisterium, Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition are three integrally linked sources of truth that are equal in importance and one cannot be completely divorced from the other two.<sup>115</sup>

Given the spread of Zen Buddhism to the West and the likelihood that non-Christian spirituality will remain a significant part of the religious landscape of multicultural Britain, I have also identified some secondary research questions. These are:

- Does effective engagement in interfaith dialogue necessarily involve participation in the spiritual practices of another religion?
- Is *zazen* a ‘common denominator’ in the prayer of all faiths, and can it simply

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<sup>114</sup> Sharf (1995) 427.

<sup>115</sup> *DV*, n.10.

be 'bolted on' to Catholic prayer, as some scholars claim?

Using the Bible, magisterial documents and books authored by both Zen Buddhist and Christian scholars, I seek to answer these questions. But this thesis is not just about textbook study and the interpretation of academic reading, for while it certainly does include these, my research is supported by interviews with *zazen* practitioners and scholars who are based chiefly in Great Britain, the United States and Japan. My conclusions and recommendations will, therefore, be more than the product of written volumes on the subject but supported by testimony from practitioners. I would also like to emphasise the originality of this thesis. The research itself – assessing a non-Christian practice such as *zazen* against magisterial documents – has not been undertaken before.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature review – the east-west debate

#### Introduction

Ever since the first Parliament of the World Religions in 1897, Zen Buddhism has been making inroads in the English-speaking world, first by missionaries from Japan in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then, later, by westerners who travelled to the Orient to learn how to meditate. Among those making the pilgrimage east were Christians who, for a variety of reasons, have been turning to forms of meditation from the non-Christian world.

In this chapter, I introduce some key people who have been influential in the east-west debate and review literature they have generated that contribute in some way to my research.<sup>116</sup>

I have grouped the authors in this review into two categories: Christian and Zen Buddhist because each will look at their subject through their own 'lens' and because I thought it would be helpful to my readers to understand their standpoint.

#### 2.1 GROUP I: CHRISTIAN AUTHORS

##### 2.1.1 Christopher Collingwood

*Christopher Collingwood (1955-) is an Anglican priest and, at the time of this review, Canon Chancellor of York Minster. He is an authorised Zen teacher in the Wild Goose Zen Sangha in Gloucestershire, part of the White Plum school.*

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<sup>116</sup> Some theologians may be surprised at the omission of Thomas Merton in this chapter. It is true that Merton was interested in different expressions of Buddhism and wrote literature on the subject. However, in his own words, Merton had "no real knowledge of Zen as it actually is in Japan." See letter to William Johnston dated January 25, 1965, see Shannon, W.H. (1965) *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on religious Experience and Social Concerns*, New York, United States of America: Farrar, Straus, Giroux [kindle edition]. While this literature review does include a range of views, authors on Zen Buddhism wrote about the Japanese expression. Merton's much broader focus was, therefore, too remote to be included in this chapter.

Collingwood's book, *Zen Wisdom for Christians*,<sup>117</sup> opens with a foreword by Catholic priest Patrick Eastman, who is also a member of the Wild Goose Zen Sangha. Eastman, who spent some years in ministry in the United States, became Collingwood's teacher after his return to the UK and conferred on him *Dharma* transmission in 2016.

*Zen Wisdom for Christians* is targeted at the person who is interested in *zazen* but who has not yet acquired a great deal of experience. This is exemplified by the entry-level explanations about *zazen* and the invitation to what might be an enquirer's first participation. The book is split into three parts with subchapters on different aspects of *zazen* that might be of particular relevance to a beginner, especially one who is Christian and one who might question whether studying Zen Buddhism is appropriate.

Collingwood wants to reassure Christians that *zazen* is compatible with Christianity. He starts by saying that up until the middle of the last century, it would have been highly unlikely to find someone who practised *zazen* alongside Christianity but feels that this situation has now changed.<sup>118</sup> He then raises the subject of Father Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle (1898-1990), who travelled to Japan as a missionary before World War II. Enomiya-Lassalle undertook *zazen* training with Daiun Harada (who I discussed in the previous chapter) and, later, with Kōun Yamada (1907-1989). In 1978, Yamada passed *Dharma* transmission to Enomiya-Lassalle. As well as being a dedicated *zazen* practitioner, Collingwood describes Enomiya-Lassalle as a 'faithful' Catholic priest.<sup>119</sup> It is interesting to note that Collingwood describes Enomiya-Lassalle as a dual believer simply because he received *Dharma* transmission. If this is what qualifies one as a dual believer, then a significant proportion of those Christian clergy who practise *zazen* would fall into this category.

Collingwood makes several observations concerning *Nostra Aetate*, the Church's document on its relationship with non-Christian religions. I will be carrying out

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<sup>117</sup> Collingwood, C. (2019) *Zen Wisdom for Christians*, London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers [kindle edition]. I have also interviewed Collingwood in Chapter Four, where he talked about his introduction to *zazen* and the subject of non-duality. See section 4.4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.



my own exegesis on this document later in this thesis but, first, I summarise some of the points that Collingwood raises:

- Collingwood points out that, in the document, the Second Vatican Council states in no uncertain terms that discrimination and/or harassment of persons on the grounds of their national origin or religion is not acceptable.<sup>120</sup>
- Collingwood also picks up on the document's affirmation of the common questions about life asked by all peoples, regardless of religion.<sup>121</sup>
- Collingwood sees that the document acknowledges admirable traits in some non-Christian faiths, such as deep meditation and the unwavering trust in God found in Hinduism and the Buddhist following of a way of life in which they achieve emancipation from this suffering world.<sup>122</sup>
- While Collingwood acknowledges the document's declaration that Christ is the way, the truth and the life, he balances this with the document's statement that the Church rejects nothing of what is truly and holy in non-Christian faiths as they contain elements of truth.<sup>123</sup>

Collingwood observes that a number of high-profile Christians have received *Dharma* transmission and pays tribute to their commitment to dialogue, saying that this involves more than simply intellectual discussions. Whether effective interreligious dialogue involves adopting the prayer practices of another faith, or whether it can be achieved through intellectual discussion alone is a matter that I will discuss with Archbishop Kevin McDonald when I interview him in Chapter Four.

Collingwood quotes scripture throughout his book, usually looking at Bible passages and readings in light of Zen Buddhist thinking. For example, he uses scripture to describe what he calls 'raising the Bodhi mind'. He defines the Bodhi mind as the desire to return to our true selves, to see who we truly are, a 'coming

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<sup>120</sup> Collingwood (2019), 25, quoting Flannery, A., (2014), *Vatican Council II: The Sixteen Documents – Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Minnesota, United States of America: Liturgical Press, 574.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., page 26, quoting Flannery, 570.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., page 26, quoting Flannery, 570-571.

home' and says this is normally achieved through *zazen*.<sup>124</sup> Occasionally, the pursuit of the Bodhi mind involves a rebellion of sorts, says Collingwood, generated by dissatisfaction with one's life or with the world. This triggers a desire in some people to search for another way, forgetting that the true home is already accessible.<sup>125</sup> He demonstrates this thinking with the story of the Prodigal Son<sup>126</sup> who perceived that his life was lacking and so sought greater fulfilment by leaving home with his share of his inheritance. After frivolously spending this inheritance and then working on a pig farm, the son had something of an awakening experience of his plight and realised that he had walked away from deep fulfilment. The older son, says Collingwood, did not have this desire to pursue another way, and was already home but did not realise it, although the father tried to explain this to him.<sup>127</sup>

### **2.1.2 Gavin D'Costa**

*Gavin D'Costa (1958-) is Professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Bristol. He has also taught at the Gregorian University, Rome, and advises the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City. He acts as an advisor to the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales and the Anglican Church on interreligious dialogue and theology.*

Gavin D'Costa's book *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*<sup>128</sup> is about Christianity's relationship with other religions and the rise of pluralism. The book is divided into two parts. Part I is an exegesis of three perspectives on pluralism: Christian-Jewish, neo-Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist. Part II introduces Trinitarian theology and how it intersects with other religions, and praying with people of other faiths. D'Costa devotes an entire chapter to inter-religious prayer – a subject that is of particular relevance to the interfaith dialogue aspect of this thesis.

As a starting point, D'Costa says we must differentiate between inter-religious prayer and multi-religious prayer, because the two are easily confused but are, in

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>126</sup> See Lk. 15:11-31.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>128</sup> D'Costa, G. (2000) *The Meeting of the Religions and the Trinity*, New York, United States of America: Orbis Books.

fact, distinct. Multi-religious prayer meetings, D'Costa explains, are events that take place at a carefully chosen, public venue and involve different religious groups each praying separately for a cause or common interest. Multi-religious prayer does not involve the groups actually praying together.<sup>129</sup> This is contrasted with inter-religious prayer, where people of different faiths meet to pray together.<sup>130</sup>

In multi-cultural Great Britain, and probably throughout the western world, praying with those of other faiths can be an attractive option. What better prescription can there be for peace than for people of different religions to pray together. After all, as D'Costa asserts, we cannot say that the prayers and meditation practices of those in non-theistic religions are worthless and there is nothing in Church teaching that suggests such a position.<sup>131</sup>

It is certainly right to recognise the value of other faiths, especially after examining documents such as the Vatican paper on non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*. So, did this document grant 'permission', so to speak, for Catholics to pray with those of non-Christian faiths? This is another matter that will be discussed with Archbishop Kevin McDonald when I interview him for Chapter Four.

D'Costa begins his debate on inter-faith prayer by looking at the issue in terms of marital fidelity, as there is a parallel between this and inter-religious prayer. For example, both involve the fostering of a covenanted love, whatever the situation and the circumstances. On the other hand, D'Costa says, an outright rejection of shared prayer might constitute idolatry as this could constitute worshipping a God who we have designed in our imaginations.<sup>132</sup>

D'Costa adds to the argument by looking at prayer and interpreting it under the headings of 'gift', 'covenant' and 'communion', as defined by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>133</sup> If one does this, D'Costa says that inter-religious prayer could

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>132</sup> D'Costa (2000), 144.

<sup>133</sup> See paragraphs 2559 to 2565 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for a full description of the nature of Christian prayer.

be viewed as marital infidelity because it would involve praying with other faith communities and praying to an unknown higher power outside the Christian understanding of the triune God.<sup>134</sup>

Nevertheless, for inter-religious prayer to be acceptable to the Christian, D'Costa says that it must contain the elements of gift, covenant and communion.<sup>135</sup> Under the heading 'gift', for example, D'Costa says that inter-faith prayer may be an opportunity for the Christian to share with others the presence of the triune God. This can lead the Christian himself into a deeper relationship with the Trinity.<sup>136</sup> For the Christian, D'Costa says, inter-religious prayer might provide an opportunity to learn prayer techniques from Buddhism or Hinduism that could help foster prayer around the triune God.<sup>137</sup> There are, of course, sensitivities around inter-religious prayer, but D'Costa says that the Holy Spirit is at work in ourselves and in the relationship so he will assist in our prayer when people of different faiths come together.<sup>138</sup> D'Costa, drawing on the *Catechism*, says that God has made a covenant with all of creation and that all people are called to prayer.<sup>139</sup> Under 'communion', even if the person does not believe in the Trinity, the three Persons are still present.<sup>140</sup> D'Costa says that excluding everything that might be offensive to other parties (such as reference to Jesus as God and the Trinity) does not achieve anything and only reduces prayer to the lowest common denominator.<sup>141</sup>

The suggestion to meditate together may also be somewhat simplistic as there are sensitivities, obstacles and difficulties regarding inter-religious prayer. These include losing the special character of Christian worship so as to avoid causing offence and being drawn into prayer practices that are heterodox to gain acceptance.<sup>142</sup> Inter-religious prayer could also mean a change to one's own prayer life, sometimes to a shocking degree. D'Costa was referring to the French

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<sup>134</sup> D'Costa (2000), 145.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>139</sup> CCC 2569.

<sup>140</sup> D'Costa (2000), 164.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>142</sup> D'Costa (2000), 162.

Benedictine priest Henri le Saux who, as Swami Abhishiktananda, allegedly said Mass using only the mantra “Om”.<sup>143</sup>

In summary, D’Costa does not rule out inter-religious prayer and says it is worth taking a risk under certain conditions. However, discerning the circumstances in which inter-religious prayer might take place is a task for the Church.<sup>144</sup> D’Costa believes that, risks aside, inter-religious prayer can bring the reward of appreciation of one’s own prayer tradition, along with a deeper understanding of another’s spirituality.<sup>145</sup>

### **2.1.3 Ruben Habito**

*Ruben Habito (1947-) joined the Society of Jesus in 1964. As a seminarian, he travelled to Japan in 1970 and was later ordained there. He left the priesthood in 1989 to marry and moved to Dallas, Texas, where he founded the Maria Kannon Zen Centre. He is a Zen master in the Sanbō Zen school and lectures at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.*

Habito writes from the perspective of a suffering world and his book *Healing Breath*<sup>146</sup> was written specifically for those looking for a spiritual answer to the fallout generated by personal psychological trauma, sociological matters and ecological issues. His book has been included in this literature review because of his in-depth examination of the subject of dualism, its relevance to Christianity, and the rift that it causes.

Habito takes a deep and broad view of the whole subject of healing, and quickly establishes that the underlying problem to the world’s aches and pains is dualism, although he does not usually refer to it as such. Instead, he tends to use the terms “I” and “other”, a dichotomy that he says is the root cause of our woundedness.<sup>147</sup> This is because humanity’s personal, social and ecological problems are inter-related, encompassing the globe to the extent that Habito refers to a ‘wounded earth.’ While many of the global issues that concern Habito –

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>146</sup> Habito (2006)

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 6.

famine, poverty, poor healthcare and pandemic disease, for example – may not affect those living in the first world, Habito says that one cannot divorce himself from humanity's problems because there is an inter-connectedness within the world.<sup>148</sup>

Habito says that religion can be a source of dualism, of division, so exacerbating the brokenness of the human family and creating invisible walls between groups of people. He adds that a shared religious vision can be consolation and a unifying comfort during harsh circumstances and times of uncertainty.<sup>149</sup> Adherence to a particular religious tradition, Habito says, can escalate the wounded nature of the human family because it categorises people into groups. For example, one religion or Christian sect may share certain truths that they believe are revealed by God but these fundamental beliefs may not be shared by others. Taking this to an extreme, this could lead to castigation of the non-believer, condemnation or inhumane treatment.<sup>150</sup>

Habito is not specific on what he means by a 'shared religious vision'. It is unclear whether he is referring to groups of Christians, groups of Buddhists or groups of any particular religion, or whether he is talking about humanity as a whole sharing a religious vision.

Habito provides a diagnosis for this general woundedness and approaches it, first, from a Buddhist perspective and, secondly, from a Christian standpoint. The Buddhist diagnosis involves embracing the Four Noble Truths.<sup>151</sup> The prescription is contained in the fourth Noble Truth – following the Eightfold Path and this leads to a life free of craving and recovery, towards a state of well-being.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>151</sup> The four Noble Truths form the foundation of basic Buddhism teaching. The first Noble Truth is that to live is to suffer as all is not well with the way the human family is living. The second is that there is a cause for this suffering, and that is a craving for attachment. The third Noble Truth is that recovery is possible and a positive existence is attainable. The final Noble Truth points to the prescription: following the Eightfold Path. This is right seeing, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. If one follows this path one can be free from the craving that leads to the perpetuation of broken behaviour.

<sup>152</sup> Habito (2006), 15.

The Christian diagnosis for suffering is that it stems from sin – a state of separation from God that can be traced back to the story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were created in God’s image but they separated from God – and the whole of creation – by choosing to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.<sup>153</sup> Habito says that because man is created in the image of God, original sin is confusing and so he prefers the term ‘original blessing’ to depict man’s nature before the Fall. He suggests the term ‘cosmic woundedness’ instead of original sin. This terminology – ‘original blessing’ and ‘cosmic woundedness’ – is part of the creation spirituality of Matthew Fox, a former Dominican priest.

Habito speaks of the negative aspects of religion but he also makes positive observations that, with dialogue and encounter alongside other faith groups, a ‘healing spirituality’ can be achieved which addresses humanity’s brokenness and can begin to mend the earth. He places Christianity alongside all the other faith traditions as having responsibility for effecting this change. Habito believes that each of the world’s faith traditions have elements about them that can make a contribution to the healing of the earth.<sup>154</sup>

In conclusion, Habito provides a solid contribution to the subject of dualism, that it is the source of woundedness within a person, among groups of peoples and in the world.

#### **2.1.4 William Johnston S.J.**

*William Johnston (1925-2010) was born in Belfast, raised a Roman Catholic and entered the Society of Jesus novitiate in 1943. In 1951, at the age of 26, he made the move to Japan, and was ordained there in 1957. He spent most of his ordained ministry in Japan, much of it in teaching positions, including at the Jesuit-run Sophia University in Tokyo.*

Johnston’s book *The Mirror Mind* is based on a series of eight lectures he was invited to give in 1980 at Oxford University following the death of Martin D’Arcy, master of the Jesuits’ Campion Hall. Each of the lectures makes up a chapter of the book.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>154</sup> Habito (2006), 139.

The first chapter of the book is on the subject of inter-religious dialogue and I will focus much of my review on this as it is pertinent to my thesis. Inter-religious dialogue was also of particular interest to Johnston. This appeal may possibly have been fuelled by his early childhood experience of living through the religious conflict in Northern Ireland.<sup>155</sup>

Johnston said that, as a starting point, dialogue was only possible if those involved in discourse recognised goodness and truth in each other.<sup>156</sup> He conceded that this does not mean that one has to put aside one's own beliefs to engage in inter-religious dialogue.<sup>157</sup> Having said this, Johnston believes that religious experience is the fundamental key to Buddhist-Christian dialogue and that the most progress will be made when the two traditions meditate together.<sup>158</sup> This is an issue that I will be discussing with Archbishop McDonald in Chapter Four.

While Johnston placed value in meditating with others, he agreed that words and some discussion of theology do eventually become necessary for fruitful interfaith dialogue. There is, however, a risk of running into doctrinal differences,<sup>159</sup> which Johnston addressed by composing a five-point guide to effective engagement that both Buddhists and Christians would find acceptable.<sup>160</sup> These five points are:

- 1) Be attentive and truly listen to what the other person is trying to articulate.
- 2) Be intelligent and come to a deeper understanding of the truth of what is being said.
- 3) Be reasonable, as interfaith dialogue may require integrating a Buddhist truth within the Christian framework.

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<sup>155</sup> In his autobiography, Johnston made references to growing up in Northern Ireland during the Catholic-Protestant conflict. See Johnston, W. (2006) *Mystical Journey*, New York, United States of America: Orbis Books.

<sup>156</sup> Johnston, W. (1981) *The Mirror Mind*, London, England: William Collins & Sons, Co. Ltd., 4. I also discuss Johnston's perspectives on dialogue in Chapter Seven, 'Zen Buddhist-Catholic interreligious relationships: dialogue and dual belonging' see sections 7.3 and 7.4.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>158</sup> Johnston (1981), 9.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



4) Be responsible and recognise the good in another religion.

5) Be committed to recognising the truth when spoken.

While Johnston's life-long participation in *zazen* may have given the appearance of a hybrid practice of Catholicism, in *Mirror Mind* he spoke out against any blurring of Christianity and Zen Buddhism, believing them to be two distinct traditions.<sup>161</sup> To illustrate the separate nature of Zen Buddhism and Catholicism, Johnston briefly discussed the Three Treasures and how Christians have their own triple treasure.<sup>162</sup>

Johnston practised *zazen* throughout most of his life and authored numerous books on the subject but, unlike many of his Jesuit brothers who became interested in *zazen*, nowhere in *The Mirror Mind* does he mention having received – or expressed a desire to receive – *Dharma* transmission.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps *Dharma* transmission was, for him, a personal boundary at which he felt he could not overstep.

Johnston ends *The Mirror Mind* with an epilogue in which he focuses on Kannon, the *Bodhisattva* of boundless compassion. Johnston explains that Kannon means 'the one who listens to the sounds of the world'. He then discusses some of the immense suffering that can be found throughout the world and indicates a meeting point between Zen Buddhism and Christianity: the compassion of the Kannon and that of the Christian in listening to the sufferings of humanity.<sup>164</sup>

### **2.1.5 Kakichi Kadowaki S.J.**

*Kakichi Kadowaki (1926-2017) was a member of the Society of Jesus and professor of philosophy at the University of Sophia, Tokyo. He first encountered Zen Buddhism during his teens but was baptised into the Roman Catholic faith when he was a university student. His interest in zazen intensified after hearing a talk by the Jesuit Hugo Enomiya-Lasalle. He undertook zazen training under Omori Sogen (1904-1994), a former president of the Rinzai Hanazono University in Kyoto.*

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>163</sup> *Dharma* transmission is passed from teacher to disciple in an unbroken line that can be traced back to the Buddha. The process leading to *Dharma* transmission, and what it enables the recipient to do, varies slightly between traditions and even *sangha*.

<sup>164</sup> Johnston (1981), 176.

In *Zen and the Bible*,<sup>165</sup> Kadowaki utilises the framework of the Bible to look at how Zen Buddhist thought fits into this structure. The idea was initially suggested by the then Professor Ratzinger who invited Kadowaki to speak to a group of his doctoral students in Germany. After the lecture, Ratzinger said it would be interesting to hear how Zen Buddhist ideas interact with the Bible. His thoughts on this are encapsulated in his book.

As with other *zazen* practitioners, Kadowaki shares a deep concern for the body and its correct posture when undertaking *zazen*. The correct positioning of the body forms a stable base that opens the path to *zazen* practice. After the body is positioned, the breathing is regulated and, lastly, the mind is composed. Kadowaki explains that this is the opposite sequence to that in Christian prayer, where the body is engaged last, after the intellect is informed.<sup>166</sup>

Kadowaki claims that there is less emphasis on the body in the Christian Church but I challenge this assumption because posture does come into play in worship but in different ways than in *zazen* practice. It is true that there is no place during the Catholic liturgy for one to sit in the highly disciplined lotus position, or count breaths, but the body is most certainly involved. During the Catholic Mass, for example, worshippers bless themselves with holy water upon entering the church, then genuflect (or bow) to the tabernacle to show their reverence. They might also kneel in supplication before the mass begins. During the penitential rite, the worshipper symbolically 'beats his breast' with a clenched fist. There are several points during the liturgy where one makes the sign of the cross and the deacon,<sup>167</sup> together with the congregation, traces a small cross on his forehead, lips and chest before the gospel is read.<sup>168</sup> There are places in the liturgy where one stands, sits and kneels, and, at the appropriate time, one offers a sign of peace – usually a handshake – to a neighbour.

Kadowaki provides an example of how involving the body in scripture can further one's understanding of the Bible. He chooses this passage from the Gospel

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<sup>165</sup> Kadowaki, J.K. (2002) *Zen and the Bible*, New York, United States of America: Orbis Books.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>167</sup> The Gospel is read by a deacon, if present. If not, it may be read by the celebrant or other member of the clergy in attendance.

<sup>168</sup> This gesture is a prayer that the words of the Gospel will be on the individual's mind, on his lips and in his heart.

of Mark: “The time has come, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”<sup>169</sup> and says that one cannot appreciate the full meaning of this reading through intellectual reasoning alone. Kadowaki believes that repentance involving the whole person and bringing our bodies in tune with our minds leads to a much more profound, fuller understanding of this gospel reading.<sup>170</sup>

He believes that a similar approach can be used in purification of the body when taming proclivity towards the deadly sins, which can be far more effective than reasoning alone.<sup>171</sup> Kadowaki adds that a spiritual director’s assistance can be successful for a strong-willed person but then says that guidance from such a person has a tendency to exclude the symbiotic working together of mind and body.<sup>172</sup> Human failings, Kadowaki says, cannot be overcome purely by reason – the body must be disciplined, too.<sup>173</sup> This disciplining of the body is not unknown in the Christian Church. Some religious orders, including the Jesuits, of which Kadowaki was a member, have historically carried out ascetic practices, although these may be declining. However, many committed Christians do fast on Wednesdays and Fridays (the days associated with Christ’s Passion), and the season of Lent is a time especially set aside for the development of ‘spiritual muscles’ through ascetism.

Kadowaki devotes part of Chapter Six to the power of silence, purporting that the less said, the greater the impact. He demonstrates this with the story about the woman caught in adultery.<sup>174</sup> While the accusations are being made, Jesus simply writes in the sand – a gesture that speaks louder than the few spoken words he utters. For Kadowaki, this Gospel reading brings to mind the *kōan* about Gutei’s finger<sup>175</sup> as he finds there are similarities. These commonalities are, in summary:

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<sup>169</sup> Mk 1:14-15.

<sup>170</sup> Kadowaki (2002), 25-26.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>174</sup> Jn 8:2-11.

<sup>175</sup> The story ‘Gutei holds up a finger’ is the third *kōan* in *The Gateless Gate: a Classic Book of Zen Kōans*, {translated by Kōun Yamada (2004), Massachusetts, United States of America: Wisdom Publications, 23}. The *kōan* reads as follows: Gutei raised his finger whenever he was asked a question about Zen. A boy attendant began to imitate him in this way. When anyone asked the boy what his master had preached about, the boy would raise his finger. Gutei heard about the boy’s mischief. He seized him and cut off his finger. The boy cried and ran

both Jesus and Gutei found a clever response to an intellectual problem. They use silence in their response to the problem and they lead the central character to self-introspection. The simplicity of their respective responses explain much more than spoken words ever could and, finally, they look beyond punishment. In doing so they achieve a profound level of teaching.<sup>176</sup>

The key to fruitful *zazen* practice is ridding oneself of all attachments, even to the point of forgetting oneself, which Kadowaki calls dying the Great Death. When this has been achieved, Kadowaki says that the student will pass the *kōan* 'Mu'.<sup>177</sup>

Kadowaki's exegesis provides us with solid examples of how *zazen* can help the Christian to reach a more profound understanding of biblical passages. However, he uses *zazen* to rid himself of egotistical inclinations which effective use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is intended to achieve. Perhaps the most significant point, however, is Kadowaki's claim that the body is not emphasised during Christian prayer. I disagree with Kadowaki on this point. Yes, the body is used differently in *zazen* and in a more disciplined manner but Christian prayer certainly does involve the body. In fact, with the genuflecting, blessing oneself, kneeling, standing, bowing, beating one's chest, sitting, and so on, the body is used in the Catholic liturgy in creative and symbolic ways.

### **2.1.6 Gordon Kaufman**

*Kaufman (1925-2011) was an ordained minister of the Mennonite church and taught at several universities, including Harvard Divinity School, with which he had a long association. He also lectured in many countries around the world. His thesis was titled: "The problem of relativism and the possibility of metaphysics."*

Kaufman's essay 'Religious diversity, historical consciousness, and Christian theology' was published in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*.<sup>178</sup> This book is a collection of viewpoints from a 'cross-section' of Christian theologians from

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away. Gutei called and stopped him. When the boy turned his head to Gutei, Gutei raised up his own finger. In that instant the boy was enlightened.

<sup>176</sup> Kadowaki (2002), 48.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>178</sup> Hick, J., and Knitter, P., editors (1988) *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, London, England: SCM Press. Hick and Knitter are both widely published on their pluralist positions. I could have chosen to focus on one of the chapters of this book written by either of these two theologians. However, I chose Kaufman for this review because he presents a less well-known voice on this subject.

around the world on the subject of how Christianity interacts with other faiths. Specifically, each of the authors was asked to consider why the modern world was pushing Christians towards a new pluralist approach, its historical context, and what such an approach might look like in the future. All the essay authors met and critiqued each other's contributions and the result is *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*. This book is divided into three parts, or bridges, as the editors prefer to say. Each of the three bridges represents a path from the authors' original position of exclusivity/inclusivity to one of a pluralist position. The three bridges are:

- The historico-cultural bridge: relativity. The basis is a 'historical consciousness', an understanding of the limitation of knowledge and religious beliefs. Also part of this bridge is an acknowledgement of the near impossibility of making an accurate assessment of someone else's claims of truth.<sup>179</sup>
- The theologico-mystical bridge: mystery. The basis of this bridge is the recognition that religious experience is infinite and that it is historically relative.<sup>180</sup>
- The ethico-practical bridge: justice. An author who writes from this perspective is motivated towards pluralism by the desire to end the sufferings of humanity.<sup>181</sup>

Kaufman's 'bridge' is relativity, described in the first of the above bullet points, and I include a review of his essay because he provides a pluralist perspective that is missing from this thesis thus far. None of the authors in this chapter spoke from a pluralist position although some of them, particularly Habito, may support elements of Kaufman's point of view.

Kaufman begins his discussion by asking how people with such widely varying beliefs and philosophies reach a common agreement on what it is to be human. He feels that reaching such an understanding in an interconnected world is difficult to do without confrontation. Kaufman believes that it is difficult for

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., preface, ix.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., preface, x.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., preface, xi.

Christianity to make any headway in this type of dialogue with other religions because it portrays an absolutist air. Kaufman says this is because the truths to human existence are held within the Christian tradition and are divinely revealed. The role of Christian teachers, Kaufman says, is not to question this position but to pass it on. Opposing points of view are either stonewalled or evaluated from a Christian perspective. While such an approach has been accepted for two thousand years, Kaufman believes this is an increasingly dangerous position, particularly when other religious traditions have something to say on the subject from which others could learn. Kaufman's position is driven by his opinion that if we do not learn to listen to each other and continue to live within our isolated view of existence, ignoring the interconnectedness of the world, then we may bring life to an end.<sup>182</sup> He warns readers of the possible end of the world several times in his essay.

Kaufman's claims about the destruction of the world seem alarmist and wildly exaggerated. However, one must look at the era in which Kaufman wrote this article. Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) was president throughout much of the 1980s, and the threat of nuclear war was a topic of worldwide concern after he launched his 'star wars' Strategic Defense Initiative. There had been several events on an international level that kept nuclear war at the forefront of people's imaginations throughout this decade. While the Cold War had been coming to an end, the escalating tension between the United States and the then Soviet Union was still deemed to be a threat to world peace.

Returning to Kaufman's proposals for dialogue, he discards suggestions of a 'universally human' philosophy because, he says, such a position does not exist. Kaufman points out that all thinking on the subject comes with certain practices, rules and regulations.<sup>183</sup> Each tradition is unique and they simply cannot be put into a religious melting pot to make something new which resonates with all. What Kaufman proposes is to look beyond the self-idolatry and absolutism claims attached to Christianity and assess a religious conviction from positions of culture, traditions, diversity, history, philosophies, thought and values to build up

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 5

a picture of how it came to be established. Many different factors would have an impact on how a particular faith tradition developed and evolved.<sup>184</sup> Kaufman claims that if the thinking he described above was followed through, Christianity would be less likely to claim that its 'truths' were divine revelation, as such a claim can appear arrogant to other faith traditions. Kaufman believes that his proposal would open the way for far more meaningful dialogue, in which faith traditions would speak from equal positions. Building such an understanding between faith traditions could make a major contribution towards real peace in the world, Kaufman says.<sup>185</sup>

Kaufman admits that omitting to argue that Christianity's teachings are divinely revealed might weaken the Christian's convictions but he does not believe doing so would be fatal.<sup>186</sup>

### **2.1.7 Robert Kennedy, S.J.**

*Robert Kennedy (1933-) was born in New York and grew up in an Irish Catholic neighbourhood. Kennedy joined the Society of Jesus in 1951 and volunteered to take the Gospel to Japan. He was ordained a priest in Tokyo in 1965. He was installed as a Zen teacher in the White Plum lineage in 1991 and given the title rōshi<sup>187</sup> in 1997.*

Like his friend, fellow Jesuit William Johnston, Kennedy was also ordained in Japan, albeit eight years earlier. Their interest in oriental mysticism grew in parallel during the fertile post-Vatican II years and, perhaps because of their shared experience of *zazen* practice and their religious affiliation, Kennedy echoes many of the thoughts of his friend.

Kennedy's book *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*, the subject of this review, is one of two books that he wrote during his active ministry. Kennedy begins most chapters with an excerpt from a Buddhist text, often from *Gateless Barrier: Zen comments*

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>187</sup> The term 'rōshi' is an honorific title that was traditionally only afforded to someone who had acquired years of *zazen* practice and teaching experience. In the *Rinzai* tradition, a rōshi would have received the 'inka' seal, a formal declaration that the disciple had completed the rigorous programme of study. In some of the Zen centres that have been established in the West, where formal language and protocol are more relaxed, usage of the word 'rōshi' is usually more casual.

on the *Mumonkan*<sup>188</sup> by Zenkei Shibayama (1894-1974), a Japanese *Rinzai* Zen master who was influential in the spread of Zen Buddhism to the West.

Like Johnston, Kennedy states in his preface that he has never considered himself to be anything other than Catholic and has never thought of himself as a Buddhist. In exploring *zazen* he said he had simply been looking for a new way of being Catholic, not a new faith, and that he sought dialogue. In fact, Kennedy says that Zen Buddhism need not be considered a religion at all but a philosophy that can enrich the beliefs of anyone, of any faith.<sup>189</sup> I found this a confusing statement because in a later chapter he says that Buddhism is the first world religion known in history.<sup>190</sup>

Kennedy adds that neither his teacher, Kōun Yamada – nor any other teacher he worked with – ever asked about his faith, that all they wanted to know about was his *zazen* practice. Kennedy is probably referring to the one-to-one interviews between teacher and disciple, known as *dokusan*, which are similar to spiritual direction in the Catholic Church but more focussed specifically on *zazen* practice. Questions about his Catholic faith were not posed because they were not relevant to *zazen* practice and his progress.

While Christianity and Zen Buddhism differ on both theological and philosophical matters, Kennedy says there is a definite convergence of the two in the area of contemplative prayer. While Christians do not always recognise its value because they look for salvation in charitable works, Kennedy believes that *zazen*-influenced prayer can be an enriching experience.<sup>191</sup> This involves ‘dying to oneself’, and detaching one’s thoughts from concepts and images, including those of God, which dispels the ‘I-thou’ ‘subject-object’ relationship.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Shibayama, Z. (2000) *Gateless Barrier: Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, Colorado, United States of America: Shambhala.

<sup>189</sup> Kennedy (1995), 13-14.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 24. In Chapter Four, I asked several of my interviewees whether they considered Zen Buddhism a religion and there was a range of responses, from “certainly” (Kim Boykin, 4.3) “definitely” (Gregory Mayers, 4.7) and “not strictly what you call a religion” (Madeleine Tacy, 4.12). My own definition of a religion can be read in the overview to Part I of this thesis.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.



Kennedy believes that Zen Buddhism is here to stay and that eastern<sup>193</sup> forms of spirituality will only become even more prevalent in the years to come so it would be unwise to ignore it.<sup>194</sup> Kennedy was specifically referring to the United States but the situation would be similar in other English-speaking countries.

Kennedy devotes a brief chapter to the subject of inter-religious dialogue and is convinced that little will be achieved through intellectual discussion alone.

Kennedy says that, in inter-religious dialogue, the emphasis must be experiential and focussed on meditating together.<sup>195</sup> This is an opinion that Kennedy shares with Johnston, but I think some people involved in inter-religious dialogue might question the notion that a fruitful exchange cannot be achieved without partaking in another religion's prayer practices.

Kennedy says that as well as sitting with those of other faiths, Christians must approach inter-religious dialogue with an attitude of learning, sharing and service.<sup>196</sup> Looking at dialogue from an eastern perspective, Kennedy describes how Buddhism has a history of effectively blending in with the local culture and thus gaining acceptance. For example, when Buddhism arrived in China, enormous adaptations were required in language, culture and philosophy. Centuries later, Buddhism moved to Japan and other countries in Asia, and gaining acceptance required further adjustments in thought and practice. Now that Buddhism has arrived in the United States (and, of course, in other English-speaking countries) Kennedy says that it will continue to adapt to the local culture wherever it finds a home.<sup>197</sup>

My belief is that Catholicism, like Buddhism, is also a missionary religion that has found a home in countries on every continent. The Catholic Church, too, has made some adaptations to the local culture in which it operates. One only needs to be present at a mass said in one of the non-Roman rites to understand that. Closer to home, the establishment in 2011 of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of

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<sup>193</sup> When I use the word 'eastern' I am usually referring to oriental, non-Christian religions that originate from parts of Asia. However, I do also sometimes use the term 'Eastern' when discussing non-Roman rites of the Catholic Church that are practised in parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 129.

Walsingham enabled former members of the Church of England to be in full communion with the Catholic Church yet retain certain features of Anglican worship. It is true that the Catholic Church's liturgy and doctrine must be protected but cultural influences are very much in evidence in the Catholic Church around the world.

### **2.1.8 Elaine MacInnes O.L.M.**

*Born in New Brunswick, Canada, Elaine MacInnes (1924-) is a religious sister with Our Lady's Missionaries. In 1961, she was sent to Japan to teach music to schoolchildren. She became interested in zazen while there and studied under Kōun Yamada in the city of Kamakura, receiving Dharma transmission from him in 1976. During her active years, she developed a ministry in teaching zazen to prison inmates.*

Elaine MacInnes's book *Zen Contemplation: Bridge of Living Water*<sup>198</sup> is an autobiographical account of how eastern spirituality has influenced her life as a Roman Catholic religious sister and Zen master. Her book, written when she was in her mid-70s, was published following her return to her native Canada after living and working overseas for 40 years.

MacInnes's contact with *zazen* began when she met a Buddhist monk called Horisawa-san<sup>199</sup> two years after her arrival in Japan. The meeting was intended to be MacInnes's opportunity to tell the monk about the Jesuits' missionary work in Japan 500 years earlier – something that Francis Xavier had been unable to do himself during the time he spent in Japan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. During this meeting, Horisawa-san raised the subject of prayer and, right there and then, taught MacInnes how to undertake *zazen*. This meeting was not only the beginning of a long friendship but it also triggered MacInnes's lifetime of *zazen* practice.<sup>200</sup>

It is noteworthy that MacInnes is concerned about people who approach *zazen* from a theoretical standpoint, without actually taking part. She refers to such

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<sup>198</sup> MacInnes (2001).

<sup>199</sup> 'San' is an honorific suffix that is added to the surname of someone who is being addressed. The same suffix applies to both men and women. It is not used when referring to oneself.

<sup>200</sup> MacInnes, E. (2001), 58.

people as ‘dabblers’.<sup>201</sup> She doesn’t say precisely why this is a concern to her, but perhaps, like Johnston and Kennedy, she believes that ‘sitting’ with people of non-Christian faiths is crucial for effective dialogue.

People from a range of backgrounds have influenced MacInnes’s spirituality. As well as receiving teaching from a renowned Zen master, the Belgian Jesuit priest Paul de Jaegher<sup>202</sup> had an impact on her early during her novitiate and she adopted his maxim “I live now not I, but Christ lives within me.” She also shows interest in Matthew Fox,<sup>203</sup> Diarmuid O’Murchu,<sup>204</sup> Anthony de Mello,<sup>205</sup> the reading of horoscopes,<sup>206</sup> the Enneagram,<sup>207</sup> and Sufi poetry.<sup>208</sup> Her writing also reflects a pantheistic view of creation.<sup>209</sup>

While MacInnes is attracted to different types of spiritualities, she is emphatic that she is Catholic and makes this point more than once in the book. Indeed, she says that finding a worshipping community where she feels at home has been important to her wherever she has moved during her life.<sup>210</sup> While she clearly practises *zazen*, she says she also does a Christian meditation every day and encourages her disciples to do the same.<sup>211</sup>

While MacInnes professes a Catholic belonging, her commitment to Zen Buddhism has been obvious enough for some people to suggest that she was both a Catholic and a Buddhist. She appears not to wholly disagree with this claim,

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>202</sup> On page 46 of *Zen Contemplation*, MacInnes explains how she was given a copy of his book *One with Jesus* (de Jaegher, P., (1946), *One with Jesus: Life of Identification with Christ* London, England: Newman), which helped convince her about the direction her future would take.

<sup>203</sup> Fox is a former Dominican priest who was expelled from the order in 1991 for views contrary to the official teaching of the Catholic Church. He subsequently joined the American Episcopal Church.

<sup>204</sup> O’Murchu, a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart order, was the subject of criticism in 2006 from the Doctrinal Commission of the Spanish Bishops’ Conference for his book *Reframing Religious life: An Expanded Vision*, which contained erroneous information.

<sup>205</sup> A decade after his death, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith conducted a review of de Mello (1931-1987) and his writings, which had the potential to cause confusion over whether Jesus Christ was the son of God. This is in opposition to Christian teaching.

<sup>206</sup> MacInnes (2001), 16.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>209</sup> For example, on page 36 of *Zen Contemplation*, MacInnes made the comment that “every particle of creation is filled with God.”

<sup>210</sup> MacInnes (2001), 30.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 64.

adding that the Buddha never intended to start a religion.<sup>212</sup> The connection is unclear between her practice of *zazen* and the Buddha's intention of starting a religion. According to author Richard McDaniel, when he asked MacInnes if it was possible to be both a Christian and a Buddhist, she quoted the Dalai Lama's response to the same question: "That would be like putting a yak's head on a sheep's body."<sup>213</sup>

MacInnes reinforces her loyalty to Catholicism by saying that she is happy to be a Catholic undertaking 'legitimate' *zazen* as a method of contemplative prayer.<sup>214</sup> MacInnes does not say more on what she means by 'legitimate' but she is a member of the *Sanbō Zen* school, a modern *Sōtō/Rinzai* hybrid outgrowth of Zen Buddhism established in 1954. It is particularly popular with westerners, especially lay people, and has evolved from its *Sōtō/Rinzai* roots. Paradoxically, MacInnes appears to disapprove that Buddhism in the West has been adapted to western tastes<sup>215</sup> (as *Sanbō Zen* certainly has, as it is more widely known and practised outside of Japan than it is within the country).

While MacInnes shows some disappointment that Zen Buddhism has been adapted to western tastes, she says that she and other 'sitters' look forward to the day when *zazen* becomes a part of the Church. She ruefully believes this is a long way away, considering the slow progress that has been made since the Second Vatican Council.<sup>216</sup> However, she does believe that *zazen* will, eventually, find its place within Christianity.<sup>217</sup> Odd, perhaps, is the revelation that her non-Christian teacher, Kōun Yamada, longed for the *satori*<sup>218</sup> experience to become part of the Christian church.<sup>219</sup> I say it is odd because Yamada is not a Christian and did not have any real training in Christian theology.

The word 'God' is sometimes used in MacInnes's book. She believes that there is a general reluctance to make a direct reference to God, with 'Ultimate Reality'

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>213</sup> McDaniel, R. (2016) *Catholicism and Zen*, Ontario, Canada: The Sumeru Press, Inc., 95.

<sup>214</sup> MacInnes (2001), 21.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>218</sup> *Satori* and *kenshō* are often confused, but, in most lineages, there is a distinction. While *kenshō* is usually the name given to one's initial enlightenment, *satori* is usually used for the deeper, more profound awakenings experienced later in one's *zazen* practice.

<sup>219</sup> MacInnes (2001), 39.

being a neutral popular alternative. She mentions a few alternative words for God and they include Absolute, Infinite and Great Power. MacInnes says the most commonly used reference, however, is IT, written in capitals, as I have done here, and uttered with humility and reverence.<sup>220</sup>

MacInnes makes a number of indirect references to dualism, saying that a Christian wishing to practise *zazen* must put the idea of subject and object to one side.<sup>221</sup> Her assessment of dualism might be summed up in her thoughts and words following an earthquake in the Philippines, where she was living at the time: the following extract is from *Beside Still Waters*: “Suddenly there was only the earth, only the soil, only the good brown stuff. That realisation caused me to cry out “I am the earth!”<sup>222</sup>

In conclusion, MacInnes has clearly drawn on a range of spiritualities to enrich her Catholic heritage. This leads to the question of whether the Catholic Church is broad enough to embrace a wide spectrum of beliefs, viewpoints and cultural standpoints.

## **2.2 GROUP II: Zen Buddhist authors**

### **2.2.1 Philip Kapleau**

*American Philip Kapleau (1912-2004) initially became interested in Zen Buddhism during a visit to Japan as a court reporter. When he returned from this trip, he studied Zen Buddhism further but became frustrated at the superficiality he found so he moved to Japan in 1953. He studied under the Zen master Hakuun Yasutani and was ordained by him in 1965. He returned to the United States the following year and founded the Rochester Zen Centre.*

Two of Kapleau’s books are included in this literature review. The first is his ‘flagship’ work, *The Three Pillars of Zen* (hereafter ‘*Pillars*’). Part One of this book focuses on the teaching and practice of *zazen*. It opens with some words from Kapleau in which he introduces the subject of *zazen*, its purpose, and an overview

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 21. The word ‘it’ in this context is imported from Chinese Chan Buddhism and is derived from the word ‘inmo’, spoken to describe something that is ineffable. See Dōgen, E. (1994) *Shobogenzo*, translated by Nishijima, G., and Cross C., Windbell Publications (kindle book).

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 90. My interviewee Christopher Collingwood discusses non-duality in Chapter Four, describing it as an ‘interconnectedness’. See section 4.4.

<sup>222</sup> Kasimow, H., et al., ed. (2003) *Beside Still Waters*, Massachusetts, United States of America: Wisdom Publications, 178.

of its practice. He also devotes several pages to *Sōtō* Zen and the person who introduced it to Japan, Dōgen. This is the tradition that shaped the thinking of Kapleau's teacher, Hakuun Yasutani. Kapleau includes a brief biography of Yasutani, followed by a series of lectures he had previously given, transcripts of dialogue with students, letters to practitioners of *zazen* and a *teisho*<sup>223</sup> he had given on the *kōan* 'mu'. Much of Part Two of *Pillars* is devoted to the subject of enlightenment, and includes a transcript of eight experiences of Japanese and westerners, along with letters from a Yaeko Iwasaki<sup>224</sup> to Zen master Harada (1870-1961), again on the subject of enlightenment. Part Two concludes with a talk given by an influential 14<sup>th</sup> century monk and *Rinzai* Zen master by the name of Bassui Tokusho (1327-1387).

Kapleau's book *Zen: Merging of East and West*<sup>225</sup> (hereafter '*East and West*') is described as a 'companion volume' to *Pillars* and was written following the experience he gained after his first book was published. The format of *East and West* is similar to *Pillars* in that the bulk of the book comprises a series of dialogues on *zazen*-related subjects raised by people who attended his lectures. The book also contains transcripts of *teisho*, commentaries on *kōan* given during *sesshin*, enlightenment testimonies and letters from disciples.

There are two subjects that Kapleau addresses that I would like to take up in this literature review. The first is his reflections on Zen Buddhism as a religion and the spiritual aspects of the particular tradition in which he engaged. The second subject from Kapleau's book that I wish to examine is enlightenment. If enlightenment is one of the main goals of relentlessly pursuing *zazen*, then enlightenment is important to my enquiries.

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<sup>223</sup> *Teisho* is a formal talk given by a Zen master, usually during *sesshin*.

<sup>224</sup> Yaeko Iwasaki was a member of the Mitsubishi empire who died when she was just 25 after suffering from ill health throughout her life. She received enlightenment after five years of *zazen* practice, often undertaken from her sick bed. She wrote a series of letters to Zen master Daiun Harada about her enlightenment experience.

<sup>225</sup> Kapleau, P. (1978) *Zen: Merging of East and West*, New York, United States of America: Anchor Books, kindle edition; rev. ed. of *Zen: Dawn in the West*, New York, United States of America: Anchor Press.

To return to our first subject, Kapleau leaves readers in no doubt of his conviction that Zen Buddhism is a religion and makes the point early in *Pillars*.<sup>226</sup> He does not, however, define what, for him, constitutes a religion.

There are five types of Zen, which Kapleau discusses in *Pillars*, but he does not say which of these describes his own practice. Perhaps this is because a practitioner may partake in more than one type or may spiritually mature and move into another type. Kapleau emphasises that each type has distinctive features and that it is important for students of Zen Buddhism to be able to identify these.<sup>227</sup> The five types are:

- 1) The first type is *bompu*, which is what Kapleau describes as 'ordinary Zen'. It has no religious content so Kapleau says it is for everyone. *Bompu* is practised for its well-being effects as it can improve the practitioner's overall health. One can learn the power of concentration and other mind control techniques.<sup>228</sup>
- 2) *Gedo* can be religious, but it comprises forms of meditation that are not Zen Buddhist in origin. Christian contemplation and Hindu meditation techniques, therefore, are two examples that fall into the *gedo* category.<sup>229</sup>
- 3) *Shojo* is aimed at attaining one's own peace of mind. It is Buddhist, but undertaken by those who are unable to engage with the Buddha's most profound teachings, which includes the knowledge that existence is an indivisible whole. As *shojo* focuses on the individual, the practitioner cannot achieve true peace of mind by only seeking one's own salvation.<sup>230</sup>
- 4) *Daijo* is expressly Buddhist and focused on enlightenment. One achieves enlightenment through *zazen*. Enlightenment is a fundamental experience as it is the actualization of one's true nature. *Daijo* is directed towards *satori*. The deeper the *satori* experience, the more that one needs *zazen*.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Kapleau (1965), xv. In *East and West*, Kapleau also discusses resistance to the import of a 'foreign religion' when Zen Buddhism crossed from India into China and from China into Japan. See Kapleau (1978), introduction.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

5) *Saijojo* is also an overtly Buddhist type of *zazen* and the one practised by the Buddha himself. Dōgen, who brought the *Sōtō* tradition to Japan, supported this type of *zazen*. Unlike *daijo*, *saijojo* does not strive for *satori*. *Shikantaza*, the practice of sitting with the mind empty of thoughts and images, is the mainstay of *saijojo* Zen.<sup>232</sup>

Newcomers are sometimes surprised to discover that Zen Buddhism can involve more than undertaking *zazen*.<sup>233</sup> Such was the case with one of Kapleau's disciples, Carol, a former fundamentalist Christian, who wrote to him complaining about the number of ceremonies and the amount of chanting undertaken in the *zendo*.<sup>234</sup> She also found paying homage to the Buddha and placing food on the altar incomprehensible. She concluded her letter by asking why the religious aspect was necessary. Kapleau did not deny the religiosity, but explained that when he first arrived at a Japanese Zen monastery he, too, was initially surprised to find figures of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*,<sup>235</sup> flowers and fruit on the altar, prostrating and bowing, chanting and ceremonies. Kapleau responded to this letter by addressing each of the writer's objections and explaining the place they rightfully have within Zen Buddhism.<sup>236</sup>

We do not know, of course, if 'Carol's' feelings over religiosity were assuaged by Kapleau's reassurances or whether she found another form of *zazen* that enabled her to focus solely on the meditation without the spirituality. While Carol was disturbed at the religiosity, another disciple expressed surprise that, considering Kapleau had called Zen Buddhism a religion several times, he had said nothing about prayer. Kapleau responded that he had not addressed this subject because few people ask about it but agreed with the enquirer's suggestion that prayer is the lifeblood of religion. Kapleau goes on to describe three different types of prayer: petition, prayer for assistance and absolute prayer (the latter involves sitting before a deity, Buddha or *bodhisattva* and 'becoming one' with it). He also explains that prostrating before Buddhist statues and offering up incense or

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>233</sup> *Bompu* Zen, which focuses on health and well-being, is excluded from this statement.

<sup>234</sup> A hall where *zazen* and other types of Zen meditation are carried out.

<sup>235</sup> A *Bodhisattva* is an awakened being who strives for the liberation of others.

<sup>236</sup> Kapleau (1978) Part Three, Section II 'a letter and a reply'.



flowers is a type of prayer and expression of gratitude, so helping to create a karmic link.<sup>237</sup>

Kapleau echoes the Buddha's stance on the existence of God, and that is to remain silent on the subject.<sup>238</sup> However, Kapleau certainly did pray. He grew up in a Christian home but some time during his early adulthood he rejected his religion so it is interesting that he prayed.<sup>239</sup> Kapleau may have believed that prayer has a direct influence on one's karma and this, rather than God, was the impetus for prayer.

Kapleau's treatment of confession and repentance is easier to grasp because although the Christian concept of sinning against God would not form part of the Buddhist belief system, any general 'pain-producing behaviour' (as Kapleau calls it) needs to be vocalised and 'owned' by the offender.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, Kapleau describes a formal ceremony, held every month, that all staff working at the Rochester Zen Centre are obliged to attend. While actual confession at this ceremony is not required, it is encouraged, and it amounts to a public – rather than one-to-one – declaration of errant ways. The ceremony is reminiscent of the 'chapter of faults' that were once a regular feature in monasteries and convents, where one publicly confessed any wrongdoing. Participants at the Rochester Zen Center sit in a semi-circle and pass a stick of incense from person to person, giving each one the opportunity to confess. While the member holds the stick of incense, the rest of the participants are also given the opportunity to address the *Dharma* sibling and point out any faults. As well as the public ceremony, Kapleau explained that his *Dharma* brothers and sisters are also welcome to confess in private, with a friend or partner.<sup>241</sup>

In the research that I have undertaken into different expressions of Zen Buddhism, this is the first time that the subject of confession and repentance in a

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<sup>237</sup> Kapleau (1978) Part Three, section III, first question.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., fourth question.

<sup>239</sup> The *Rinzai* abbot Meido Moore, whose book *The Rinzai Way* I have reviewed (see section 2.2.2) and who I interviewed in Chapter Five (see section 5.4) also spoke about prayer directed to 'beings' in the universe. Moore agreed that Buddhists do not always use the word 'prayer' because it can be confused with its understanding in the Abrahamic faiths. Archbishop Kevin McDonald, who I interviewed in Chapter Four, section 4.8, clarified Christian prayer as follows: "Christians pray to God our Father, through Our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit."

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., question four.

<sup>241</sup> Kapleau (1978) Dialogues, question four.

non-Christian context has been addressed in such depth. It is interesting to note that Kapleau was, at one time, a member of Sanbō Zen, a modern outgrowth of Zen Buddhism that I described in the previous chapter, until he broke away to set up the Rochester Zen Center. Robert Sharf, Distinguished Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California, pointed out that the Sanbō Zen organisation had stripped away unnecessary pomp, ceremony and public liturgy to provide its disciples with an ‘uncluttered’ path to enlightenment.<sup>242</sup> It is interesting that when Kapleau established his own lineages he re-introduced features that he had almost certainly once dispensed with.

Kapleau does not discuss the subject of *jukai* and that is surprising, given that his school of Zen Buddhism places great emphasis on community, commitment and ritual.<sup>243</sup> Interestingly, Kapleau includes a definition of *jukai* in his glossary and states that it is an initiation ceremony as a Zen Buddhist.<sup>244</sup>

Kapleau explains that devotions such as prostrations before the Buddha and *bodhisattvas*, making offerings to them and taking part in regular confession/repentance ceremonies can hasten awakening when performed in the right state of mind.<sup>245</sup> Awakening is the much-anticipated reward for dedicated *zazen* practice and this brings me to the second point I wish to discuss: enlightenment. It is a subject that Kapleau covers well in *Pillars*. There are eight transcripts at the beginning of Part Two of *Pillars* that describe the enlightenment experiences of ordinary men and women. Kapleau says that he deliberately excluded ‘professional’ *zazen* practitioners from this section as he wanted to demonstrate how enlightenment was attainable for all people with sufficient determination and was not simply the domain of a select few.

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<sup>242</sup> Sharf, 428.

<sup>243</sup> The *jukai* ceremony is sometimes viewed as one’s formal entrance into Zen Buddhism. *Jukai* can vary slightly from lineage to lineage but at its most rudimentary level, involves receiving the Buddhist precepts. The precepts are a set of rules by which the new Buddhist strives to live. Prior to the *jukai* ceremony, a Zen student usually sews himself a ‘*rakusu*’, pieces of cloth that are stitched together and worn over the neck. The reverse is usually signed by the student’s teacher. It is usual to receive a document at the ceremony stating that the recipient is now a formal member of the lineage.

<sup>244</sup> In Chapter Six, I discuss at length whether *jukai* is, in fact, an initiation into Zen Buddhism because there are wide differences of opinion on this matter.

<sup>245</sup> Kapleau (1978), *Dialogues*, Introduction.

That first *kenshō* experience, however, may evade some people for many years. This was the case with a Mr. P.K. a 46-year-old former businessman from the United States who, after unsuccessful practice in New York, decided to pursue enlightenment in Japan. His experiences at *sesshin*, the encounters with the *kyosaku*, the interminable struggle with the 'mu' *kōan*, the pain he encountered during *zazen* and his conversations with the *rōshi* at *dokusan* are recounted in *Pillars*. On August 4, 1958 – more than five years after his arrival in Japan – Mr. P.K. was in *dokusan* when the *rōshi* began explaining the oneness of the universe. The room, and everything in it, was bathed in light and Mr. P.K. became aware that this was his *kenshō* experience, or initial experience of enlightenment.<sup>246</sup>

In contrast, Mrs. A.M., a 38-year-old American schoolteacher and her husband achieved enlightenment in just one week. They had shared an 'intellectual' interest in eastern spirituality and then during a holiday in Hawaii they discovered a local *zazen* group and put into practice all they had read. They took turns with each other, alternating *zazen* with childcare, and invested every moment into *zazen*. At the end of the week, both were enlightened.

*Sesshin* provides the right environment in which enlightenment can be encouraged, sometimes under much pressure. In a traditional Zen Buddhist monastery, for example, this includes the liberal use of the *kyosaku* as a means of ensuring the practitioner remains alert, shouting by the monitors who parade the *zendo* and regular one-to-one *dokusan* exchanges, where an expectant *rōshi* awaits signs of enlightenment. So prized is enlightenment that in some lineages, a ceremony is conducted at the end of *sesshin* to recognise those who achieved *kenshō* during their time on retreat.<sup>247</sup>

Every practitioner eagerly pursues the much-desired enlightenment experience but it is difficult to gain any real understanding of this phenomenon beyond random threads of information. A common theme in an enlightenment experience is that it is accompanied by laughter and tears of joy, as was the case with a 47-year-old Japanese executive who Kapleau refers to as 'Mr. K.Y.'<sup>248</sup> As

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<sup>246</sup> Kapleau (1965), 253.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>248</sup> Sharf reports that Mr. K.Y. was, in fact, Kōun Yamada, the Zen teacher who is part of the Harada-Yasutani-Yamada lineage that founded the Sanbō Zen organisation. See Sharf, 423.

well as waking up in the middle of the night to uncontrollable laughter, Mr. K.Y. shed tears and experienced feelings of deep joy.<sup>249</sup>

The origin of enlightenment and what triggers the phenomenon is mysterious. Sharf believes it might be a state of mind acquired through rigorous study and extreme discipline, implying that it might be a long process.<sup>250</sup> While Sharf's explanation seems plausible, he is not completely correct on this because while some people do take a long time to receive enlightenment, it comes more quickly to others. It is difficult to articulate the essence of enlightenment – yes, it is seeing into one's nature, but there is a vagueness about it in literature that makes it difficult to provide a more meaningful definition. There are numerous testimonies but they do not fully answer the question: "What exactly is enlightenment and, having had the experience, what does it enable one to do?" The special knowledge elements surrounding enlightenment is reminiscent of Gnosticism.<sup>251</sup>

In summary, while the subject of enlightenment is vague, what is clear is that Kapleau considered the type of *zazen* he practised to be religious, and overtly so. Zen Buddhism is often proclaimed as a philosophy that can be bolted onto any religion but some Christians may find elements of it difficult to reconcile with their beliefs. Christians may be drawn into practices with which they may feel uncomfortable, such as prostrating themselves before the Buddha and reciting some of the sutras.

### **2.2.2 Meido Moore**

*Moore (1961-) is abbot of Korinji, a Rinzai monastery in Wisconsin, in the United States. Korinji is one of the few Rinzai centres outside of Japan. Moore authored The Rinzai Zen Way,*<sup>252</sup> *his first book.*

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<sup>249</sup> Kapleau (1965), 230.

<sup>250</sup> Sharf, 418.

<sup>251</sup> The document 'Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life' (see [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_20030203\\_new-age\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html)) defines Gnosticism as knowledge that is not intellectual, but visionary or mystical, thought to be revealed, and capable of joining the human being to the divine mystery.

<sup>252</sup> Moore, M. (2018) *The Rinzai Zen Way*, Colorado, United States of America: Shambhala Publications Inc.

A recent book written by a *Rinzai* master is an unusual find because so many people interested in Zen Buddhism today are attracted to the westernised forms that blend *Rinzai* and *Sōtō*. This is an observation that I made during my enquiries and one that Moore confirms in the preface of his book.<sup>253</sup>

In an initial cursory look through Moore's book, it is surprising that he does not dedicate more space to the place of solving *kōan* as these riddles are very much part of the *Rinzai* tradition. True, they are also sometimes undertaken in *Sōtō* and the modern Zen Buddhist sects, but they are particularly associated with *Rinzai*. However, Moore has positioned his book at the beginner, and some Zen masters do not encourage their students in *kōan* practice until they have gained some *zazen* experience. Also, the solving of *kōan* requires the assistance of a teacher and many new to *zazen* practice have not yet engaged the services of such a person.

Moore encourages his readers to engage a teacher if they have not already done so and devotes an entire chapter to this subject. Moore says there are pitfalls and detours on a *zazen* journey and the role of a guide is crucial in steering a student on the correct path.<sup>254</sup> To Moore, the services of a teacher are not optional but an integral component of *zazen* practice.<sup>255</sup> Once a formal teaching partnership has been agreed between the guide and the practitioner, they will meet regularly to check on progress. Over time, the observant teacher comes to know the practitioner well and a profound relationship develops between the two.<sup>256</sup>

To an outsider, it can seem surprising, or even rude, when a Zen master terminates a *dokusan* interview before the practitioner has even fully entered the room. Moore says such a response is because the Zen master can recognise his student's state of mind by his body language. Even the way the student rings the bell upon entering the *dokusan* room can be an indication of the disciple's mental state.<sup>257</sup> As well as journeying with a disciple on the path to enlightenment, a

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., preface, xiv.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 151-253.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 152.

teacher's assistance is crucial in verifying that *kenshō* has taken place because, if it has, the experience needs to be enriched, deepened and developed.<sup>258</sup>

While Moore says little about *kōan* study, what he does talk about at length is dualistic thought. The eradication of dualism underpins Zen Buddhism. Virtually every author who writes about the east-west spirituality debate addresses this subject. I have already examined Ruben Habito's discussion on dualism earlier in this thesis but we will re-visit the subject again here because while Moore's perspective broadly echoes Habito's, there is a notable difference: Moore is not a Christian and approaches dualism from a Zen Buddhist viewpoint. Unlike Habito, God is not part of Moore's *zazen* practice. While Moore certainly does not suggest a personal relationship with an 'other', he does devote a chapter on dualism and its interplay with Abrahamic religions.

Moore begins the chapter on Zen Buddhism and Abrahamic religions by saying that God has many different faces, shaped by a range of factors. The believer's own upbringing, personal attributes, insecurities, brokenness and anxieties all combine with a particular faith's doctrine to create a God that has been made in humanity's image. The underlying reason for this, Moore posits, is the dualistic relationship between an individual believer and his relationship with God. Moore says that at the heart of Abrahamic religions is a dualistic, 'I-thou' relationship between the believer and God.<sup>259</sup> Moore further suggests that, rather than direct prayer to this created God, the believer closes his eyes and addresses supplications to what he calls "a space within".<sup>260</sup> Moore does not give reasons as to why he believes this and he appears to have no evidence for his claim. On the one hand he says that people have a dualistic relationship (with God) and then, on the other, seemingly contradicts himself by saying that he believes they pray to themselves. His statement that Christians address their prayer to "a space within", rather than to God, with whom they have an 'I'-'thou' relationship is a sweeping generalisation and is not supported by any evidence that this is so.

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 154-155.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 23.

Moore says that the answer to this dualistic interaction with the world is the regular undertaking of *samadhi*.<sup>261</sup> He appears to place great emphasis on *samadhi*, although it is not specific to the *Rinzai* tradition, and can be easy to achieve. In fact, Moore says that some people experience *samadhi* without even taking part in meditation as activities can occasionally engage a person's complete concentration to the extent that time is forgotten, and subject and object begin to merge.<sup>262</sup> For most beginners, however, Moore says entering into *samadhi* involves a concerted effort and the resolution of obstructions. With regular practice, subject and object will diminish over time.<sup>263</sup> Genuine *samadhi* and the shrinking of dualism will unmask a selfless being.<sup>264</sup> The hoped-for prize in return for such resolve and perseverance is the possibility of a *kenshō* experience, or passage through 'the gateless gate'. This *kenshō* experience is but one step on the path to full enlightenment. After *kenshō*, regular *samadhi* is still required to remain in touch with one's Buddha nature.

### 2.2.3 Julian Skinner

*Skinner (1963-), a former scientist, resigned from his job, sold his property, donated his money to charity and then spent 14 years in a Sōtō Zen monastery. This was followed by a move to the Rinzai Zen temple, Gyokuryuji, in central Japan. Now back in the UK, Skinner runs Zenways, an organisation that holds teacher training courses in yoga and mindfulness, as well as hosting retreats.*

Julian Skinner is a successor of Miyamae Shinzan (1935-), a Zen master who merged the teachings of Yotaku Bankei (1622-1693) and Ekaku Hakuin (1685-1768)<sup>265</sup> to form a new lineage, *Zendo Kyodan*. Skinner published his first book in 2017, *Practical Zen: Meditation and Beyond*. Glimpses of Skinner's life as a monk at Gyokuryuji permeate his book, which makes for interesting reading. His pilgrimage on the Japanese island of Shikoku, where he slept outside and lived on

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<sup>261</sup> A deeply absorptive, meditative state in which the mind is without thoughts and images.

<sup>262</sup> Moore (2018), 67.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>265</sup> In Chapter One, section 1.1, I described how interest in Zen Buddhism had to declined to a level where it was in danger of extinction until Hakuin revived it through art.

alms, is particularly entertaining, as is his 777-mile walk through England and Scotland shortly after moving back to the UK in 2007.

The main point of Skinner's book, however, is to provide an eight-week course in *zazen*, drawing upon the philosophy and teachings of Miyamae Shinzan. The course is self-taught, in a user-friendly format and requires 25 minutes of *zazen* time every day for the eight weeks, plus five minutes a day recording experiences in a diary. Skinner says that following his book works well when used in conjunction with a teacher. He does, however, acknowledge that not everybody has the time to consult the same teacher every week for two hours over a period of eight weeks. For those who fit into this category, Skinner says the book can be used on its own. In my opinion, and my experience, it is unusual for a Zen master to treat the services of a teacher so casually. Most Zen masters would claim that a teacher is integral to the practice of *zazen*. Zen master Philip Kapleau, for example, says that without a *rōshi's* guidance, a student has no sure way of knowing whether his *zazen* practice is authentic. Meido Moore, also a Zen master, advises listening to the guidance of one's teacher in attempts to achieve *kenshō*. In *Zen, the Authentic Gate* Zen master Kōun Yamada devotes an entire chapter to finding an authentic Zen teacher. A teacher, therefore, is absolutely imperative for proper Zen practice and not an optional decision. Bodhidharma, the 'grandfather' of Zen Buddhism even goes as far as to say that only 'one person in a million' achieves enlightenment without the help of a teacher.<sup>266</sup>

The meditation exercises Skinner describes in *Practical Zen* emphasise health and wellness, which calls to mind the *Bompu* style of *zazen*. *Bompu* is one of five types of *zazen*, as described earlier in this thesis, and a chief concern is learning to concentrate the mind and discipline its thought processes. *Bompu* Zen contains no specifically religious content so it is often deemed to be suitable for people of any faith, or of none. Perhaps this type of Zen's focus on health and well-being is less dependent upon a teacher's guidance. There is a clear difference between Skinner's non-religious practice and, say, Kapleau's, which has a definite Buddhist connection.

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<sup>266</sup> Pine, R. (1989), 15.



Skinner's meditation style draws on Bankei's teaching on the 'unborn', the Original Buddha mind. Skinner defines the Buddha mind as the nature a person was born with, before life experiences cloud one's personality. To illustrate this, a person is able to simultaneously manage different mental processes. Thoughts and feelings come and go but if one pauses and focuses on any one of these, it can become all-encompassing and consuming, causing the person to lose sight of one's original Buddha mind.

When Skinner established Zenways in the UK, he evaluated practices and adapted them to make them particularly appealing to lay people. One of the concessions he made was in the practice of *dokusan*, or *sanzen*, as it is called in the *Rinzai* tradition. When Skinner was in Japan, Shinzan had been experimenting with a group alternative to *sanzen* because he had observed that there was little historical evidence of the one-to-one interviews in literature from Zen masters from the Golden Age of Zen. Thus, teaching sessions at Gyokuryuji became a forum for using different permutations of *sanzen*. These would include public interactions between master and a student, between master and the group and between students. At Zenways, Skinner inherited these types of interactions and combined them with Charles Berner's dyad process to create a 64-hour intensive Zen retreat format incorporating much of the work contained in his book. The aim is to provide a fast-track process to awakening and Skinner says there is a 50 per cent chance of this happening, even for a beginner. Skinner does not say whether following the course in his book will lead to *kenshō* or whether one has to undergo the intensive retreat to achieve this but the speed with which awakening is expected to take place resembles that of the Sanbō Zen school.

In conclusion, Skinner's book is unusual in that it provides a structured course that runs for a specific length of time. Follow the course and in eight weeks, the reader will achieve proficiency. In reality, when undertaken as a serious student or disciple of a master, *zazen* takes many years to hone and polish. After the course, there is no recommendation to continue *zazen* practice with a teacher.

#### **2.2.4 Kōun Yamada**

*Kōun Yamada (1907-1989) became a Dharma successor of the Zen master Hakuin*

*Yasutani while maintaining a career in business. He ran San-un Zendo<sup>267</sup> in Kamakura, Japan, with his wife, Dr. Kazue Yamada, and remained a lay person throughout his life. Although never ordained, he guided the zazen practice of many students from various religions and backgrounds. His Dharma successors include Robert Aitken, Ruben Habito and David Loy.*

Yamada's book, *Zen: the Authentic Gate*,<sup>268</sup> is actually a compilation of introductory articles related to Zen Buddhism, written for laypeople. The articles were part of a series that Yamada wrote for Sanbō Zen's bi-monthly magazine. Soon after the series had been completed, the articles were gathered and published in the form of a book. The book comprises 17 chapters aimed at giving beginners, particularly laypeople, some background to *zazen*. Chapters cover a range of related topics, including suffering, the different types of *zazen*, *kōan* practice, how to find an authentic teacher and enlightenment. One of the chapters is about *zazen* practice for non-Buddhists. It is because of this chapter that Yamada's book is being included in this literature review as it may help in discerning exactly why Christians are attracted to *zazen*.

In his lifetime, Yamada had much contact with Christians who he trained in *zazen* and noted that many of them were Catholics. Yamada said that Christians who take part in *zazen* hope that awakening will lead them to a direct experience of God, suggesting that ordinary Christian worship does not provide such an opportunity. Yamada attributes some of the interest in Zen to what he calls the movement towards "philosophical precision" in theology coupled with a decline in actual spiritual experience. Yamada believed that religion as a cerebral activity cannot replace the actual mystical experience.<sup>269</sup>

Yamada has made an excellent point and one that prudent Christian leaders might consider when looking at ways of boosting local church communities. Catholicism is, indeed, cerebral and aligned to an unshakable doctrine, which is necessary to ensure practice is tethered to sound theology, but it is not

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<sup>267</sup> A *zendo* is a meditation hall.

<sup>268</sup> Yamada, K. (2015) *Zen: the Authentic Gate*, Massachusetts, United States of America: Wisdom Publications, kindle edition.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 15.

completely without a mystical element. Catholicism demands faith and faith is implicitly mysterious. Congregations need mystical experiences to feed that faith and keep it alive, which might account for the popularity of the charismatic renewal movement in the Catholic Church.

Yamada says that some Christians consulted him as a matter of urgency as to whether it was possible to retain their own beliefs and undertake *zazen* at the same time. He responded that it is possible, so long as they have '*kokoro*',<sup>270</sup> which, as well as being an ambiguous response, does not directly answer the question. Yamada assuaged any anxiety that Christians may feel in practising *zazen* by reassuring them that it can only serve to deepen their experience of prayer. However, Yamada does say that when sitting down to *zazen*, one must put aside Jesus Christ (or Buddha or whoever) and focus on the meditation at hand.<sup>271</sup> Yamada, incidentally, was also William Johnston's *zazen* teacher for a time but the Jesuit priest ended the relationship when Yamada reprimanded him for reciting Christian prayers during *zazen*. Whether the participation in *zazen* is an acceptable method of keeping a Christian's faith alive will be explored later in this thesis.

It is interesting to note that Yamada's Christian disciples consulted him – rather than a priest or spiritual director – about whether it was appropriate for them to study Zen. Yamada does admit that he has undertaken no formal study of Christianity. Nevertheless, he quoted a piece of scripture from Luke 17:21, and erroneously believed that Christ said that the Kingdom of God was within each of the individuals he was addressing. Yamada does not say which Bible interpretation he used,<sup>272</sup> but Jesus was, in fact, talking to the Pharisees, a Jewish self-righteous religious sect known for its strict observance of man-made rules. The Pharisees frequently confronted Jesus Christ for breaking these rules so it is

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<sup>270</sup> There appears to be no direct translation of this word into English, but it approximately means a combination of heart, mind and spirit.

<sup>271</sup> Yamada, Chapter 15.

<sup>272</sup> The New Jerusalem interpretation, which has been used in this thesis, is "...and there will be no-one to say: 'Look, it is here! Look, it is there!' For look, the kingdom of God is among you." See the New Jerusalem Bible, pocket edition (1990), imprimatur Rt. Rev. John Crowley VG, Bishop of Westminster 1989, nihil obstat Anton Cowan, published in London, England, by Dartman, Longman and Todd.

unlikely that he would then reinforce the Pharisees' type of thinking by saying that the Kingdom of God was within them.

Yamada was certainly well-trained to direct Buddhists on their spiritual path but he was not a Christian and was not qualified to advise on Christian matters. His misleading advice brings to mind Simon Peter's warning of the destruction that can be caused through receiving wrong guidance on spiritual issues.<sup>273</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Zen Buddhism has proven to be an attractive spirituality for Christians who find that worship in the pew has become too cerebral and are looking at introducing a mystical element to their prayer lives. In turning to Zen spirituality and its tradition of *zazen*, some Catholics have discovered a deeper, more meaningful expression of their faith.

Some authors have also pointed out that Zen Buddhism has been a path to dialogue with the people of a nation that was mysterious until the second half of the last century. A few Christians consciously pursued it by travelling to the Far East, but the majority featured in this chapter encountered Zen Buddhism while they were in Japan for other reasons. Having discovered *zazen*, some Christians have gone on to receive *Dharma* transmission and teach it after returning to their home countries.

A few of the authors reviewed in this chapter reassure readers that the practice of *zazen* alongside Christian prayer do not conflict. However, non-dualistic thought was raised by some authors, both Christian and Zen Buddhist. This can be an issue with Christians because the very nature of their relationship with God is an 'I-thou', subject-object matter and is, therefore, dualistic.

Following the review of literature undertaken in this chapter, I can now pinpoint specific research questions under three headings: *Dharma* transmission, the nature of belonging, and prayer. The questions under each of these headings are:

### ***Dharma* transmission**

1) What is the Japanese term for '*Dharma* transmission'? The word '*Shiho*' exists,

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<sup>273</sup> 2Pet2:1.

but it only refers to *Dharma* transmission in the *Sōtō* school and seems to be rarely used. There appears to be no 'umbrella' term in Japanese for *Dharma* transmission that encompasses all Zen Buddhist traditions.

2) Does receiving *Dharma* transmission make one a Buddhist? If the receiver is of another faith, does *Dharma* transmission make the person a 'dual believer'. If not, what constitutes a dual believer?

### **The nature of belonging**

1) A number of authors in this chapter have insisted that they have remained Catholic while undertaking *zazen*. What does it mean to be 'Catholic'? Is it simply a case of being baptised into the Catholic Church or is it something more? Does the engagement with *zazen* make the practitioner feel more or less Catholic?

2) From a doctrinal point of view, is it possible for a person to be both a Catholic and a Zen Buddhist. Is dual belonging contrary, or in harmony, with the teaching of the Catholic Church as disseminated through magisterial documents?

3) Do all Zen Buddhist schools regard *jukai* as an initiation ceremony? Is this a ceremony in which Christians may or may not participate?

### **Prayer**

1) To what extent do magisterial documents enable Catholics to engage in the prayer practices of another religious tradition?

## CHAPTER THREE

### Gathering the Data

#### Introduction

I have described how Japan and the West had encountered each other in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Jesuit priests entered the country with the intention of converting Buddhists to Christianity. These early exchanges between the two faith traditions were not always easy, and they sometimes led to dramatic, shocking executions of missionaries, but 500 years after Francis Xavier set foot on Japanese soil, a turnaround has taken place. During the past century, the UK and, indeed, much of the western world, proved to be fertile ground for Japanese Zen Buddhist teachers who crossed the Pacific to bring a new type of spirituality to the West. Today, Zen Buddhist teachers no longer have to leave Japanese shores to propagate this spirituality. Catholics – both lay and ordained – have made the journey to Japan to learn from Zen masters and have taken their learning back to their home countries. This new spirituality then prospered and grew.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed literature produced by key authors and they presented a range of perspectives. Some of these authors were Christians with an experiential knowledge of Zen Buddhism: a few had even lived in Japan, studied under a teacher and meditated in a Zen Buddhist temple. Some authors were not Christian and had no declared religious affiliation except that they had become Zen Buddhists. Also included in my literature review were some scholars who do not practise *zazen* but whose knowledge contributes to my research in some way.

During the early stages of my research, it became apparent to me that Zen Buddhism, or elements of it, is not only here to stay but that some westerners, including Catholics, find it extremely attractive. This opened up a number of research questions about interfaith dialogue and whether such interaction would involve participation in another faith and whether *zazen* can be incorporated into Catholic prayer. I have grouped these broad areas under three headings: *Dharma* transmission, the nature of belonging and prayer. These questions are described in more detail in the previous chapter, but they are also summarised below:

- 1) What is the Japanese term for *Dharma* transmission’?
- 2) Does receiving *Dharma* transmission make one a Zen Buddhist?
- 3) Are there parallels between Christian contemplative prayer and *zazen*?
- 4) Is dual belonging contrary, or in harmony, with the spirit of *Lumen Gentium*, *Nostra Aetate*, *Ecclesiam Suam* and other magisterial documents?
- 5) To what extent do magisterial documents sanction Catholics’ engagement in the prayer practices of another religious tradition?
- 6) What effect does *jukai* have on an individual?

My next task is to explain how I plan to seek answers to my research questions.<sup>274</sup>

### 3.1 The research approaches

In *Qualitative Research Methods*, Professor Sarah Tracy suggests asking two questions when considering a research methodology. These questions are:

- What types of methods are best suited for the goals of my research project?
- What types of methodologies am I most equipped to use, or most attracted to?<sup>275</sup>

To respond to the second question first, when I formulated my two main research questions and their associated themes, I was drawn to producing the ‘thick descriptions’ that are characteristic of qualitative research. The interviews are not just desirable – they are essential, as there are many questions that

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<sup>274</sup> The questions have been refined since I began my research, a tendency that is highlighted in the book *Research Methods in Education* (Cohen, L., et al (2018) Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 305) as characteristic of proper qualitative research because repeatedly returning to the initial issue, regardless of subsequent learning that has taken place, could be highly detrimental to a thesis. Other principal books consulted on the subject of research methods are Bell, J., (2014) *Doing Your Research Project: a Guide for First-Time Researchers*, Berkshire, England: Open University Press [kindle book]; Swinton, J., and Mowat, H., (2006) *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, London, England: SCM Press [ebook, accessed November 25, 2019]; Davies, M., and Hughes, N., (2014) *Doing a Successful Research Project*, Basingstoke, England: Macmillan Publishers [ebook, accessed November 26, 2019]; Tracy, D.J., (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods*, Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons [ebook, accessed November 26, 2019]. It is true that some of these books are aimed at researchers working in specialised areas, such as education, but the content and the methods employed are usually transferable across disciplines.

<sup>275</sup> Tracy, S.J. (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods*, Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 47 [ebook, accessed November 26, 2019].

require a response that cannot be found by searching library volumes on the subject. I was not just interested in discovering the incidence of *zazen* among Christians – and especially Catholics – I wanted to put this development into its historical context and trace its evolution. Most importantly, I wanted to emphasise the human aspect of this research.

In response to Tracy's first question – the methodologies that are best suited to my research goals – before I had even considered the characteristics and benefits of qualitative research, I had envisaged conducting in-depth, individually tailored interviews to learn what attracts Christians to *zazen*. These one-to-one interviews would bring to life all the academic reading that had taken place. The answers to my questions would be highly individualised, and the nature of them could not be fully understood through checked boxes or the standardised responses that are key features of quantitative research.

While Tracy is clearly a qualitative researcher, she says that a combined approach can work extremely well and this is something that I gave serious consideration. While I do not think the nature of my research could be adequately answered through quantitative methodology alone, I saw possible merit in designing a structured, closed-question survey inviting Catholics to report whether they had participated in non-Christian meditation, and, if so, what type and how often. For Catholics who had not taken part in non-Christian meditation, I would have asked that, if the opportunity presented itself, would this be an activity that they would engage in. The survey would provide possible opportunities to develop some of the responses into a more in-depth interview so this approach did have some extremely attractive advantages. However, I concluded that, while it would indeed be useful to know how many Catholic *zazen* practitioners there are in the UK, it would be difficult to design a survey that would be able to depict this information accurately without having to extrapolate to the point that the results would be of little use from a scientific point of view. While this type of feedback would be of personal interest, it would do little to advance my research because I am not questioning whether or not people participate in *zazen*. This is already self-evident in the authors that I reviewed in Chapter Two.



I therefore concluded that a fully qualitative approach to gathering data would be the most fruitful way of conducting my research. Rather than proving restrictive, I felt that this approach would provide the reader with a wealth of insightful, thought-provoking feedback from respondents who have been given the opportunity to tell their stories, as it were.

Having situated my research within the qualitative sphere, I sought to understand if the fieldwork I will be undertaking could be considered ethnographic or naturalistic. This is an area that Cohen, et al, discuss in their book *Research Methods in Education*.<sup>276</sup> It is true that I had planned to visit Zen Buddhist monasteries during my fieldwork, but I was not intending to live among the monastic community, nor did I propose making formal observations of monks meditating so I can definitively say that my fieldwork did not include this type of research.

### **3.2 Interviews**

The qualitative research that I undertook chiefly comprised in-depth, one-to-one interviews. These fell into two main groups (1) exchanges with Christians and (2) exchanges with Zen Buddhists. Many of the Christians (not all were Catholic) were well-educated and knowledgeable about *zazen*, with first-hand experience at this form of meditation. Most of the Zen Buddhists I interviewed were, at one time, Christian (including a number of former Catholics).

I gave my interviewees the option of confidentiality. All but one, however, chose to be identified by his or her real name. This was because almost all of the people I interviewed had already made their views known by authoring books or lecturing on the subject. Bell has said that she has witnessed broken assurances of confidentiality because either the interviewer or interviewee did know the difference between this and anonymity. Bell has, therefore, made a clear distinction between the two and explains that confidentiality means the participant will not be identifiable. Anonymity, however, means that even the interviewer will not be able to identify the participant.<sup>277</sup> In discussing these options with the interviewee who did not want to be identified, she confirmed

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<sup>276</sup> Cohen, et al (2018) 292-295.

<sup>277</sup> Bell (2014), Loc 1668

she did not require anonymity and was satisfied with the assurance of confidentiality.

I decided on the semi-structured interview because this provides me with the flexibility to adjust my questioning, where necessary, while at the same time giving me the control required to keep the encounter focussed.<sup>278</sup> The majority of my interviewees are located in the UK, North America and Japan.

When a participant was identified as a possible interviewee, an email was sent to the person concerned to introduce myself and explain the nature of my research. The email included details of how the information they provide will be used. All interviewees were offered sight of copy, giving them an opportunity to clarify any information they have provided. In advance of the discussion, they were also sent a list of discussion themes. In all interviews, a transcript of the interview was made using a laptop computer. For additional security, a recording was also made of most, but not all, interviews.

### **3.3 Ethics**

A signed and completed ethics form has been appended to this thesis, as required by St. Mary's University. The University has in place a three-tier ethics approval process and a set of research guidelines that govern both staff and students. The guidelines define the University's understanding of the words 'research', 'researchers' and 'research ethics'.<sup>279</sup> The guidelines also state that it expects staff and students to adopt four ethical principles when undertaking research. In summary, the four principles are:

- A standard of research that ensures integrity and quality.
- Respect for the autonomy of people.
- Avoidance of harm to others.
- Treatment of people with fairness and respect.

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<sup>278</sup> Cohen et al (2018), 511.

<sup>279</sup> St Mary's University (2017) *Research Ethics and Guidelines for Staff and Students*. See <https://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/ethics-integrity/Documents/Ethical-Guidelines.pdf> [accessed November 27, 2019], 3. Please note that this website can only be viewed by staff and students.

These four principles are then subdivided into areas that include informed consent, meeting the needs of those who are affected by the research, and confidentiality and anonymity.<sup>280</sup>

As well as having the above policy in place, research students are required to complete a two-hour seminar on ethics, which I undertook in December of 2018.

None of the interviews have involved children or vulnerable adults.

### 3.4 Summary of interviewees

Interviewees have been divided into two broad categories: those who speak from a Christian viewpoint and those who provide a Zen Buddhist perspective. These interviews are summarised in the two tables below.

#### A. Interviewees who speak from a Christian perspective

Interviewee	Relevance to research question	Location
Yoshiko Aoki, R.S.C.J: Japanese Catholic religious sister and member of Sanbō Zen.	Aoki can speak about personal experience with <i>zazen</i> and its compatibility with Christian prayer. Being Japanese, I am interested in whether she has a different perspective of <i>zazen</i> .	Tokyo, Japan
Ellen Birx: Co-founder of New River Zen Community, member of the White Plum Asanga, <i>zazen</i> teacher and speaker.	I am interested to hear more about what Birx calls 'inter-spiritual practice', dualism and what distinguishes <i>zazen</i> from different types of Christian prayer.	Virginia, USA
Kim Boykin: Christian author and college lecturer.	Boykin finds no conflict between Catholic teaching and <i>zazen</i> practice. She also articulates well what constitutes a religion.	Atlanta, USA
Christopher Collingwood: Anglican priest and leader of a <i>sangha</i>	Collingwood is a dual believer so I was keen to learn his definition of this term. Collingwood is also knowledgeable about non-duality, a key concept in Zen Buddhism.	York, England
Michael Holleran: Catholic priest/ <i>zazen</i>	Holleran has an interest in prayer practices and has received <i>Dharma</i>	New York City

<sup>280</sup> St Mary's University (2017), 5-8.

practitioner and member of the White Plum.	transmission, but has an interesting reason why he did not feel it appropriate to participate in <i>jukai</i> .	
Declan Marmion, S.M: Priest, seminary professor and Karl Rahner scholar.	I was interested to hear Marmion's thoughts on the nature of Christian prayer and his interpretation of Rahner's comment that the Christian of tomorrow would either be a mystic or not at all.	Dublin, Ireland
Greg Mayers, C.Ss.R: Catholic priest, member of Sanbō Zen and <i>zazen</i> practitioner	Mayers was never taught the Christian contemplative tradition. He says <i>zazen</i> is not captive to Buddhism and can be practised by all faiths (and none).	Missouri, USA
Archbishop Dr. Kevin McDonald: Archbishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of Southwark and former member of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity	This interviewee will be able to interpret magisterial documents published during the Second Vatican Council years and clarify to what extent they enabled the Catholic to engage with non-Christian prayer.	London, England
Marlene Milasus, O.S.B: Catholic religious sister and member of Monastic Interfaith Dialogue.	Milasus believes that the paths of individual religious 'ladders' get closer to each other as one reaches the top. Says that the similarities between religions often outnumber the differences.	New Jersey, USA
"Myotai": Anglican priest, <i>jukai</i> recipient and member of the White Plum.	Myotai considers herself a dual believer and has received <i>jukai</i> .	Yorkshire, England
Migaku Sato: New Testament scholar, former university professor and teacher in the Sanbō Zen school	Sato can speak authoritatively on issues that have arisen during my research, particularly the decline in Christianity and rise in people practising <i>zazen</i> .	Munich, Germany/Tokyo Japan
Madeleine Tacy, O.P: Catholic religious sister and member of the White Plum school.	Tacy has received <i>jukai</i> and describes herself as a dual believer.	Massachusetts, USA

## B. Interviewees who speak from a Zen Buddhist perspective

Interviewee	Relevance to research question(s)	Location
Ray Cicetti: Zen teacher and lay preceptor in the White Plum.	Cicetti is being interviewed to clarify questions regarding <i>jukai</i> and other ceremonies in the White Plum.	New Jersey, USA
Thomas Kirchner: <i>Rinzai</i> Buddhist monk	Kirchner, a former Catholic, has spent most of his adult life in a Zen Buddhist monastery in Japan. While clearly now a Buddhist, he says he has grown closer to Catholicism.	Tenryuji temple, Kyoto, Japan
Mike Luetchford: <i>Zazen</i> teacher in the line of Eihei Dōgen.	Luetchford is being interviewed because I wanted to learn more about the traditional Zen Buddhist schools.	Prague, Czech Republic
Meido Moore Abbot of Korinji temple.	Moore spent 10 years at a <i>Rinzai</i> monastery in Japan. Will be able to respond to some queries about <i>Dharma</i> transmission, <i>jukai</i> and the contemporary outgrowths of <i>Rinzai/Sōtō</i> Zen.	Wisconsin, USA
Jiryu Mark Rutschman-Byler: Buddhist monk	Rutschman-Byler spent two years in Japanese temples before returning to the USA. Rutschman-Byler will be able to talk from his experience of being a monk in both Japan and the United States.	California, USA
Yuko Yamada: Convert from Catholic nun to <i>Sōtō</i> Zen Buddhist nun	As a Catholic nun, Yamada wanted to practise <i>zazen</i> but was forbidden to do so. She left her monastery and is now a nun in a <i>Sōtō</i> Zen community. I am interviewing her because her story may help me to further understand the reasons why some Catholics are attracted to <i>zazen</i> and Zen Buddhism.	Tokyo, Japan

## **- PART II -**

### **IN THE FIELD – VIRTUALLY**

#### **Introduction and overview of Part II**

In Chapter Three, I explained that my research would be undertaken through a qualitative approach, chiefly a series of in-depth, one-to-one interviews. These interviews fall into two broad groupings: (1) exchanges with individuals who speak from a Christian point of view and (2) interviews with those who speak from their Zen Buddhist perspective. Each of my interviewees was a unique piece of the puzzle, providing an individual, personal contribution towards answering my research question. Prior to the interview, each person was supplied with a set of possible discussion themes upon which he or she might consider commenting. These discussion themes were very much tailored to individual interviewees and their own particular experience or knowledge of a subject that would enhance my understanding of the broader picture.

My first group of interviewees includes Christians who actually practise *zazen* and speak from their own, personal experience. Also part of this group are interviewees who speak from a Christian perspective but who may not necessarily practise *zazen*. Most of these people have been interviewed because of their expert knowledge on one or more areas related to this thesis. These interviews are documented in Chapter Four.

My second group of interviews comprises Zen Buddhists who provide a point of view on one or more aspects of my research question. Some of these interviewees may have originally come from a Christian background but no longer practise. These interviews make up Chapter Five.

In both chapters, interviews have been placed in alphabetical order of the interviewee's surname.

My interviewees in both groups were from a wide range of backgrounds, with differing areas of expertise and levels of knowledge. It was not, therefore, possible to stage structured interviews with a set of standard, 'one-size-fits-all'

set of questions. Instead, in advance of each interview, I provided a list of possible discussion themes, which were tailored to the interviewee. I then invited my interviewees to speak from their knowledge and experience in an almost unstructured manner. This gave my interviewees the freedom to focus on those areas of particular relevance to them, while enabling me to guide discussions when I felt it necessary. The interviewees come from a range of backgrounds and live on three different continents. A short overview of each person introduces the interviewee. This is then followed by a transcript of interviewees' views on themes related to my research question. The commentary in the 'Courier' font following the interview summarises pertinent points of the interview that I wish to emphasise.

Many of my interviewees are well known for their views as they publish books on their subject, lecture on it or maintain an on-line presence. All but one of these interviewees, have, therefore – with their permission – been identified by their real names.

### **Coronavirus pandemic**

Ever since I first proposed this research project, I had intended to conduct face-to-face as many of the interviews as possible. The majority of my interviewees are located in the UK, the United States and Japan. I had set aside a period of time in the spring, summer and autumn of 2020 to conduct these interviews. My first interviews were to be carried out in Japan, followed by the UK during the summer and the United States in the autumn. During the winter of 2019, however, reports of the Coronavirus outbreak in China began to circulate and this had soon spread to Japan. I therefore decided to postpone my Japan trip until the autumn of 2020, and bring forward to the spring of that year my interviews in the United States. At the time, there were no reports of a Coronavirus outbreak in the UK so my plans remained unchanged for interviews during the summer.

I had started making firm plans for my trip to the United States when reports circulated that Coronavirus had been identified in North America. I considered postponing the fieldwork but after discussing the situation with my supervisors, I followed their advice and carried out all the interviews in the United States using social media platforms, mostly Zoom. During February 2020, Coronavirus

became well-established in the UK so I decided to carry out these interviews by social media, too. I still hoped to travel to Japan as I had intended to organise the interviews after I arrived there, when I had the assistance of native speakers and Japanese introductions, which is important in this ritualised, formal culture. However, in March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the Coronavirus situation a pandemic. Travel restrictions and quarantine requirements were put in place, forcing me to abandon my visit to the Far East, too. I, therefore, also conducted the Japanese element of my fieldwork the same way that I had done interviews in the United States and the UK: through an on-line conferencing platform.

### **Interviewees who declined**

Most of the people I approached as a potential interviewee readily agreed to a discussion. There were, however, three people who declined. The first was Sister Elaine MacInnes. In Chapter Two, I reviewed MacInnes's book *Zen Contemplation, Bridge of Living Water*, an autobiographical account of her life as a missionary religious sister and *zazen* practitioner who had received *Dharma* transmission. While MacInnes's autobiography gave a good account of her passion for *zazen* and her commitment to taking it into prisons, it left me with a number of questions about her spirituality. Her zeal for *zazen*, for example, seemed to be matched by strong loyalty to her Catholic roots, which made me curious as to whether she was an early 'dual believer'. She had insisted several times in her book that she was Catholic which most outsiders would not question, given that she was a religious sister. Her insistence of being Catholic has been echoed by other Zen-Christian practitioners, notably Jesuits Robert Kennedy, S.J. and William Johnston, S.J., which led me to question religious belonging, what makes one 'Catholic' and whether Christianity was broad enough to encompass spiritualities from non-Christian sources. MacInnes also spoke disparagingly about people who studied Zen Buddhism academically but did not actually practise *zazen*. I then considered whether true Christian-Zen dialogue meant having to engage in *zazen* or whether an intellectual approach alone was effective. I felt that MacInnes might hold some missing pieces of my research so I decided to take some of these questions into the field, including MacInnes herself.



I knew that MacInnes had retired some 20 years ago and had returned to her native Canada. I traced her to her religious community in Scarborough, Toronto. My email to the community requesting an interview with MacInnes appeared in Sister Christine Gebel's in box on MacInnes's 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. Gebel offered me her apologies but explained that MacInnes was "no longer up to formal interviews" and made reference to MacInnes's books. I asked Gebel to pass on to MacInnes my congratulations and good wishes and accepted that I would either have to work without the information I sought from her or find it through other resources.

The second person to decline an interview was Father Cyril Mathew, S.J., a priest in the Indian province of Madurai. In 2000, Mathew became a disciple of Father Ama Samy S.J. (1936-), a Zen master who trained under the French Benedictine priest Henri le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) (1910-1973). Mathew received *Dharma* transmission from Samy in 2018 and appears to be one of the few Catholic priests in India who combine Zen Buddhism with Christian ministry. Mathew now runs the Bodhi Zendo,<sup>281</sup> a Zen Buddhist training school founded by Samy in 1996 in a remote area of the state of Tamilnadu in southern India. According to the Bodhi Sangha website,<sup>282</sup> the Bodhi Zendo is the only centre of its kind in India.

The Bodhi Sangha's website describes Mathew's ministry, which includes *sesshin* retreats, daily group *zazen*, *kōan* study and *dokusan* at the school. I could find out little else about Mathew other than what was on the website. While there are, undoubtedly, other priests in India who practise *zazen*, Samy and Mathew are the only ones I discovered in my research. My original intention was to interview Samy but as he spends several months every year on tour, I decided to contact Mathew, who resides with Samy at the Bodhi Zendo.

There were a number of issues that I wanted to discuss with Mathew. For example, I had been looking at the Bodhi Sangha website and noted that during

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<sup>281</sup> Ama Samy founded the Bodhi Sangha, the community of his disciples, in 1986. Bodhi Sangha became an independent Zen school when he left the Sanbō Kyodan organization in 2002. Ama Samy's method of teaching embraces both the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* Zen schools and draws from the resources of Christianity and other religions. He lives and teaches at Bodhi Zendo Zen Center.

<sup>282</sup> See [www.bodhisangha.net/index.php/en/](http://www.bodhisangha.net/index.php/en/) [accessed December 29, 2021].

*sesshin*, certain Zen Buddhist texts are recited daily. I would have liked to have asked him whether it was appropriate for a Catholic to recite scripture that clearly belongs to a non-Christian religion. I would also have liked to know if he has taken part in a *jukai* ceremony, which religion he subscribes to (or if he considers himself a ‘dual believer’), his views on whether he regards Zen Buddhism a religion and his opinions on what Christianity can learn from Zen Buddhism. Born in 1970, Mathew is also younger than most other priests and religious who became involved in Zen Buddhism at the time of Vatican II. This interview would have presented Mathew with an opportunity to put his ministry into context but he firmly refused. Instead, he invited me to India to practise meditation and then, if I wished, I could have a chat with him. I did not feel that this would elicit the information I was looking for.

Bodhin Kjolhede, leader of the Rochester Zen Center in New York, was the third person to decline an interview. A peer answered my email to Kjolhede, saying he was too busy running the Center to grant interviews and referred me to the books the founder, Philip Kapleau (1912-2004) wrote. It was precisely because of the books that I wanted to speak to Kjolhede. Kapleau founded the Rochester Zen Center in 1966, where he practised a contemporary form of Zen Buddhism, which drew upon a combination of the time he spent at a *Sōtō* Zen monastery in Japan, his study with a *Rinzai* Zen teacher and the years of his membership of Sanbō Zen. In fact, the Rochester Zen Center’s website describes Kapleau as one of the “founding fathers of American Zen” who devoted much of his life to bringing Zen Buddhism to the ordinary person.<sup>283</sup> Kapleau wrote several books, and two of them were reviewed in Chapter Two: *Zen: Merging of East and West* and *The Three Pillars of Zen*. Kapleau installed Kjolhede as his *Dharma* successor in 1986. Because Kjolhede had known Kapleau personally, I felt he was well-placed to respond to my questions about Kapleau. My main interest in interviewing Kjolhede was to find out a little more about Kapleau’s particular approach to Zen Buddhism and how it differed from other contemporary expressions, such as White Plum and Sanbō Zen. I also noted from Kapleau’s books that the Zen Buddhism he practised was highly ritualised and ceremonious. I was keen to

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<sup>283</sup> See [www.rzc.org/about/who-we-are/roshi-philip-kapleau/](http://www.rzc.org/about/who-we-are/roshi-philip-kapleau/) [accessed September 3, 2020].

know if Kjolhede had continued with this expression of Zen Buddhism and whether it had evolved since Kapleau's death. I would have liked to have received answers to my questions as it would have added to the story about the development of Zen Buddhism in the United States, but not having the information is not a major obstacle in my research.

One person withdrew from my research, a *Rinzai* priest in Japan, and this disappointed me because I am not exactly sure of the reason except that there was a strong objection to *zazen* being described as a form of prayer in which Christians might partake. The *Rinzai* priest insisted that *zazen* was solely a means of self-discovery.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Christian perspectives on *Zazen* and Christian prayer

#### Introduction

In this chapter, Christians talk about their practice of *zazen*, Zen Buddhism, and related subjects such as dual belonging, prayer (where relevant), non-duality, ceremonies such as *jukai*, Zen Buddhist schools, inter-religious dialogue and contemplative prayer.

#### 4.1 Yoshiko Aoki, R.S.C.J.

*Tokyo-based Yoshiko Aoki is a counsellor, retired high school teacher and professed religious sister of the Society of the Sacred Heart. She became interested in zazen in the 1980s after meeting Fr. Hugo Lassalle-Enomiya.<sup>284</sup> She is now a member of Sanbō Zen and runs the Circle of Zen sangha, which meets twice-monthly for zazen sittings. I interviewed Aoki because she is Japanese and I wanted to know if, and how, her perspective of zazen differed from a westerner's.*

#### Introduction to Zen

"I was born as the daughter of a medical doctor. I went to kindergarten and I met Jesus for the first time. I think I liked him a lot and I continued to go to Sunday school and, later, a Catholic church because a friend's sister was Catholic and she brought me. Then I said to myself, Catholicism is much older than Protestant so I was baptised into the Catholic Church when I was 13 years old. Then I went to the school of the Sacred Heart and university and I saw nuns and I wanted to consecrate myself, too. This is my very short process of faith.

"The thing I count on most about the religious life is an interior life. When I was a young novice I decided I would do something about improving my religious life and began practising prayer quite seriously and I think I developed into the so-called quiet prayer.<sup>285</sup> Quiet prayer is not meditation, but deeper, I would say,

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<sup>284</sup> Fr. Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle, S.J. (1898-1990) is a German Jesuit who was instrumental in teaching *zazen* to Catholics, first in Japan and then, later, Europe. He became a Japanese citizen in 1948, adopting the name Makibi Enomiya.

without reasoning. Without a lot of knowledge you just watch and see and you can intuitively know a little more about God.

“Later, when I was teaching at a high school, I ran into the chance to make a retreat with the children. I thought I would like them to experience something of the history of eastern prayer, which is *zazen*. We have only one Catholic *zazen* retreat centre, in the mountains, called Akigawa, so I asked them if there is any possibility to introduce my children to *zazen* practice but then I said to myself, before I show my students, I have to practice first myself so one summer holiday I went there to join this eight-day retreat ran by Fr. Lassalle. Then, I must say, I tasted it and ever since I couldn’t depart from it. That is why I went into *zazen* practice. I was already in a state of quiet prayer, which is very similar to *zazen* practice, so this was not difficult for me. This is my way to search God deeper and learn the truth. That is why I still continue *zazen*, because my prayer life is very similar – Catholic prayer and *zazen* is the same because we are searching for God.

### ***Zazen* and religion**

“*Zazen* is not a religion. It came to Japan under the culture of Buddhism. However, it is not Buddhism. It is no religion. It is a way of life, a way of prayer, so you can use it in the many varieties of, I think, so-called religion so long as you are eager to go down, down, down into the mystery of God that is truth. Have you ever learned anything about Meister Eckhart?<sup>286</sup> I find his teaching and his insight are very much like what Zen teaches and aims at. His idea is very much similar to what Zen is trying to do. I was so surprised by studying Eckhart. I wonder how he understood this without any *zazen*. He was a great master of prayer.

“*Zazen* doesn’t teach you any theology or reasoning. *Zazen* is just sitting with your deep breathing, if possible, in the traditional form of sitting.<sup>287</sup> By doing so, your continuous breathing makes you go down, down, down into yourself and gradually you lose yourself but become one with your breath or breathing. At this

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<sup>286</sup> Meister Eckhart, O.P. (c1260-c1328) was a German Dominican, mystic and theologian. He was tried for heresy but died before receiving the outcome of investigations about his teaching.

<sup>287</sup> Aoki is referring to the ‘lotus’ position, which involves sitting cross-legged and placing the right foot on the left thigh, and the left foot on the right thigh.

stage, you may notice or find out what is your true self. At the same time, you see partially what God is. This may be a long process with one's sincere determination. Also, by doing *zazen*, even at the early stage of practice, somehow you acquire a kind of spiritual power. It's very interesting and we call it '*yoriki*'.<sup>288</sup> This spiritual power makes it easy to decide, to make a judgement, which is better, which is wrong, or to control or to adjust your feeling, or to manage your feeling. This is a product of *zazen*, I think. Zen means the way of knowing yourself, by letting yourself empty your ego. Detachment, the total detachment, to make yourself empty, is the way of doing *zazen*.

"*Zazen* is my way of getting to know God. For me it is the blessed way to know God. You know what God is more and more because God is infinite. There is no end to knowing God. Shakyamuni, however many years ago, discovered the real truth. Truth is truth. There is only one truth in the whole world. Buddhism truth, Catholic truth, Protestant truth, there is no difference in the real truth. Human intellect is not the truth. It reveals only the partial truth. There is only one real truth.

### ***Zazen* and prayer**

"*Zazen* is a prayer. I still do all of the Catholic prayers – *zazen* doesn't hinder anything. I never experienced conflict. I care little which prayer I do practise. I undertake *zazen* to get to know God, just like when you pray you like to know more about God. You read the Bible and you talk to Jesus, you converse with him, see the actions of Jesus Christ and what he says. Through that, you know Christ, you know God deeper. After I started the practice of *zazen*, I noticed that I understood Jesus more when I read the gospel. I see and understand more between the lines of the writings of the apostles.

"I believe, you can get to know God deeper by emptying yourself. The space you create within yourself, there God fills himself and speaks to you. Detachment is so important in prayer life because if you are full of yourself there is no space for God to come in. If there is space there, God fills that space, so by doing *zazen* I am

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<sup>288</sup> A Japanese word meaning the spiritual strength or power within a person (jo = concentration, riki = power).

trying to increase my space for God. For that, *zazen* is one of the best ways for me to increase my space for God.

### **On meditation and three forms of prayer**

“Meditation has a really narrow meaning. Meditation is something in which you use your mind and intellect. You meditate on *something*. Meditation is a good form of prayer. People use their intellect and their knowledge to try to get know Jesus or God (*sic*).<sup>289</sup> However, often when you go into the meditation, you lose the thinking part and you just gaze at God and talk to God and stay in stillness in God’s presence, then intuitively you know something of God. That stage is called quiet prayer. In quiet prayer, you come out of the meditation method. In meditation you use your mind. I usually differentiate between meditation and quiet prayer. Yes, meditation is very good, meditation is fine, but as long as you are too much to yourself by using your mind, there is a danger. You make your own God by imagining. This danger exists also in quiet prayer. Also it is not easy, I think, to continue listening or thinking in meditation for an hour or more. In quiet prayer, you don’t use your intellect nor knowledge, like meditation, but you gaze, or listen or just sit there, before God. *Zazen* is not meditation. *Zazen* is not using your mind. *Zazen* doesn’t use the intellect or knowledge. In *zazen* you try to lose yourself, to become empty. By being empty, by detaching yourself, you abandon yourself entirely to the hand of God.

“Those are my ways of differentiating the three forms of prayer, through my own experience.”

### **Commentary**

I said in the italicised introduction at the beginning of this interview that I was interested in talking to Aoki because, as a Japanese, I thought she might offer a different perspective on *zazen* than the westerners I interviewed. I was right, although I am not sure whether this was because of Japanese thinking or her own personal insight into *zazen*. We conducted the interview in English and, although she had difficulty in articulating some

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<sup>289</sup> Jesus *is* God. This was probably simply a language issue.

concepts, she persisted and made her points in an extremely lucid way. There is much about this interview that is worth expounding upon.

I will start with a point that Aoki made towards the end of our discussion, as it was thought-provoking. Aoki talked about three forms of prayer: *zazen*, 'quiet prayer' and meditation. It is noteworthy that she (along with other Christians I have interviewed) categorises *zazen* as prayer. A *Rinzai* priest I interviewed (who later withdrew from this study) vehemently opposed the notion that prayer was *zazen*, insisting it was purely a tool for self-discovery. I suspect the thinking of *zazen* as prayer depends upon inter-related factors, such as cultural environment and personal beliefs. To illustrate my point, Meido Moore, who I interview in Chapter Five, is also a *Rinzai* priest but based in the United States and he made the point that *zazen* was prayer.

Aoki appears to draw on Saint Teresa of Avila's grades of prayer to define meditation and quiet prayer.<sup>290</sup> The Spanish saint discusses the grades of prayer in her book *The Way to Perfection*,<sup>291</sup> and describes the prayer of quiet as an awareness of God's presence that is accompanied by inner peace and deep joy. The prayer of quiet is supernatural and it cannot be produced by the will. Teresa speaks disparagingly of those who ignore the gift of quiet by filling their minds with the recitation of prayers.<sup>292</sup>

Dominican Jordon Aumann, author of eight books on spiritual theology, uses Teresa's grades of prayer in his

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<sup>290</sup> The Spanish mystic actually termed this mystical form of prayer as the 'prayer of quiet'.

<sup>291</sup> Teresa of Avila (2018), trans Peers E.A., *The Way to Perfection*, Dead Authors Society [kindle edition].

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*



explanation of a soul's journey towards perfection and he offers a succinct definition of the prayer of quiet:

**A type of mystical prayer in which the intimate awareness of God's presence captivates the will and fills the soul and body with ineffable sweetness and delight... the prayer of quiet, as its name indicates, tends to contemplative silence and repose.<sup>293</sup>**

Aoki talked about how much she liked the interior life and found 'quiet prayer' very similar to *zazen* when she discovered it. Because she had already been enjoying quiet prayer for some time she found it easy to slip into *zazen*.

In line with Teresa's thinking, Aoki clearly defines meditation as an activity that involves the intellect. Aoki does not, therefore, classify *zazen* as meditation as this involves emptying the mind. Aumann describes meditation as follows:

**Discursive meditation can be defined as a reasoned application of the mind to some supernatural truth in order to penetrate its meaning, love it, and carry it into practice with the assistance of grace. As soon as we cease to reason or discourse, we cease to meditate.<sup>294</sup>**

Aoki explains well the purpose of emptying the mind in that it leaves space for God. Aoki points out that a danger with meditation, as with quiet prayer, is that one can create one's own God.

Aoki has mentioned Jesus Christ a few times in her testimony and it is clear that she maintains a relationship with him. I am not saying that none of the other Christians has a relationship with Jesus Christ, because I did not specifically ask them this question and it did not arise during interviews with them. However,

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<sup>293</sup> Aumann (1980), 337

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-9

during my discussion with Aoki, her relationship with Jesus Christ was apparent.

And, finally, I would like to clarify a few points about what Aoki said concerning *zazen* and religion and *zazen* and Buddhism. I agree that *zazen* itself is not a religion and that *zazen*, per se, is not Buddhism. However, *zazen* as a practice did originate from Buddhism and that is why its interaction with the Catholic tradition of prayer is being researched as part of this thesis.

## **4.2 Ellen Birx**

*Ellen Birx grew up a Christian and became attracted to meditation from the East almost 50 years ago. She has continued to practise zazen in conjunction with Christian prayer and now teaches others how to meditate. Birx is a member of the White Plum tradition and co-founded the New River Zen Community. I interviewed Birx because of her knowledge of non-duality, the Christian contemplative tradition, inter-spiritual practice and the interaction between Christian prayer and zazen.*

### **Introduction to zazen**

“I have been an early follower of Jesus since baptism in the Presbyterian Church as a child then, as a young adult, I had a classic born-again experience of asking Jesus into my heart and committing my life to following his teachings and his example to the best of my ability. I saw meditation as a way to do that, a way to accomplish that, so my life is committed to Jesus but Buddha is also a great teacher, particularly of meditation, so I am also a follower of Buddha.

“I learned to meditate back in the 1970s and was attracted to Zen in particular because of its simple, natural, uncluttered style and that appealed to me. I came to view meditation as a way to be in God’s presence, a way to love God with my whole heart, mind, soul and strength. I was pleased I did learn to meditate and expand my awareness of God’s presence.

“I have always been very interested in different cultures of the world and the wisdom they could share. I had the feeling that if we could gather together all the spiritual resources we could address the big problems in the world that were

already there in the 1970s but are even more apparent now, such the climate, environmental issues, getting along with each other and avoiding war.

### **Inter-spiritual practice**

“If someone asked me what religion I was today, I would say I am both Christian and Buddhist, but I don’t like the phrase ‘dual belonging’. I prefer to say ‘inter-spiritual practice’, a term which Teasdale<sup>295</sup> coined. He was talking about sharing ultimate experiences across different traditions and I like Teasdale’s term because the emphasis is on practice. It’s not just dialogue or sharing ideas of different theologies and philosophies, but actually practising.

“Zen has different words for the ultimate, such as ultimate reality, oneness, suchness, thusness or often just ‘it’, the unnameable, the inconceivable. Christianity often calls this God, or sometimes the infinite, but in both traditions the ultimate is inconceivable, ineffable, and cannot be expressed in words. This needs to be approached, not by the intellect, but through meditation, intuition and an intuitive leap to experience what is beyond thoughts, words, concepts and ideas. So the emphasis in my inter-spiritual practice is on direct experience beyond thoughts, words, concepts and ideas. I do always like to emphasise, though, that each of these traditions – Christianity and Zen – is complete and transformative all on its own. However, if we can practise these and experience that they are mutually enriching, expanding and enlightening then we can draw on these multiple traditions. After all, we need all the help we can get to deal with the problems of our times.

“I think that inter-spiritual practice is important because many people are born into more than one culture. People from around the world are coming together and sometimes they have a Christian mother and a Jewish father or a Buddhist mother and Muslim father and so forth, so people are born into an inter-spiritual environment. Some marry into inter-spiritual practice and some simply choose it as they move along through life and encounter different traditions. It’s really important for people to feel liberated from the pressure to choose just one tradition but I want people to practise what’s life affirming for them, what’s

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<sup>295</sup> Brother Wayne Teasdale (1945-2004) was a Catholic monk who drew on the teachings of all the world’s main faith traditions to create a universal spirituality.

enriching, more expanding and helps them feel more of a presence of ultimate reality, or God, in the world around them.

“There’s a poem by Ikkyū,<sup>296</sup> about there being many paths up the same mountain but at the peak, we all view one single bright moon. So, these many different paths do have commonality in viewing the single bright moon but if you look at the paths up the mountain, one person might tell you it is a grassy stroll and another a rocky climb so all these different paths give us greater information. However, the path itself is different, the practices are different, the vocabulary is different and yet there is commonality. I think the different paths, like Zen and Christianity, for example, both ultimately lead us to compassionate action. It is important not to ignore the distinctions between these traditions, or try to gloss over them, because it is the differences that help us understand life more fully.

### **Christian contemplative tradition**

“There are many different forms of Christian contemplative prayer. As a Zen teacher, the questions I get asked most often are about centering prayer because so many people in the United States have been practising that type of prayer. I often need to point out the differences or distinctions between *zazen* and Christian centering prayer.

“The first distinction is that this type of prayer is called ‘centering’ because the person centres him- or herself in God. So, one of the differences between *zazen* and centering prayer is that in *zazen* we want to help an individual empty out all thoughts, concepts and images of God because even the faintest image limits God. God is inconceivable and far beyond what we could imagine. In centering prayer, there’s often a word one repeats – *kyrie*,<sup>297</sup> for example – or some other phrase or word that an individual may have chosen for its spiritual meaning. In *zazen*, we are dropping off all meaning, all intellectualising. Also, Zen’s main emphasis is the direct experience of non-duality so from a non-dual perspective there is no centre and periphery. That would be a dualistic view of centre versus periphery.

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<sup>296</sup> Ikkyū (1394-1481) was a poet and Zen master who grew up during Japan’s Muromachi period (1393-1573), a time of renewed interest in the arts.

<sup>297</sup> Kyrie means ‘Lord’ and is often said during formal Christian liturgy.

We go beyond inside and outside, centre and periphery, self and other. All these are dualistic divisions.

“There are many people I know who go to Christian contemplative prayer groups and what they tend to do in those groups are guided meditations. The group leader will use a lot of words and images to guide people through while they are sitting in silence. In Zen we don’t do guided meditation as the words used are limiting and constrict God. A lady once asked if I thought it would be better if we had some music playing in the background but I said, no, in *zazen* we don’t have background music because music evokes images and emotions. We are going beyond anything we can create. So we don’t have music in the background and we don’t have anyone talking us through it. *Zazen* isn’t a guided meditation.

“Another type of contemplative Christian prayer is the Jesus prayer,<sup>298</sup> where there is verbal repetition. It could also involve a single word, a mantra or a phrase. Again, *zazen* is not working with words, concepts and ideas.

“Then there’s Christian contemplation, such as the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>299</sup> With this type of Christian contemplation you are using your imagination to enter scenes from scripture. Again, this is not *zazen*, which is silent, and involves the emptying out of all concepts, thoughts, words, images and so forth.

“Then some types of Christian contemplation are aimed at bringing the individual into union with God. The emphasis is on this close relationship and uniting yourself with God. In *zazen*, however, we have this non-dual perspective where we’re trying to help the individual directly experience that he or she is a manifestation of God. In Zen, there is an expression that helps us understand this. There is a Zen master who said ‘He surely is me but I am not Him’. In other words, in Zen, individuals experience their true identity in ultimate reality or God and yet God is greater than any of us are and greater than all of creation put together. In *zazen* we are moving from relationship to identity. I am a

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<sup>298</sup> The Jesus prayer, particularly popular in the Orthodox Church, consists of the words: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

<sup>299</sup> The spiritual exercises, a series of meditations focussed on the birth, life, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are closely associated with the Spanish priest St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).

manifestation of God and so, like the Apostle Paul said, 'Nothing can separate you from the love of God'. The reason this is true is because you are a manifestation of God's love so how could anything ever separate you from what you are? The move from relationship to identity does not eliminate relationship but it helps us see that we are a manifestation of God or ultimate reality in that direct experience. So, these are some of the ways that *zazen* is distinct from various Christian contemplation approaches.

"I think the approach of St. John of the Cross,<sup>300</sup> the apophatic emptying of all concepts and ideas is like the emptying approach of *zazen* where we let go of thoughts, concepts, ideas, and to come into direct experience of God or ultimate reality to the extent that a human being can experience that. So, I think there are some similarities. There isn't an exact parallel but some of the ideas are similar. In the dark night of the soul,<sup>301</sup> we learn to let go of who we think we are and who we think God is before we can open up to something new, so there can be this death and resurrection, moment-by-moment aspect to *zazen* that is in some ways similar to what St. John of the Cross is talking about in terms of letting go of what we know and opening up to that which is inconceivable.

### **On non-duality**

"I started learning meditation because I wanted to expand my awareness of God's presence. I didn't know non-duality existed and I didn't know what it was but as I studied Zen and the teachings of the Buddha, I learned about this idea of non-duality, non-separation. For example, in the process of *zazen*, people often become aware that they identify with their thoughts, concepts, images and ideas. I am what I think. I am how I feel. I am a subject observing an object. *Zazen* helps us see beyond this limited sense of self-identity. In the experience of non-duality, you open to complete non-separation. I am not separate from ultimate reality and

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<sup>300</sup> St John of the Cross (1542-1591), born Juan de Yepes y Álvarez, was a Spanish Carmelite friar who authored books on mystical theology. Pope Pius XI declared him a doctor of the Catholic Church in 1926.

<sup>301</sup> The dark night of the soul is a spiritual crisis during the soul's journey towards God. John of the Cross wrote a poem of the same name about the soul's journey and the spiritual struggles it encounters.

its manifestation in the universe. There is no separate self. You discover the non-separate self.

“I think we can understand non-separation better when we think about Jesus being distinct, but not separate, from God. In other words, there are not two separate beings there – God and Jesus are not separate, yet they are distinct. In the same way, there is no separate self. We are distinct but not separate from ultimate reality or other people or from the earth or all beings and so this direct experience of non-separation, or oneness, allows us to engage in compassionate action. It’s not me helping you. Our response to this direct experience is that we are one so when Jesus says “whatever you do to the least you, you do for me,”<sup>302</sup> he is making a non-dual statement. Jesus also said: “I and the Father are one” and “this is my body.” The example that the bread is Jesus’s body is a direct expression of non-duality. The earth, the mountains, the rivers, the furthest star is my body so an experience I never imagined existed and yet Jesus was teaching non-duality. The experience of non-duality through my Zen practice was not only wonderful from a Zen perspective but was also wonderful in helping me understand the non-dual teachings of Jesus.

### **Zazen and Christian prayer**

“For 45 years, *zazen* has been my main form of Christian prayer. I sit for 25 minutes morning and evening and then every Wednesday our Zen group sits for three 25-minute periods in the evening and from time to time we will have a day where we alternate between sitting and walking meditation all day. Several times a year we go to *sesshin*<sup>303</sup> and for a weekend or for a whole week we meditate for 25-minute periods 14 or 15 times a day.

“I continue to pray as any other Christian does. I say verbal prayers, give praise and thanksgiving, I pray for peace, I pray for my family and I pray for freedom for all the people of the world. I say the Our Father every day. The distinction is that when I am doing *zazen* I am not engaged in verbal prayer. I empty out all thoughts, words and images. Also, in addition to that, the awareness, the alertness, the presence during *zazen* carries over into the rest of the day so when

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<sup>302</sup> Matt 25:40

<sup>303</sup> Intensive Zen Buddhist meditation retreat.

I'm washing dishes, I am just washing dishes and it's a dishwashing meditation. When I am driving, I am just driving and not pre-occupied with thinking about other things. When I'm working at the computer, I just do that so, like in meditation, during the rest of the day that presence and awareness carries over, especially being fully present to the people I encounter. I am present and attentive and not distracted or preoccupied.

“There are people from all different branches of Christianity who say “yes”, this is wonderful, this is enriching. So many Christians don't feel there's a problem with combining these practices and, in fact, they find it liberating, enriching and enhancing. I really like the example of medicine man Nicholas Black Elk<sup>304</sup> who was a native American Indian and Catholic catechist. He is now under consideration for sainthood in the Catholic Church. Nicholas Black Elk said that as the Indian tribes were coming together and meeting each other over the decades and centuries they would often adopt spiritual practices from one another. They would just add them to their existing beliefs and practices. When Christianity appeared in America, many Native Americans simply said this sounds lovely, let's just add it on. Of course, the missionaries of the time did not see it this way. I think Nicholas Black Elk was a pioneer of inter-spiritual practice.

“We need to use beneficial practices from traditions around the world. The caveat I would give is that I think it is important that people go deeply into the traditions. Individuals shouldn't do a little bit of this and a little bit of that, which a lot of people do. Many of the Christian contemplative practices that are popular today come from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Meditation came into the country in the 1960s and helped Christians discover a similar practice in the *Cloud of the Unknowing*.<sup>305</sup> Throughout the world, religious traditions have been mixing and mingling for centuries. The current interest in meditation is part of this ongoing process. We have to use our common sense, our discernment, and our scientific knowledge from the fields of psychology and neuroscience to make good decisions about what is life-affirming and helps us know God more fully,

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<sup>304</sup> Nicholas Black Elk (1863-1950) was a native American Lakota Sioux 'medicine man' who converted to Christianity when he married a Catholic. He was baptised in 1904 and continued to participate in native American rituals throughout his life.

<sup>305</sup> The *Cloud of Unknowing* was written in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century by an unknown author.



realising we can never know the infinite, inconceivable God completely. Ultimately, we must live our lives with love and compassionate action, in harmony with one another and with the earth.”

### **Commentary**

Birx has been fascinated with different cultures for much of her life so one might expect that this interest would influence her personal spirituality. In fact, at the time that Birx became interested in Zen, she desired to work together with all faiths to create a better world and that is a laudable objective.

Baptised in the Presbyterian Church, she had a “born-again” experience as a young adult in which she committed herself to Jesus Christ.

*Zazen* has enabled Birx to love God more completely than she was able to before turning to Zen Buddhism. She concedes, however, that Zen Buddhism and Christianity are both complete as individual faith traditions, but they complement each other and give them a fullness.

Birx disapproves of the word ‘dual belonging’, possibly because she does not like the idea of being compartmentalised into specific faith traditions, even if more than one is involved. Instead, she prefers to be part of the wider world and this is possibly why she prefers the term ‘inter-spiritual practice’. She does not believe that others, either, should be pressurised into choosing one particular faith. Birx correctly points out that people encounter other faiths more readily today and often have parents of different religions, or they encounter other faith traditions during the course of life.

Birx is knowledgeable about the Christian contemplative tradition and pointed out the difference between *zazen*

and other types of prayer. This really helped isolate *zazen*.

Birx pointed out that there are other names for God, including 'It'. This is the name that Sister Elaine McGuinness frequently used for God in her book *Zen Contemplation: A Bridge of Living Water*,<sup>306</sup> which I reviewed in Chapter Two.

It was interesting to note that Birx refers to *zazen* as prayer. A *Rinzai* priest I interviewed but who later withdrew from this study, would argue against any notion at all of *zazen* being prayer.

Birx brings to attention how *zazen* enables her to live in the present moment and to be attentive to the task she is engaged in. This is a positive benefit because living in the present moment can be difficult. It can be too easy to focus attention on what has passed, or worry excessively about the future and, in so doing, miss God's activity in one's life.

Interestingly, like Michael Holloran, who I also interviewed for this chapter, Birx makes a comparison between Centering Prayer, where there is a subject and object, and Zen, where there is not. Holloran believed that Centering Prayer is moving towards non-duality. Birx did not make a similar observation. Instead, she placed Centering Prayer firmly in the dualistic Christian realm. Birx makes some brief observations about non-duality and being a connected part of the universe. She illustrates this non-separation by pointing out that Jesus and God are distinct but not separate and quotes verses from scripture as proof that Jesus made non-dual statements. The three verses she quotes are:

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<sup>306</sup> MacInnes, E. (2001), 21

- 1) Whatever you do for the least of my brothers you do for me. Matt. 25:40.
- 2) I and the Father are one. John 10:30.
- 3) This is my body. Luke 22:19.

Birx believes that different aspects of non-duality and interconnectedness can be seen in the above statements.

### **4.3 Kim Boykin**

*Kim Boykin was received into the Catholic Church in 1998 but has maintained a deep interest in Zen Buddhism. She is author of **Zen for Christians**<sup>307</sup> and has taught an on-line course of the same name for the past three summers at Emory University's Candler School of Theology.*

#### **Introduction to Zen Buddhism**

“I didn’t grow up in any particular faith tradition, but got interested in religion in my senior year at Vassar College in New York State. I took a class on Buddhism, and we went on a field trip to Zen Mountain Monastery<sup>308</sup> in the nearby Catskill Mountains. Some time later, the abbot and head teacher from the monastery, John Daido Loori, came to Vassar to give a talk, and I asked him afterwards if I might be able to go up there for a few days for a retreat so my best friend and I went for our spring break.

“I was really looking for something and was thinking about Christianity alongside Zen. I was reading authors such as St. John of the Cross, Thomas Merton’s works such as *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

“Later, I returned to the monastery for three months and then went back to Boulder, Colorado, where I’d moved after college. After a time, I went back to Zen Mountain Monastery for a year.

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<sup>307</sup> Boykin, K., (2003) *Zen for Christians*, San Francisco, United States of America: Jossey-Bass (see [josseybass.com](http://josseybass.com)), second edition, Dover, 2018.

<sup>308</sup> Zen Mountain Monastery is part of the Mountains and Rivers Order, established by the late John Daido Loori (1931-2009). The order, a western Zen Buddhist lineage, draws on the teaching of both the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* traditions.

### **Conversion to Catholicism**

“Somewhere along the line, I realised that Zen wasn’t quite working for me. I was engaged by now and my fiancé (who is a life-long Catholic and also practises *zazen*) introduced me to a Catholic nun, who became my spiritual director. She didn’t have any problem at all with my Zen practice. I also had a Methodist woman as my spiritual director for a while and she never had any issue with my being Christian and doing Zen practice. In my experience, Christians who are attracted to the Christian contemplative and monastic tradition find it perfectly natural to be interested in Zen and to both pray and do *zazen*. In fact, in westernised Zen, I don’t see any conflict with Christianity at all. Japanese Zen was getting modernised and westernised in Japan before it even came here to the United States, because of what was going on in the country during the *Meiji* period at the time.

### ***Zazen* practice alongside Catholic prayer**

“When Zen reached the United States, it continued to develop to western tastes and can be incorporated into Christians’ prayer lives without compromising their beliefs. So what’s the issue? I wasn’t Christian when I first got involved, so perhaps I would have had an issue, or maybe not. I’ve noticed that my students on my online course have the most trouble with all the bowing, especially bowing towards an image of the Buddha on an altar. I still, as a Christian, don’t have any trouble with that, but I understand why some Christians do.

“A lot of westerners who practise Zen are former Christians. They rejected Christianity as a child or adolescent but what they are usually rejecting is their understanding of Christianity as a 10-year-old. They compare the Zen that they have been practising for two decades with their childhood knowledge of Christianity and say Buddhism is so much better. I wish people didn’t do that. I wish they wouldn’t make comparisons. They really shouldn’t comment at all because they don’t have an adult’s understanding of Christianity and are speaking from their childhood experience.

### **Buddhism as a religion**

“Buddhism is certainly a religion, not just a philosophy or a psychology. I think

many Westerners think of 'religion' as mainly being about beliefs, especially belief in a god or gods, but it is true that Zen Buddhism, especially in its modernised, westernised form, has little to do with beliefs and doesn't address the existence of a god or gods. But there's more to religion than beliefs and deities. Buddhism has liturgy, sacred texts, sacred stories, monasteries, temples, ethical precepts, spiritual practices, a worldview. Buddhism addresses basic existential questions of being human, questions about suffering, mortality, and how to live a good life.

"It's a pet peeve of mine that books on Buddhism often end up in the 'philosophy' section of bookstores, instead of the 'religion' section. My hunch is that it's because the folks who decide how to organise bookstores might not have a very high regard for religion, but they think Buddhism is kind of cool, so they don't want to put the Buddhism books under 'religion'.

"I think Christianity can be enriched by opening up to various meditative practices which may have come from outside the Christian tradition. For Christians interested in contemplative practices, the problem is not only that Christian contemplative practices might not be as accessible or available as Buddhist practices but also that (it seems to me) Buddhism has a much more well developed tradition of contemplative practice.

### **On dual belonging**

"I suppose I would not categorize myself as a "dual believer," partially because it's an ungainly term but more importantly because I have never thought of myself as a Buddhist, even while I was living at a Zen monastery.

"I am Catholic, and Buddhism is important to me. That's how I think about it. Both Buddhism and Christianity have significantly shaped my worldview and my religious practice and my life in general. I feel equally at home at a Catholic church or a Zen center.

"I feel like my "first language" religiously was Buddhism and while I am now fluent in Christianity, I still sometimes think in Buddhism and have to mentally translate into Christianity. Christianity still doesn't come quite so naturally to me as Buddhism does.

“But Buddhism (in the Western forms I'm familiar with) just seems to me less like an identity or a thing one "belongs" to than Christianity does. Buddhism and Christianity are perhaps equally important to me, but I feel like the category of "belonging" doesn't quite work for my relationship to Buddhism.”

### **Commentary**

Zen Buddhism has evolved to adapt to westerners' customs, but there are certain aspects of it that Christians appear to still feel uncomfortable with, such as bowing to the Buddha, as Boykin pointed out in reference to her students. It is difficult, when in a group and possibly feeling peer pressure, to refrain from a practice on the grounds that it might not be acceptable to one's faith tradition. Some people in a group may understand a Christian's position on this but he or she may feel pressure to comply.

Boykin observes that former Christians - and there are many to be found in Zen Buddhism - who compare, unfavourably, their childhood experience of 'Church' with their adult understanding of Zen Buddhism. I believe that many people have heard former Christians voice similar sentiments but it is interesting to hear Boykin articulate this observation in the way that she has.

Boykin is the first of several of my interviewees to point out that Christians are hungry for contemplative prayer - something that exists within Christianity but is not easily accessed nor readily available. This need was observed in 1989 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and its Prefect, the then Cardinal Ratzinger, in a letter to bishops:

Many Christians today have a keen desire to learn how to experience a deeper and authentic prayer life despite the not inconsiderable difficulties which modern culture places in the way of the need for silence, recollection and meditation. The interest which in recent years has been awakened also among some Christians by forms of meditation associated

with some eastern religions and their particular methods of prayer is a significant sign of this need for spiritual recollection and a deep contact with the divine mystery.<sup>309</sup>

Boykin observes that those who are attracted to the Christian contemplative tradition would, naturally, also be interested in *zazen*. William Johnston, for example, had been interested in mysticism long before he started *zazen*.

Soon I found myself sitting in the half-lotus position and gazing at the wall in silence. This kind of meditation was not, however, entirely new to me. John of the Cross has been my guru for many years and, at this time, I was reading the *Cloud of Unknowing*, which teaches a species of silent, imageless meditation not unlike Zen.<sup>310</sup>

Boykin makes several comments about what constitutes a religion and I have incorporated elements of these observations in writing my own definition in Chapter One.

#### **4.4 Chris Collingwood**

*At the time of this interview, Anglican priest Chris Collingwood was chancellor at York Minster. He is also an experienced Zen teacher and sangha leader in the White Plum Asanga.<sup>311</sup> I interviewed Collingwood because in Chapter Two I explained that I had some queries on the subject of dual belonging and non-duality, which he might be able to resolve.*

#### **Introduction to Zen Buddhism**

“I first became interested in Zen on one level years ago, way back when I was a

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<sup>309</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1989) *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, Vatican City, 1.1. See [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19891015\\_meditazione-cristiana\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19891015_meditazione-cristiana_en.html) [accessed June 12, 2020]. This document is formally known as *Orationis Formas*.

<sup>310</sup> Johnston, W. (1997) *Christian Zen*, New York, United States of America: Fordham University Press), 4.

<sup>311</sup> The White Plum Asanga, established in the 1970s by Hakuyu Maezumi (1931-1995), is a contemporary Zen sect that draws upon the traditions of both the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools. Most of White Plum’s members are based in the United States, but there are members in other countries, too, including the UK. See <https://whiteplum.org/welcome/> [accessed June 16, 2020].

student. The first serious book I read on the subject was *Silent Music*<sup>312</sup> by William Johnston S.J. My mum happened to give me the book, just by chance, and I was captivated by it.

“Later, I had the opportunity to actually meet William Johnston and that really got my interest going. I had also been interested in the spirituality of the English Benedictine Bede Griffiths<sup>313</sup> and went to his ashram in India. I started to meditate in that context but later I was talking to my spiritual director about this. He had recently begun practising *zazen* and when I was chatting to him about my prayer life he just reached up to his bookshelf and said “you might find this book helpful”. I took the book home with me and I absolutely devoured it. My spiritual director had obviously picked up something from me that this was the direction in which I was going.

“My spiritual director said he would speak to his Zen teacher about the possibility of me coming on a *sesshin*. I leapt at the opportunity as this was the first living contact I had had with Zen. At the same time, I discovered a Zen master – a Roman Catholic priest – in my area and I asked him if I could come over and see him. At the end of our discussion, he asked me what I wanted. I told him I needed a teacher and that I wanted to experience non-duality. I felt that my discovery of the practice of Zen was the natural outcome of my spiritual life. There was a sense in which everything in my life had taken me in that direction.

### **Dual belonging**

“I describe myself as a dual believer. To clarify what I mean by that, dual belonging applies to the traditions we inherit and the traditions in which we were formed. I was brought up a Christian, and I still consider myself a Christian, but at a cultural level, there is Zen, which has its origins in Buddhism. It started with the Buddha in northern India but then it passed to Bodhidharma, then went to China, followed by Japan and now it has arrived in the West. So, Zen arises from a different cultural context and, at that level, there are two traditions in the relative Christianity and Zen world. It seems to me that both Christian practice

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<sup>312</sup> Johnston, W. (1974) *Silent Music*, London, England: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd.

<sup>313</sup> Bede Griffiths (1906-1993) was a Benedictine priest from the UK who spent the last half of his life living in ashrams in India. He became known as Swami Dayananda.



and Zen practice enables us to become fully alive and who we are meant to be. Dual belonging is like two rivers that re-join at a common source.

### **On non-duality**

“Whatever I had thought about non-duality turned out to be not what I had expected. When we speak about non-duality, we’re speaking about it in conceptual terms. Zen cuts right through conceptual thinking to bring us to a direct experience of ultimate reality. We’re constantly projecting onto reality, even what we think non-duality is, but the practice of Zen pulls the rug away from under our feet. Reality always transcends what we think about it. This is what I mean when I say that non-duality turned out to be not what I had expected. I’d formed an idea in my mind of what non-duality is but the practice of Zen reveals that that’s just what it is: an idea and not the reality.

“There is, of course, a sense of duality in our experience – you are there and I am here and there are objects around us. In Zen terminology this is the relative world. Zen also points to the essential world, which is characterised by emptiness. People tend to think of emptiness as nothingness but this is far from the truth – it’s actually nothing like that at all.

“As soon as you start *zazen* and allow thoughts to come and go, and you don’t engage with them, questions occur. You ask who it is who is asking these questions and, the further you push it, the more difficult it is to identify this self, this mind, or whatever. The realisation comes that I am not any of this, not even who I think I am, which leads to this experience of emptiness. The paradoxical thing is that emptiness is actually fullness.

“I came to realise that I don’t exist as an independent, separate, substantial being in my own right. I am related to, and inter-connected with, everything and everyone else. This is what non-duality is getting at. We begin to taste what it is not to be separate but deeply, profoundly related to everything and everyone else. We find this emptiness to be dynamic and creative. It has an energy. The difficulty for all of us is that we tend to hang on to things that are passing as if they were substantial and unchanging. Emptiness reveals that there is this constant movement. We have to learn to let go. It’s a way of dying, but the shared human condition is that we try to hang on.

“Christianity, supremely, can learn from Zen the practice of non-duality – so much of our language and aspiration is to become somebody and make a mark and that’s fine at one level but at another, the profound discovery of our inter-dependence is undoubtedly there in Christianity – for example, the doctrine of Trinity and our being created in the image of God – it is all inter-relatedness. After the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, things became fragmented and we now tend to think of ourselves as separate, independent individuals. The misguidedness of that thinking is a falling away of the truth of the way things are but the practice of *zazen* enables us to gradually let go of all those things we cling to, that we hang on to, all those things that boost ourselves as an independent substantial separate being in our own right.

### **Learning from the Cross**

“Is there anything that Zen can learn from Christianity? I would say yes, and it is to do with the person of Christ and, specifically, the Cross. Zen in particular, and Buddhism in general, are very much motivated to find the cause of suffering and, having found that cause, seek to alleviate it. So, Buddhism and Zen are characterised by compassion. What is distinctive in the Christian tradition is that compassion is revealed in the most horrendous of suffering that Jesus meets on the Cross, where he dies convulsed in pain and agony.

“What I see in Jesus on the Cross is exactly what I experience in the practice of Zen, which is not a running away from the uncomfortable aspects of life but embracing them with love and compassion and allowing them to be mysteriously transformed. Jesus meets his suffering with love, acceptance and non-violence, and that is what we do in *zazen*. The cushion and the mat we sit on in *zazen* can be likened to the Cross, and we engage with whatever arises. We meet that with love, compassion and understanding, and recognise that these things come, in part, from our conditioning and the way we have learned to engage with the world. In Jesus on the Cross, we see this all-embracing, all-inclusive compassionate love. It is in the most terrible of circumstances where we see God. Christianity and Zen alike encourage and enable us to embrace, accept and live everything that arises in our experience with this compassionate love, and it’s

this practice, whether in *zazen* or the circumstances of everyday life, which is liberating and transformative.”

### **Commentary**

As I suspected, Collingwood was able to articulate both dual belonging and non-duality extremely well. Both subjects, particularly dual belonging, are being raised more frequently in Christian spirituality.

As I have already pointed out in an earlier chapter, dual belonging did not appear in the spiritual arena until recent years, possibly as a result of increasing globalisation and westerners' exposure to different cultures. This makes me curious as to whether some of the numerous Catholic clergy and religious who explored Zen so passionately following the Second Vatican Council would, today, now describe themselves as dual belongers.

Collingwood believes that the combination of Zen Buddhism and Christianity are complementary and provides a fullness to the Christian's life. Each provides something that the other lacks. As an example, Zen Buddhism is characterised by compassion and it tries to alleviate the cause of suffering. In Christianity, we know that suffering exists and we accept it as an inevitable part of life. We use Christ's Passion as a model for the acceptance of this suffering and receive grace in doing so. The trials that we face in life can be transformed through redemptive suffering.

Collingwood provides a thorough explanation of non-dualism, describing it as an interconnectedness. At the time of writing this chapter, the UK - and indeed, most areas of the world - was emerging from a period of lockdown caused by the Coronavirus outbreak. The interconnectedness Collingwood describes was, in part, felt by millions of people who were 'grounded' and unable

to socialise outside of their immediate households. I say 'in part' because Collingwood describes non-dualism as an interconnectedness between everything and everyone, and I am only referring to the human aspect, but the lockdown did carry overtones of what it is to have this interconnectedness threatened and the ensuing mental health issues it can cause. For committed Catholics, the virus took away an aspect of life that many had come to expect as a right - the freedom to attend Mass regularly and experience the interconnectedness of the Church. For some, social media brought a new dimension to this relationship through the broadcasting of liturgical services. Zen, of course, takes the subject of interconnectedness much wider and deeper than I have suggested here but I think there is a similarity in what I have described.

At the end of the interview, Collingwood provides a splendid analogy between the *zafu*<sup>314</sup> and the Cross. Like the Cross, the *zafu* is the place where one embraces life's sufferings. There is no escape from either the Cross or the *zafu* but accepting the suffering found there can be transformative.

#### **4.5 Michael Holleran**

*Michael Holleran began formation as a Jesuit in 1967 but left in 1972 and entered the Carthusian order, where he was ordained in 1979. He remained with the Carthusians for 22 years. He has been a secular priest since 1994 and is currently based in New York City. He received Dharma transmission in the White Plum tradition from Robert Kennedy, S.J. in 2009 and runs his own zendo, the Dragon's Eye. Holleran is well-known in the American Catholic world for his practice of Zen alongside his ministry as a parish priest. I interviewed Holleran because I was*

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<sup>314</sup> The *zafu* is the cushion on which one sits to meditate.

*interested in talking to a priest who is also a double believer. I was also interested in knowing if he had received jukai.*

### **Introduction to zazen**

“I was first introduced to Zen through reading Thomas Merton in college when I was a young Jesuit (1967-72). I left the Jesuits in 1972 and joined the Carthusians for 22 years (1972-94). I was ordained a priest in 1979.

“I left the Carthusian order in 1994 and became a parish priest in the archdiocese of New York the same year. I reconnected with Robert Kennedy S.J. (who I knew from my Jesuit days) and discovered there were Zen sittings being held half a block from my church in New York City. I have been out of the Carthusians now for 26 years and have been practising *zazen* since then. I have been a Zen teacher since 2009, when I received *Dharma* transmission from Robert Kennedy (making me a member of the White Plum Asanga). I started my own *zendo* (the Dragon’s Eye Zendo) when I received *Dharma* transmission.

“I didn’t undertake *zazen* training in Japan but I have given talks there to Buddhists about Christian contemplation and their first reaction was surprise that we even had a contemplative tradition because they had received a different impression of Christianity. Their experience of Christianity was drawn from encountering evangelical Christians or other aspects of Christianity, but never a mystical tradition.

“I’ve never had the slightest conflict – not even tension – between my practice of *zazen* and being a Catholic priest. Of course, there are always going to be differences of opinion. When I was training, my teacher (Robert Kennedy) was always available if I wanted to talk through anything (about Catholicism and *zazen*).

### **Jukai**

“I didn’t take part in a *jukai* ceremony (where one accepts the Buddhist precepts) and I wouldn’t do so because that would make me a Buddhist. I am a Catholic. Robert Kennedy and I made a definite and conscious decision not to do so as it

would create confusion among Buddhists and our Catholic confreres. I didn't see myself as a Buddhist priest because I am already a priest, a Catholic priest.

### **Double belonging**

"I would call myself a double believer. My good friend Paul Knitter defined double belonging as being part of one tradition but also finding substantial nourishment in another. This often reaffirms some elements of our own tradition, and contemplation is an example of that.<sup>315</sup>

### **Christian contemplative prayer**

"We can rediscover the mystery of God and our true selves by delving into the silence of contemplative prayer.<sup>316</sup> Christians are often suspicious of silence. They don't realise that silence is very much part of the Christian tradition. I have a background in contemplative prayer and follow the thought of Thomas Keating. I normally hold centering prayer sessions on a Monday night here at the Church of Notre Dame and a weekly Zen group at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi.

"Buddhists are often accused of being atheist but that is not an accurate view – they just refuse to conceptualize the Ultimate Mystery. Because of this, Christians make the assumption that Buddhists do not have faith. As it happens, Buddhists can have more respect for God's unknowability and infinity than Christians.

"Christians often think they know God. They are told that God revealed himself to us but, as Thomas Aquinas asserts, we can know *that* God is, but not *what* God is. Christians are told that they were made in the likeness of God so we think we know him but we can actually have a rather naïve understanding of God.

"I was never told how to meditate or contemplate at the Catholic school I went to. Catholics don't know this type of prayer is available to them. A lot of Catholics

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<sup>315</sup> Paul Knitter has since re-defined his interpretation of 'dual belonging'. In the first version of his book *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*, Knitter defines double-belonging as maintaining a primary belief in one religion but finding enrichment through a second religion. However, he has since concluded that a true double believer is just as much at home in the second religion as in the original religion. Knitter also equates dual belonging with the concept of 'theology without walls', a trans-religious movement that skirts the doctrinal issues of individual faiths and religions. For further information, see Chapter Seven 'Zen Buddhist-Catholic interreligious relationships: dialogue and dual belonging', section 7.4.

<sup>316</sup> In Chapter Four, section 4.2, Ellen Birx provides a good explanation of the different types of contemplative prayer.

look to Zen because they realise that something is missing from their prayer lives and so they go looking for it elsewhere. They find it in yoga – not that there’s anything wrong with that – or Zen. Again, there’s nothing wrong with either of those, but the point is they look outside their own tradition for what they are seeking.

“I’d like to make one more point. I’m often asked how do you compare centering prayer (where there seems to be a subject and object) with Zen, which doesn’t. I have found that the centering prayer movement has, over the years, started to move beyond subject-object contemplation and towards a non-dual consciousness (where subject and object are one). This is true of all the great traditions – I believe we are all moving towards the same thing.”

### **Commentary**

Again, the Christian contemplative movement has been discussed in depth, this time making reference to the surprise expressed by a group of Buddhists that such a tradition existed in Christianity. Few Catholics themselves may also be aware of the Christian contemplative tradition as Holleran was not taught this type of prayer at the Catholic school he attended. The general unavailability of Christian contemplation is possibly one of the main reasons that Catholics look for it – and an experience of God – outside their own tradition.

I was interested to hear what Holleran said about *jukai* and whether he had taken part in this ceremony. Holleran has not because he – along with his teacher Robert Kennedy, S.J., – had earlier made a decision not to do so because it would make them Buddhists. Holleran firmly confirmed that he is Catholic, just as Kennedy did in his book *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*.

Since my installation as a Zen teacher in New York in December 9 1991, I have been asked by Zen practitioners if I had lost my Catholic faith and didn't know it, or if I had lost it and didn't have the courage to admit it. As far as anyone can answer a question like that, I have never thought of myself as anything but Catholic and I certainly have never thought of myself as a Buddhist.<sup>317</sup>

I was curious as to whether Holleran had ever been met with resistance over his combined Christian-Zen practice but, save from the odd difference of opinion, he had not encountered any major problems. He added that Kennedy was always available for consultation on this matter, if required. Kennedy, however, is also a *zazen* practitioner, a fellow Catholic priest and long-term friend so he and Holleran are almost certainly of similar mind on the subject.

Holleran says that he is a double believer, as do a growing number of more recent Zen practitioners. His definition, which originated from Paul Knitter, is consistent with Collingwood's. Holleran, like others such as Kennedy,<sup>318</sup> have found that *zazen* practice has deepened their experience of Christianity.

At the end of the interview, Holleran said that all the main faith traditions are moving towards non-duality. However, in Christianity, the very nature of the creature's relationship with God is dualistic.<sup>319</sup> The two beings will always remain distinct, so I think it is unlikely that Christianity will also move in that direction.

#### **4.6 Declan Marmion, S.M.**

*Declan Marmion is Dean of Theology at St. Patrick's College in Kildare, Ireland. His*

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<sup>317</sup> Kennedy (1995), 13.

<sup>318</sup> On page 17 of *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*, Kennedy said that Zen, under the guidance of a teacher, can be integrated into Christian life and serve to deepen Christian prayer.

<sup>319</sup> See *OF*, 14.



area of expertise is mystical theology, particularly that of Karl Rahner (1904-1984). Marmion discusses Rahner's now famous comment that the Christian of tomorrow will either be a mystic or will not exist at all.<sup>320</sup> I chose to interview Marmion because of his knowledge of mystical theology and because of the contribution he could make to answering my query in Chapter Two about community and belonging in the Catholic Church.

### **On mysticism**

“Rahner made his comment (*about the Christian of tomorrow*) during the 1960s, after Vatican II, in an article he wrote on spirituality in the future. This was later included in his 23 ‘Theological Investigations’. What Rahner meant was that he believed Christianity in the future, such as today, would be based on an actual experience of God. Rahner said that mysticism isn’t for the few.<sup>321</sup> He talked a lot about grace and, to him, mysticism was simply God communicating with the soul – something that can be experienced by anyone. God’s communication is a *self*-communication – it is personal and not just the communication of information, facts, propositions and so on.

“Rahner’s comment was a reaction to the indoctrination of faith. Catholics had the intellectual side of faith drummed into them through catechesis but underlying the doctrinal dimension of Christianity was an experience or an encounter with God. I think Rahner would have had a strong affinity with the Orthodox tradition, where we find a sense of transcendent mystery and the awe of God.

### **Theology and spirituality**

“There is an invitation in scripture to ‘come and taste’, ‘come and see’ which illustrates how doctrine and experience go hand in hand. I studied Rahner because of the connection he made between theology and spirituality. Theology without spirituality can become arid and disconnected with life. As theologians we have to be hard-nosed rationalists but we need a deep spirituality, too. All the

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<sup>320</sup> Rahner, K. (1971) ‘Christian Living Formerly and Today’, *Theological Investigations* volume 7 translated by David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder), 15.

<sup>321</sup> Rahner tended not to use the word ‘mysticism’ publicly as it often confused people. He was not, for example, referring to paranormal behaviour.

good theologians in history, such as Augustine, Aquinas and Bonaventure, have also had a strong spirituality.

“In the past, a Catholic’s faith would have been nurtured by their Christian communities and societies. During Rahner’s lifetime, you would have been ostracised in Ireland if you weren’t Catholic but he could see the signs that the day would come when one would no longer be able to rely on this societal support. Rahner believed that the Christian of the future would have to derive his or her faith through an experience of God. Christians would need to get their strength from within, from a prayer life.

### **Christian spirituality**

“One of the differences between Christian spirituality and that of the east<sup>322</sup> is that the latter is less institutional. Christianity places a great deal of emphasis on community, through others and through the Church. That has played a role right from the beginning. At the heart of Christianity is an encounter with God, mediated through Jesus and through the Church. Within the Christian framework (*prayer, the scriptures and sacramental life*), there has to be a Christocentric/communal (*which includes the Trinity*) dimension. If it doesn’t, it’s not Christian.

“Christianity is fundamentally about service, and any spirituality that is overly introspective can lead to a lack of care for those around us. As Catholics, we are required to build up a spiritual society that is fairer and more just, otherwise we could develop a kind of narcissism. Spirituality is more than meditative techniques – it’s about a life of service to others.

“Christianity and prayer have been very focused on me and my relationship with God and that is still prevalent today. We hear people say ‘I don’t need a priest’ and so on, but Christianity is not distinctly personal because we are all connected. Autonomy is all very well but this post-modernism world is very lonely and it’s a dog-eat-dog life.

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<sup>322</sup> Marmion was referring to non-Christian spiritualities that originated in, for example, India, China, Japan and Thailand. He was not talking about the Christian East.

“There has been a revival of people doing the Spiritual Exercises in their daily life because they are not experiencing God in society, nor in the Church nor even in their local parish. There are many Jesuits giving retreats for specific groups of people. A lot of people are searching and they are looking for community, too. For example, why is the Camino so popular today?”

“The Vatican brought out a document some time ago about the new age and within it there was discussion about what we value as Christians and what we can learn from others. We need to be receptive, but, having said that, all religions are not the same. This doesn’t mean we can’t learn from other religions and dialogue with them. Rahner talked about what he called ‘anonymous Christians’. What he was trying to say was that if we look at a Muslim or a Buddhist and see in them Christian aspects we can say that they might not be Christian in name but they are living a very Christian life, and vice versa.

“There are elements in other religions that we can learn from but it doesn’t mean we have to sell our birthright.”

### **Commentary**

Karl Rahner’s prophetic comment about spirituality of the future is extraordinary and foretold of the growing interest today in Christianity’s mystical roots. This interest is reflected in many of the interviews undertaken in my thesis.

As I expected, Marmion discussed various aspects of belonging and community. With declining church attendance, fewer parents sending their children to Catholic schools, multi-cultural neighbourhoods and the break-up of families, it is easy to see how societal support for strengthening faith communities might also be waning. In such a setting, one can understand how an individual’s spirituality might either diminish or strengthen.

Marmion emphasised how important community is to an individual and pointed out the popularity today of the

Camino<sup>323</sup> and special interest retreats. We have a connectedness with others and community is the basis of the Christian faith. During the uncertainty of the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, the connectedness of humanity became extremely apparent. Indeed, advertising slogans said we were 'all in this together'. As the lockdown progressed, people came to realize how much they depended upon the company of others.

The communal aspect of Christianity begins with the Trinity itself and its unique hallmark: three Persons, one God. Marmion reminds us that spirituality without the presence of the Trinity is not Christian. Christian spirituality is saturated with the notion of community. Even private prayer has a community aspect, as outlined in the letter *Orationis Formas*:

...when a Christian prays, even if he is alone, his prayer is in fact always within the framework of the "Communion of Saints" in which and with which he prays, whether in a public and liturgical way or in a private manner. Consequently, it must always be offered within the authentic spirit of the Church at prayer, and therefore under its guidance, which can sometimes take a concrete form in terms of a proven spiritual direction. The Christian, even when he is alone and prays in secret, is conscious that he always prays for the good of the Church in union with Christ, in the Holy Spirit and together with all the Saints.<sup>324</sup>

It is interesting that Marmion said Rahner would have been critical of somebody looking outside the Christian tradition for an experience of the divine. Clearly, Christians do turn to other faiths for a mystical

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<sup>323</sup> In 2019, 347,578 people collected certificates for reaching Santiago de Compostela at the end of the Camino. Most pilgrims arrived on foot. The corresponding number for 2018 is 327,248 and for 2017, 300,883. According to Gali Wonders.com, the opportunity to meet other pilgrims from around the world is one of the top five reasons for walking the Camino de Santiago. See <https://galiwonders.com/en/blog/camino-santiago-statistics-2019/>. Regarding Marmion's comment about retreats, in looking at the website for St Bueno's, a Jesuit spirituality centre in North Wales, the 2020 programme includes individually guided retreats, an art retreat, poetry and prayer retreat, men's online retreat and a retreat focussing on Eve's story. See [www.pathwaystogod.org/org/st-beunos](http://www.pathwaystogod.org/org/st-beunos) [accessed August 3, 2021].

<sup>324</sup> *OF*, 2.7

experience but many of those who have done so are often unaware of its existence within Christianity, too.

#### **4.7 Gregory Mayers, C.Ss.R.**

*Gregory Mayers is a Redemptorist priest who discovered zazen more than four decades ago. He received Dharma transmission in 2010 from his teacher, Willigis Jäger O.S.B., and is a member of the Sanbō Zen tradition. Until recently, he directed the East-West retreat programme at Mercy Center in California. I was particularly interested in hearing about Mayers' experience of belonging as a Catholic and member of the Sanbō Zen sect.*

##### **Introduction to zazen**

“My first experience of *zazen* was in 1978. At the time I was stationed near Seattle and I would occasionally travel to a Trappist monastery in the south of Oregon for a retreat. The abbot visited me every day and would invite me to sit in *zazen* with a small group of monks but I always refused. I thought ‘what did I have to do with all that stuff – I was a good Catholic priest’ but somewhere along the line I agreed and continued with it. I didn’t receive much instruction from the monastery, except to use one of those small prayer benches, but the aim was to eventually sit in the full lotus or half-lotus position.

“Later, when I was on retreat again, the abbot told me that Bob Aitken (*the Zen teacher who co-founded the Honolulu Diamond Sangha in 1959, my italics*) was visiting and would I like to speak with him, so I agreed. Afterwards, I clearly remember thinking that I don’t know what this man has but I want it and it was this encounter that set me on my rather haphazard Zen journey.

“I signed up for some ‘Zen for Christians’ *sesshin* but I walked out of the first two because my back ached and my legs hurt – I was in so much pain. I did eventually get deeper into the practice of *zazen*, but I was dragged, kicking and fighting, the whole way.

“Then I met Willigis Jäger<sup>325</sup> and he led a few *sesshin*. I liked him and we really hit it off. Until that point, the whole Buddhist thing had been foreign to me but I found that Willigis could explain everything to me in western terms without all the Japanese terminology. Willigis was based in Germany but he would travel to the North-West area of the United States and spend about six weeks at a time leading *sesshin* and Christian contemplation, but he never mixed the two. He always kept the two quite separate.

### **Christian contemplative prayer**

“It took me a long time to get to the heart of Christian contemplation and mystical prayer. There is a very rich, mystical current in Christianity that goes way back, before John of the Cross, the *Cloud of the Unknowing*, Meister Eckert and the others. In fact, it goes back to pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>326</sup>

“There is a myth that, if you had led a really good life, God in his infinite mercy might give you the gift of mystical prayer for perhaps 10 minutes before you died. That was a myth perpetuated by people who didn’t understand mysticism.

“We were never told in the Catholic Church how to do contemplative prayer but, when my Zen teacher spoke to me, he was able to give me very specific, practical instructions and guidance on how to do *zazen*. I found Zen to be very practical, very concrete, and I was fortunate to have Willigis Jäger as my teacher.

“Thinking that one empties one’s mind in *zazen* is a big mistake. In *zazen*, you train your mind to become unattached to any type of mental thought, image or picture. We let thoughts pass us by, like a train passing through – we just don’t jump on the train. During *zazen*, there might be a feeling that there is an ‘observer’ but even the one observing our thoughts passes away until there is no observer. The best way that I can describe the state that one reaches in contemplative prayer is ‘absence’. Some people say ‘emptiness’ or ‘nothingness’

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<sup>325</sup> Willigis Jäger O.S.B. (1925-2020) was a German Benedictine monk, Zen master and student of Enomiya-Lassalle.

<sup>326</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius was a Christian monk of circa fifth century, known only by his pseudonym. His writings attempted to unite Neoplatonic philosophy with Christian theology and mystical experience.

but these words are too concrete. We need to drop the 'ness'! It is absence of self – in Zen there is no self, and that's not a metaphysical statement.

"I'm a member of the Sanbō Zen tradition, a westernised Zen sect which draws from both the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* schools. From what I've heard from elders in Sanbō Zen is that Kōun Yamada (*the successor of the sect's founder, Hakuun Yasutani*) was very fond of western thought and culture. He enjoyed receiving western priests and religious who went to him to learn meditation so he put a lot of effort into making them welcome and adapted Zen to their tastes.

"During the very beginning of my interest in contemplative prayer, some doubts arose about Zen. I thought 'how could sitting on a cushion and doing nothing be called prayer'. I wondered what I was doing, as a Catholic, in this non-Christian setting. I never got an answer or a resolution – the doubts just withered away into nothing.

### **Zen Buddhism and Christianity**

"I would say that Zen Buddhism is definitely a religion. All Yamada said on the subject was that Buddhism is a religion and so is Christianity, but Zen – separated from Buddhism – is not. Zen is a practice, and a deeply spiritual one at that. It is not just simply a technique, though. It has a soul and has to go beyond the self. Nonetheless, I don't find any conflict in the practice of Buddhism alongside Christianity.

"The Buddha never presented any type of a god in his teachings, but he did serve the function of a god. There are statues of him that you bow to, for example, and he is an icon of something greater than oneself. No Buddhist, however, would ever agree with that statement!

"I believe that Zen can fit into any faith tradition. In Sanbō Zen, we have people of all faiths and of none. As well as Christians, we have Muslims, atheists, Jews, agnostics ..... Zen grew up in Buddhism and it evolves because it touches some deep human reality that doesn't belong to any specific religion. Zen isn't captive to Buddhism.

“Christianity can learn from Zen by rediscovering and returning to its great mystical roots. Mystical prayer isn’t for special people – it is available to everyone.”

### **Commentary**

Like Holloran, Mayers says that he was never taught Christianity’s contemplative tradition. Mayers highlighted the relative accessibility of Zen when his teacher taught him how to meditate. The westernised nature of the Sanbō Zen sect and its ability to adapt to western thought becomes evident after Mayers meets his teacher, the Benedictine Willigis Jäger. Jäger explained *zazen* to Mayers in western terms, using plain language and without the Japanese terminology that had, until that point, so alienated Mayers.

What I found particularly interesting to hear about Mayers’ teacher was that he was clearly knowledgeable about Christian contemplation and *zazen*, as he had led retreats on both of these, but he refused to mix the two. I believe that most Christian-Zen devotees tend to form a hybrid of the two. I am unsure of what Jäger’s reasons were for the strict separation of Christian contemplation and *zazen*. The only possible reason that comes to mind is that Jäger, in the spirit of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s Letter to the Bishops, felt that mixing the two was “not free of dangers and errors”.<sup>327</sup>

Mayers says that *zazen* is not “captive to Buddhism”, a comment that would resonate with William Johnston who differentiated between Zen Buddhism and simply Zen. In his book *Christian Zen*, Johnston said that Zen Buddhism is a sect founded by the sixth century Bodhidharma, who merged the spirituality of Taoism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

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<sup>327</sup> *OF*, n.12.



Zen, however, said Johnston, simply means meditation and, for that reason, it can be practised alongside any faith.<sup>328</sup> I imagine the issue over whether or not Zen can actually be separated from Buddhism is one of those matters that is argued and debated but will never be resolved.

Mayers says that mystical prayer has a reputation for being reserved for those who are particularly holy but he himself refutes that claim, saying that it is for all people. While some forms of prayer may not necessarily be reserved for those who have made major progress on their journey to perfection, mystical experience is a gift from God and cannot be switched on through the will.<sup>329</sup>

#### **4.8 Kevin McDonald**

*Archbishop Kevin McDonald worked from 1985-1993 at the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. When he returned to England he became a parish priest in Sparkhill, Birmingham, which was populated mostly by Muslims. Because of his experience in Sparkhill, when Kevin McDonald was ordained bishop he was made responsible for relations between the Catholic Church and other religions.*

#### **On the Assisi day of prayer and inter-religious/multi-religious gatherings**

“It was during my time in Rome that Pope John Paul II convened the famous inter-religious day of prayer in Assisi. I would say that some of the most important statements about inter-religious relations, and indeed, inter-religious prayer issued from the things he said before, during and after that meeting. In a speech prior to the meeting, he used the phrase which became, if you like, the watchword for that meeting: “We don’t come to pray together, we come together to pray,” and that was the way everybody understood it.

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<sup>328</sup> Johnston (1997), 33.

<sup>329</sup> Aumann (1980), 332.

“This was not a meeting in which everyone would pray together and so at the Assisi meeting the Christians prayed together while the people of other religions prayed in other places in their own way and there was a kind of general declaration at the end.

“The Assisi Day of Prayer was a ground-breaking event. It caused a lot of comments and concern in some quarters at the time but it was something that Pope John Paul II saw himself as very much as having a responsibility to undertake – an outreach to the whole human community and not just to Catholics and I think that is the context in which we should see it. I would relate it to Pope Francis’s vision of the connectedness between all people. Of course, the background to Pope John Paul’s initiative was *Nostra Aetate*, which enabled us to talk about other religions in an inclusive way, in terms of a connectedness between Christianity and other religions, and not in an adversarial way.<sup>330</sup>

“The document *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*<sup>331</sup> was produced by the Bishops’ Conference to try and promote *Nostra Aetate* and all it stood for in the British situation. It does talk about inter-religious prayer but always recognising that distinction between praying together and coming together to pray. The key word is presence. It opens up the possibility of Christians going to places of worship of other religions and being present in a reverent way and vice versa.

### **On adopting prayer practices from other faiths**

“I did speak to someone who used to be at the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and he said the Council never produced anything on the specific question. (*You mentioned about finding things in other religions attractive, and wanting to engage with them.*) He did refer to a document that I remember the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith produced which he said was extremely

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<sup>330</sup> The Assisi Day of Prayer is briefly referred to in *Dialogue and Proclamation*. Pope John Paul II discussed his thinking on the event to the Cardinals and to the Roman Curia. He pointed out aspects such as the interconnectedness of people and how the Church reflects this connection. He emphasised interreligious dialogue, but balanced this with the Church’s responsibility to proclaim Jesus Christ to all peoples. See *Dialogue and Proclamation*, [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html) [accessed February 26, 2022], n.5.

<sup>331</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (2010) *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger: Fostering Respect and Mutual Understanding Between the Religions*, London, England: Catholic Truth Society.

guarded and against of any idea of praying together. When I looked at your questions, you asked whether if Christians found prayer of other religions 'attractive' what about them joining in with it. I don't think this is about what is or is not "attractive". The key phrase in all of this is *lex orandi (the law of praying)* and *lex credendi (the law of belief)* which, of course, you're very familiar with, and which means that your prayer is an exploration, and an expression, of your faith. It is inextricably bound up in your faith.

"Christians pray to God our Father, through Our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what Christian prayer is. As I said, the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue never broached the specific questions that you raised, but, as you'll find in here (the book *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*) the Church acknowledges the possibility of people being present to each other's prayer and *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger* gives guidelines for this and also about welcoming people on special occasions to Church, to be present at our prayer – but not participating.

### **On *Nostra Aetate* and developing relationships with those of non-Christian faiths**

"*Nostra Aetate* makes a distinction, first of all, between relations with the Jews and all other relations because our relations with the Jews is as a parent religion. Our roots are in Judaism, and we wouldn't exist without Judaism so relations with the Jews is entirely distinctive and specific from the others. There is a connection of a different kind with Islam in virtue of the fact that Jesus and Our Lady are mentioned in the Koran but they are not mentioned in a way that would be recognised by orthodox Christians but there is a connectedness, if you like, within the monotheistic tradition.

"With regard to the eastern religions, the *Dharmic* religions, there is a lot of very positive things that were said in *Nostra Aetate* and also by John Paul II himself, about their spiritual and mystical tradition. The point is made that the Church acknowledges all that is good in them. In fact, in 2014, Cardinal Tauran (1943-2018), who was then the President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, came to England and we visited the Hindu temple in Neasden in North London, the Jain temple at Potters Bar and the Sikhs in Birmingham and the idea

was to talk about the ways in which each religion sees between peace in the world and prayer – so that’s the kind of exploration that the Church has explored.

“There are those, who I’m sure you know about – monastic people – who have gone to India and Japan – people like Henri le Saux and Bede Griffiths – and explored the relationship between Christian prayer and the prayer of other religions. I would also mention one author I am very fond of – William Johnston – and he engaged with a Zen group in Japan so there are those realities as well which are very much personal spiritual journeys. Also, Thomas Merton. There is obviously a lot of interest and respect for what they did and certainly Merton and Johnston have been hugely inspirational to many people. It was very much, for those people, a kind of personal journey.

“William Johnston did his doctorate on the *Cloud of Unknowing*<sup>332</sup> and translated it into English. Obviously, for him and his own journey, the connectedness between the spirituality of the *Cloud* and his experience of Buddhism was very important. People like Bede Griffiths would have things to say about their experience but they are witnessing to their own particular experience. I, as a bishop and former Church official, have not been involved in anything like that so I can only speak about what the Church has said and what the Church teaches.

“The Church teaching is very measured. There are those people who would say that the Church is much too cautious about all of this and there are those in the Church who were not at all sympathetic to *Nostra Aetate*. That’s just the reality of the Church we inhabit today.

### **On presenting a modern image of the Church**

“I think the Church has been very busy presenting a fresh image of itself for the past 100 years. The people who separated from the Church at the time of the Council – I’m thinking particularly of Archbishop Lefebvre<sup>333</sup> – left because the Church, as it emerged from the Council, was unrecognisable to them. It had changed out of all recognition. It all depends upon where you are at.

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<sup>332</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing* was written in Middle English by an anonymous author in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>333</sup> Lefebvre (1905-1991) founded the Society of Saint Pius X in 1970.

“I’m one of those who thinks that the Church has developed organically in fidelity to its teaching and to its mission and has done this in the light of inspirational theologians such as Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) and Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), and others. They have presented a way of understanding the Church which is more inclusive, and I think Pope Francis is very much in that tradition. Developments in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are all organically connected with the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*.

“Pope Francis’s encyclical on the environment was about the connectedness of all nature. His latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, is making the point that he made at the beginning of the pandemic namely that humans are radically united – we are basically all in the same boat. What the Pope is saying is that all life is connected. All life matters. Everybody in the world matters and we should see other people in terms of our connectedness with them.

“I think that vision, that thinking, is very much a development. I think that Catholics in the 1940s and 1950s would not have recognised that kind of breadth of vision. In particular, it has to be seen in relation to the conviction that the Church is the sacrament and instrumental sign of intimate unity with God and unity for the whole human race (LG 1) – the fullness of God’s revelation and God’s truth is to be found in the Catholic Church. As a Catholic, that’s what I believe.

**On dialogue and whether taking part in prayer practices of another faith is required for an effective exchange with its members**

“I don’t agree (*that participating in the prayer practices of another religion is necessary for real dialogue*). I’ve taken part in dialogues with Muslims, for example, in Oman with senior representatives of Islam and Catholics, and it was a very interesting dialogue. For example, the question of conversion came up, which was unintelligible for some of the Muslims. The idea that you join a religion that wasn’t the religion of your clan, your tribe or your family was something beyond their ken.

“You see, we have a great culture of choice in the West but the *Declaration of Religious Freedom* at the Second Vatican Council didn’t make religion a matter of choice. I don’t think religion usually *is* a matter of choice. I mean, Our Lady didn’t

choose to be the mother of God, Moses didn't choose to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, Abraham didn't choose to be the Father of Many Nations. They just consented to being chosen, so I have an issue with this idea of choice. I don't think it's true to say that you can't enter into interreligious dialogue unless you actually "join in". It depends on what you mean by 'join in'. I did, for example, once preach at a synagogue and I had the experience of hearing psalms being sung – I didn't join in because it was in Hebrew! – but there was a kind of participation because their psalms are our psalms but, in any case, the issue for the Jews is different and rather specific. I think in that situation I was caught up in prayer because I was caught up in the psalms in the synagogue. If you're saying that with Buddhists you can't have a genuine dialogue unless you identify with, and join in with, their prayers, I don't see that. There have been all sorts of important inter-religious dialogues that have been very fruitful, in which people have talked about their prayer, talked about how they pray, while acknowledging that the metaphysical and theological context and framework for that prayer is entirely different.

### **On the influence of the local culture on prayer**

"Yes, I think that Johnston bears witness to that (*that the local culture influences prayer*). On this question of connectedness, there are some remarkable passages in *Redemptoris Missio* about people of other religions.

For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated in their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free co-operation.<sup>334</sup>

"So I think the connection you are talking about is there ... it is easier to talk about connection if you are talking about the Holy Spirit. The Church does acknowledge that the Holy Spirit can be at work outside the Church and in the world so I think it's important to acknowledge that. What you're looking at, and I'm not telling you what to say – it's entirely your business – is that the

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<sup>334</sup> *RM*, n. 10.

connection is real but praying together is a problem for the Church, precisely for the reasons I was saying earlier, that prayer is bound up with faith. Now there are some Christians, perhaps evangelical Christians and some Catholics, who would interpret that very strictly in the sense that the only authentic prayer is prayer that explicitly acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord. The Catholic Church, I think has developed, if you like, a more nuanced position, which doesn't deny, of course, that Jesus Christ is Lord and all prayer is by the Holy Spirit but has found ways of some kind of accommodation or inclusion of people of other faiths. Pope John Paul in the Address to the Roman Curia of December 1986 said that "every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit". He saw the Assisi Day as an expression of the "hidden but radical unity" which the Word of God creates among people.

### **On dual belonging**

"It is one thing – and I think William Johnston was a very good example of this – to be a Catholic but be nourished by Zen. It's another thing to say you belong in both camps and I don't think that there is any provision for that in the teaching of the Catholic Church.

"You can well imagine – this hasn't been part of my experience – that William Johnston and other people like that would be on a journey in which questions about their spiritual and religious identity would emerge in a way they haven't for me because I haven't been there and I would have the greatest respect for people like that. I think because these people like Bede Griffiths in his ashram years and Johnston, 40 years in Japan, I mean, I don't feel I'm entitled to adjudicate about their journey. I speak as a person of prayer and a person who has sympathy and interest in the prayer of others but who hasn't ever felt the need for that kind of very direct engagement that they had.

### **On *jukai* and participating in ceremonies of other faiths**

"I think you know when you are straying outside the orbit of your own faith. I have been reading a lot of Cardinal Newman lately and he was a great believer in following your spiritual nose and looking for signs and indications that nourish your mind and your imagination but I think that a committed Christian would

know he is crossing a line or when he is putting himself – or herself – into a situation and adopting a mindset which cannot be recognised as consistent with Christianity. I think there are lines to be drawn. I don't think the Church has gone into that. As I was saying, I was speaking to somebody who used to be on the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue – I explained your interest – and he did say that the Council has not addressed the subject specifically but it's common sense, I think, that you know when you are being asked to adopt assumptions that take you mentally and spiritually outside the sphere of Christianity.

“The actual techniques and the way they are meant to induce peace and, you could say the techniques of breathing, posture, and so on are a different matter so are spiritually neutral.

“There has to be a kind of line because the definition of a Christian is someone who believes that God is our Father, Jesus is Lord and we have all received the Holy Spirit, and that involves belonging to the Church. There does come a point where you either are or aren't. Dual belonging is a rather clumsy way of putting it. I think I would talk more about mutual edification, mutual learning, and things like that.”

### **Commentary**

One of the misunderstandings I have occasionally encountered in connection with the Assisi Day of Prayer is that it was an event in which people of all faiths actually prayed together but this was clearly not the case. McDonald described this event as one in which people 'came together to pray' and not 'came to pray together'. Each faith tradition had their own time of prayer, according to their custom, and there was a reconvening at the end.

McDonald clarified that Christians prayed to God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit and this was a succinct reminder of the essence of Christian prayer.



McDonald discusses some well-known explorations made by Christian monastics to non-Christian countries where prayer was explored and termed these 'personal spiritual journeys'.

He disagrees with any references that the Church fails to keep up with modern trends, saying that it had, in fact, been busy during the past 100 years presenting a fresh image of itself.

McDonald made an important point in that to be nourished by a non-Christian form of prayer, such as *zazen*, is quite different to actually belonging to two faiths.

#### **4.9 Marlene Milasus, O.S.B.**

*Marlene Milasus O.S.B. is a professed member of St. Walburga Monastery in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She is a Board member of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID), a national organisation established to foster relations between the monastic traditions of Christianity and with those of other religions, particularly Buddhism. I interviewed Milasus because I had some queries about interfaith dialogue and whether it necessarily involved participating in non-Christian meditation.*

#### **Eastern, non-Christian traditions**

"In my experience, it's not necessary to have a kind of in-the-same-room meditation to dialogue with people of a non-Christian faith. My impression of their practice is that it's the cumulative result of a long period, just as Christian practice is. I cannot imagine that anyone can just jump into another tradition's practice.

"I started reading from the eastern traditions in college, and it intensified during my novice year in the monastery and has continued off and on through the years. In my limited view, reading and coming to understand other traditions gave me an appreciation of both the similarities and the differences, probably beginning on a conceptual level but later moving beyond. When I've needed strengthening of whatever kind in my life, the eastern traditions sometimes have been a huge

help, precisely because they often do the same things we do but in a different way. It doesn't move me away from my Christian tradition but enriches it.

### **Christian contemplative prayer**

"When you get to the heart of contemplative prayer, there is a similarity with other faiths, there is a blending. We're all climbing different ladders but as you get to the top, we get closer to each other. For example, if you look at Christian writings on dealing with the false self and then you look at the four noble truths, there are parallels. I remember once reading about a Zen master who, after hearing Paul's words in Philippians 2:6-22<sup>335</sup> commented that the author of that passage knew *satori*. So, the traditions do meet as we climb our various ladders. I would want to say that they meet in Christ.

"Obviously, for Christians, our meditation is not about emptiness so much as the presence of God within us. In approaching that presence and spending time in that presence, you let other thoughts go, even holy thoughts, because words and concepts about God are just that – snapshots and photos. The presence of God, however, is different. It's like having a photo of someone you love on your desk is not the same as actually being with them. That is where the commonality is.

### **Letting go**

"In both types of meditation, (*Christian and Zen*) it is about letting go of the ego, or the antics of the ego, which plays all kinds of games within us. There is a similarity there with centering prayer, made famous by the Trappist monk Thomas Keating. Our prayer is not about obliterating the self but letting go of anything that is not God. There are two approaches to God, the cataphatic (using language to describe what God is thought to be) and the apophatic (the letting go

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<sup>335</sup> "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father". Phil 2:6-22.

of language to describe God and surrendering to the fact that God transcends whatever we say about Him). In Zen, we are sharing the apophatic approach. Language is a pointer, but the divine reality is beyond ideas and words. This is why mystics so often had a hard time and were condemned or at least squelched. They're stuck with the same language as everyone else, and they are trying to express an experience that is beyond language. We need words and ideas for God, but at the same time, God is completely beyond anything we can say or think.

“In thinking about different spiritualities, they are like other old testaments. There is only one God, and we all have that same desire within us, that “God-shaped hole”, as someone once said, no matter what our culture or tradition. “There are some quarters of the Church who would say that Zen is not in keeping with Catholic teaching, but it just depends upon who you are talking to. I think that Pope Francis would be very amenable to contemplative prayer. Pope Paul VI certainly asked for an opening up of dialogue. If you read Zen stuff and our contemplative stuff, along with the mothers and fathers of the desert, there is not much difference. If you look at the *Cloud of Unknowing*, it is beyond concepts, beyond knowing. It is the same with the spirituality of John of the Cross particularly, and Teresa of Avila to a lesser extent. There is the recognition that, in your prayer life, words don't always help you and you have to let go of thinking.

“I think we learn from one another. As a Christian monastic, I can't let go of the tradition I'm part of but I think we can share our practices. It seems to me that this is something that can be done as long as you remain within your own tradition. I think the more that we talk about what we do, the more we see the commonalities and they are a lot more numerous than the differences. For the Christian, Jesus Christ is the goal of all spiritual journeys but we're now seeing this porousness of boundaries that were once solid and it often takes institutions a while to catch up with that.”

### **Commentary**

In my reading and interviews on Zen-Christian dialogue, I

have noticed the emergence of two different approaches. The first is a type of dialogue where people of different faiths learn about each other through discussion and sharing information. There is another type of dialogue where people actually experience elements of another religion. Most, but not all, of the references to dialogue in this chapter are about this second type of dialogue.

Professor of sociology and religion at Middlebury College in Vermont E. Burke Rochford, Jr. recognised the two main types of dialogue years ago and, to remove any ambiguity, articulated two phrases: interfaith dialogue and interfaith encounter.

I see interfaith dialogue as an attempt to build empathetic *understanding* of a religious “other”. It is a form of mutual exchange that favours a stance of “objective distancing”. Interfaith encounter, on the other hand, leaves open the possibility of *personal* change and transformation. The encounter of faith different from one’s own means to engage actively in portions of its theology, morals, ethics, or practices.<sup>336</sup>

The reason I raise the issue of interfaith dialogue/interfaith encounter now is that my observations came to light just before my interview with Milasus, a member of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue. The first question I asked Milasus was whether effective dialogue with members of non-Christian faiths depends upon actually meditating with them. Milasus does not believe it is absolutely necessary. Milasus makes an important point in saying that you can’t simply jump headlong into another faith tradition’s practice, and that – as with Christian prayer – it develops over time. However, she does appear to be receptive to Catholics sharing

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<sup>336</sup> E. Burke Rochford, Jr. (2003) ‘Interfaith Encounter and Religious Encounter: Societal Observations and Reflections’, *Beside Still Waters*, edited by Kasimow, H., et al, Massachusetts, United States of America: Wisdom Publications, 218.

practices provided they remain within their tradition. Milasus did not elaborate on what lay behind her comment 'remain within their tradition' but it might perhaps be connected with syncretism or multiple belonging.

Milasus believes that, over the decades, the boundaries that separated religions are becoming less concrete. She has observed that the more Christians learn about other faiths, the similarities outnumber the contrasts. In fact, there are times during her life when the eastern (non-Christian) traditions have been a source of emotional support.

Milasus, like many of the people I interviewed in this chapter talked at length about Christianity's contemplative tradition and its similarity to *zazen*. Individual churches can meet this longing for silence by, perhaps, considering running a short series on contemplative prayer.

#### **4.10 "Myotai"**

*My next interviewee is 'Myotai' (her Dharma name), who became interested in Zen Buddhism when she was living in Tokyo during the early 1990s, and was later ordained as an Anglican priest. Myotai has received *jukai* in the White Plum and, at the time of this interview (2021), was due to receive Dharma transmission the following year. I chose to interview Myotai because discovering Zen not only enabled her to connect Christianity's contemplative roots but helped her remain a Christian.*

#### **Christian contemplative prayer**

"Discovering the Christian contemplative tradition was the beginning of the journey for me. I was doing Masters work at Oxford University many years ago and technically I was doing classical philosophy but I found myself being asked to read some early church documents and, in doing so, I stumbled upon Gregory of

Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor and discovered the Christian apophatic, Neoplatonist tradition. I had had no idea it was there – it's completely transformed my juvenile Christian faith. I don't think I would have remained a Christian had I not made that discovery. It was the turning point of my life, but Oxford University being the kind of place it is, I discovered it all in text and didn't know of anybody for whom it was a living tradition.

"I was once talking to some people and I asked if there was anybody who actually does this stuff in the church and they really unhelpfully said: "Well you could go to the monks of Mount Athos but of course you can't because you're the wrong gender". So there was this rumour of an esoteric Christian tradition that was blocked to me!

### **Discovery of Zen Buddhism**

"Then I found myself in Tokyo and when in Tokyo you learn about Zen. I heard that there was this fabulous Zen master in town, Gudō Wafu Nishijina, and he was teaching in English so I went along and it was interesting, compellingly interesting. I thought my gosh this is the living wisdom tradition and it is not the same thing as those ancient Christians but it is much closer than anything else and it was just extraordinary to find it. So then I had this living practice and it was only later that I discovered that there are actually people and Christian communities that are practising in the apophatic, contemplative way.

"If I hadn't gone to Japan and if I had grown up in a different kind of Christian context, Zen wouldn't be part of my life but I did and I fell in love with it and I'm not going to drop it. I am fascinated by the number of people who say the same thing.

"In Tokyo, I had met Mike Luetchford (*who has been interviewed in Chapter Five of this thesis*) and shortly after I returned to England, he did, too. Mike was in Bristol in the Dōgen Sangha and I was too far away to sit with him every week, and I also had young children. When I had a Sunday off parenting, which was about twice a

year, I'd pelt down to Mike as he did a once-a-month *zazenkai*.<sup>337</sup> I'd plonk myself down on the mat, have a fabulous day and then hurtle back.

### **Introduction to White Plum**

"At one stage, somebody asked me if I'd seen that there was a Zen teacher in town. I was teaching in a sixth form college at the time so I thought if there is this guy in town I had better go and check him out in case my students wanted to go and see him. The Zen teacher was a Catholic priest and he, like Mike, was extremely generous and invited me to come and sit with him. I initially went to sit with him thinking he would be a poor substitute for Mike because I like the way he does things and I like the way the Dōgen Sangha does things. If Mike had been living nearer to me I would have been sitting with him but Mike wasn't even close and then he moved to London, which was even further away, so I was sitting with one teacher but doing *sesshin* occasionally with Mike.

"Gradually, I found myself spending more and more time supporting people in the White Plum and I just thought Mike's a long way away and there was a White Plum *sangha* that was closer. It wasn't like with a Christian church, where there are 10 within driving range, and you choose the one you like. I don't think many of us really choose the *sangha* – if we are in a western context, we take the *sangha* that's available.

"The White Plum has a large number of people and a much stronger network of support and collegiality. I think some of us in the White Plum are there because of that, because it's there, and that's a good thing. It's preferable to going around looking at which flavour of Zen is ideologically purest, or whatever. In White Plum, it's easier to find a network, it's easier to find a teacher, it's easier to find a community and therefore it's got a self-reinforcing energy.

### **Taking *jukai***

"I have taken *jukai* in the White Plum. It is traditional to sew your own *rakusu*<sup>338</sup> for the ceremony. Well, my needlework is so bad that I was thrown out of sewing class at three separate schools! There was I, trying to sew this *rakusu*, swearing,

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<sup>337</sup> A *sesshin* conducted within a short period of time, often a day.

<sup>338</sup> This is a garment won over the head, usually sewn by the *jukai* recipient and traditionally signed on the reverse by one's teacher.

cursing, and making terrible, terrible jokes to myself about attachment and non-attachment. I made my *rakusu* out of the same bolt of black cloth that my clergy shirts are made out of. I took the offcuts and made them into my *rakusu*, and there was something very powerful for me in doing that.

“I’m receiving *Dharma* transmission next year, which morally places obligations on the recipient. The ceremony itself spells out the obligation, which is to stand in the line of transmission.

“I don’t find the phrase ‘dual believer’ remotely helpful as it comes with pre-suppositions, most of which I want to challenge.<sup>339</sup> Having said that, I have written material as a dual believer because I was asked to do so. I’ll wear the badge of a dual believer for somebody if that’s a helpful thing for me to do and if that puts me in a category that’s helpful for the person to understand.

### **Zazen and Christian prayer**

I teach prayer and have a lot to say on the subject. One of the things I want to do when I teach prayer is to distinguish between particular prayer practices and prayer itself so particular prayer practice might be the rosary, the Our Father, lectio divina, meditating with icons and so on. Prayer itself, I want to argue, is a disposition of being in communion with God. If I were to say to you, tell me about your communication with your husband, you might say something to me about how you speak to one another but that wouldn’t be all of the communication, would it, because in some ways you are in communication with him even though you might not be actually talking with him at the moment and you are sharing space within the space of a larger commitment, and are available to one another.

“When I talk to my students about Christian prayer, I want to take them back to praying without ceasing, and I ask them what it means to pray without ceasing. Well, it certainly wouldn’t be talking without stopping, would it? I would say my availability to God sits very comfortably with my practice of *zazen* in exactly the same way that it sits comfortably with my practice of doing the laundry. When I’m doing the laundry, I am not talking to God and when I’m on the cushion I’m

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<sup>339</sup> My interviewee, Ellen Birx (see Chapter Four, section 4.2) also dislikes the phrase ‘dual believer’, preferring the term ‘inter-spiritual practice’.



not talking to God but I've not stopped being available to God and I haven't shut the door and said I'm not going to be available for a while because I'm doing something else.

"If I was asked what the relationship is between Christian prayer and *zazen*, I would say that, in the context of this conversation, we are talking about a practice and it's just one of the things I do to pray without ceasing. I could also turn that around and say the same sort of thing about *zazen*, not as a particular practice, but as a kind of ceaseless availability.

"Buddhism has made spirituality accessible to me in a way nothing else ever had. And then once I had found Buddhism I found a way to the Christianity that was my cultural inheritance that I had never known had anything living in it. I have met quite a few people for whom Buddhism, and Zen in particular, has been a kind of foster parent and just enabled them to get to a place where they could stand, and from that place see something in Christianity that they hadn't known was there. It's not the case for me but these people, having found their way back to Christianity, don't keep up their Zen practice. I now teach Buddhism to Buddhists. I think it is an extraordinary testimony to the generosity of the Buddhist tradition that they can ask someone who is a Christian priest to teach them Buddhism. What Christian would ask a Muslim to teach them Christianity? The amazing thing about the White Plum, in particular, is this extraordinary hospitality it has that says you may be wearing the collar of Christ but we believe you have the integrity to teach us our tradition. That's wonderful. I love it when I'm asked to teach Buddhism to people who just want to know about Buddhism but if Christians say they want to know about Buddhism, I love that just as much, to be able to make Buddhism available to people within our own tradition and to teach them some of its joys and glories. Some of the ridiculous orientalisising that goes on is just projection, I mean, there are as many murderers in the Buddhist tradition as there are in any other. Its texts are as culturally conditioned and open to abuse as any other faith's text, but it's a living wisdom tradition and it's beautiful."

### **Commentary**

An issue that has come to light is the obligation that

*Dharma* transmission places upon the recipient. This has not only been raised by Myotai but other interviewees have also discussed this, not as a negative point, but matter of factly. To recapitulate this obligation, *Dharma* transmission appears to require that the recipient pass on *Dharma* to other *zazen* practitioners to ensure continuation of the lineage.

Myotai does not like being cast as a dual believer, which is not surprising, as I believe she does not like being labelled. She feels that the term 'dual believer' brings with it pre-suppositions that Myotai challenges but concedes that some people find labels helpful.

Myotai may have been as comfortable joining the *Sōtō* Zen tradition as she was with the White Plum. In my experience of conducting interviews with Christians who practise *zazen*, however, most belong to one of the contemporary schools. This is not an absolute rule of thumb, and I am sure there are exceptions, but this is my experience. A possible reason for this is that the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* traditions - the two remaining schools from the Five Houses of Chan<sup>340</sup> - are probably more likely to retain a more overtly Buddhist culture. It could be challenging for a Christian belonging to a *Sōtō* or *Rinzai* *sangha* to extract the *zazen* element and not adopt the rest of the teaching and associated practices.

#### **4.11 Migaku Sato**

*Migaku Sato is a New Testament scholar, former professor of Christian theology at Tokyo's Rikkyo University and Zen master in the Sanbō Zen tradition. He first encountered Zen in Switzerland in March 1982 when he was in the country writing*

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<sup>340</sup> The Five Houses of *Chan* were the major schools of Zen that arose during the Tang dynasty (618-906). Only two of those 'houses' still survive: 'Lin Chi' (Japanese *Rinzai*) and *Ts'ao-tung* (Japanese 'Sōtō').

a dissertation. While there, he met German Jesuit priest Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle (1898-1990) and joined a sesshin he was running. Sato continued to practise zazen and now divides his time between Japan and Germany, where he runs a zendo<sup>341</sup> and holds zazenkaï<sup>342</sup> and sesshin.<sup>343</sup> At the time of this interview, Sato was in Germany. I interviewed Sato because I had some questions about the growth in the popularity of contemporary expressions of Zen Buddhism, particularly among Catholics, and possible reasons for this.

### **Zen Buddhist or Christian?**

“When you practise *zazen* seriously your concept of life changes radically – it is not so meaningful to opt between the two, either Christian or Zen, because those are concepts. When you do *zazen*, you go into – the way I prefer to term – the anthropological depth of your identity, but if you ask me that question (*for example, whether Zen Buddhist or Christian*), I would probably say ‘neither/nor’ or both/and. There is this depth of anthropological truth that opens up in Zen, which is probably my standpoint now. Zen Buddhism and Christianity can both have a solid, deep background of what a human being actually is. However, I still feel a very strong bond to Jesus so you can call me a Christian.

### **Composition of Sanbō Zen**

“The majority of those in Sanbō Zen are westerners – there are about 1000 members of Sanbō Zen, and there are a lot more who practise but aren’t members. You can start practising Zen without becoming a member. About 700 people are non-Japanese – I wouldn’t say westerners because there are people in the Philippines, Singapore, Australia and so on but there are many western people. About 300 are Japanese. These days, membership is diverse. I wouldn’t say the majority are Christian, but then I wonder how many people *would* say “I am a Christian”. Maybe 20 or 30 years ago there were more people who said they are a Christian doing *zazen*.

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<sup>341</sup> Meditation hall where *zazen* is carried out.

<sup>342</sup> *Zazenkaï* is a short meditation retreat, often held within a single day.

<sup>343</sup> *Sesshin* is a several-day long, intensive meditation course.

### **On the decline of Christianity in continental Europe**

“On the European continent, the situation is a little different than in England, I think. Here (*the European continent*), the spiritual influence of Christianity has become flattened. There is very little spiritual leadership, especially in Germany, and maybe in other parts of Europe, too. Many of the people who have lost their hope in Christianity are practising *zazen* these days. Twenty years ago, it was different. Zen practice was a kind of complement to what was lacking in Christianity.

“Today, many people are away from the Church and they don’t believe in theology but they feel that *zazen* provides some very important basis for their lives. I think that’s the common denominator for many people who are practising Zen these days, especially in the West. While not negating their roots in Christianity, many people have lost confidence in Christianity and more strongly than in England, I feel. In England, I wouldn’t necessarily stress Catholicism. The Anglican Church is also enjoying a strong presence in England in the way people live their life. You can’t live in England without noticing the positive presence of the Church, whether it is Anglican or Catholic, but here in Germany the situation is quite different and secularisation has done so much. There is very little interest in church life, but the holidays of course are still recognised!

“In the 1970s or 1980s, Fr. Enomiya-Lassalle carried out so many *sesshin* in Germany within the framework of the Catholic Church. About one half of the people were Catholic but since that time we have seen a huge decline, a radical decline, of the Catholic Church but this Zen movement survived ....First there were Catholic people practising Zen and then there were other people practising Zen, and they were side by side in terms of numbers, but Zen remained intact, or became more present than before, but Catholicism didn’t.

“I wouldn’t say there is no interest at all in Christianity (*in Germany*) but there is a serious decline. If you go to church on Sundays you see that – the number of church goers has radically diminished but I still think that, ethically, Christianity plays a huge role in Germany, too. This orientation of being committed in society, being committed in human relationships around you and responsibility in society

in human circles – I think that is still there. It is obviously the most powerful legacy of Christianity. But Christianity as a salvation religion has almost gone.

“Christianity has this code of language that Jesus Christ was crucified on the Cross for the sins of humanity but how many people do actually believe that? You are a theologian, too, right, so you can evaluate that statement – how many Christians say ‘I’m saved’? I think it’s extremely scarce these days. Many people in England, Italy and France go to church because it has other functions, too, it’s where people socialise, they are recognised and acknowledged by groups of people so that function still remains, but salvation?

### ***Zazen and anxiety***

“Another side to salvation is that people have anxiety and there is fear in life. How do people cope with that anxiety? Of course, you can go to psychologists and doctors but the deepest problem in life, anxiety of being, cannot be solved through *ad hoc* treatments. And some of those people who have lost hope come to *zazen*.

“In my circle, the main reason why people come to *zazen* is this type of anxiety. Something in life is lacking, and this lack of something causes anxiety, a feeling of not being fulfilled in life. This lack cannot be refilled with any other activities such as going on vacation, becoming richer, getting a better job or being recognised by society. People have grown very keenly in their observation of where this anxiety comes from and without being able to pinpoint it they sense that, in order to get an answer, I have to do something with my own existence, not simply learn something. Then Zen comes up as a very powerful opportunity because you can read about Zen and what these old masters say – well, it is good to have something and it’s something I want to taste myself so you do it but it’s not because you want to become a monk or learn something cultural. These are minor points. The main thing is to find out what you really are – that is the main point of Zen.

### **On the doctrine of salvation**

“I feel that the slow decline in western spirituality or western civilisation has a lot to do with this acceptance of Zen. The decline has taken place, not because of

Zen, but through this whole set up of human beings – this intellectualisation which has been carried out to such an extent. We now know so many things about medicine, the world, the cosmos and this has destroyed the doctrine of salvation that is especially preserved in church. It is very rare for me to hear someone say: “I am saved through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the resurrection thereafter”. Who could ever say that with confidence in today’s world among Christians? This lack of something in Christianity – that was part of the motive of Fr. Enomiya-Lassalle introducing Zen to the Catholic Church in Germany, which at first seemed like something so irrelevant and so totally irrational, soon found a very solid acceptance within the Catholic Church and the Catholic Church welcomed it and many serious Catholics accepted Zen training because that filled this lack of something vivid inside.

“This was about 1980s or 1990s. From 2000 onward, the situation has become a whole lot different from the time of Fr. Enomiya-Lassalle. People were more exasperated, more disappointed, in the Church teachings, in the Church doctrine. Fewer people were going to church until now, these days, many church buildings are empty. Many dioceses are closed or being rationalised. In fact, there are hardly any people who are becoming priests and pastors and hardly any people coming to church. In Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, if you wanted to become a priest you were a high-level person in society but now, if you say you want to study theology, people say ‘what’? In the so-called First World, it is a common phenomenon that Christianity is losing very rapidly its social relevance.

“I think one very interesting factor in this entire movement of Zen is an *experiential* understanding of reality among practitioners. That is, what they are doing is beyond so-called religion. In religion you usually have to commit yourself to a system of beliefs, a system of doctrines that you believe are right, and believing acceptance, that is the alpha and omega in Christianity. But those who are practising Zen is something different from being Christian in this belief system. It is something that you experience with your mind and body, something that you experience in the depth of your existence, apart from the belief system. You can drink coffee and you know what it is and the taste has nothing to do with Christianity or Buddhism or Islam or whatever.

“Christian wisdom, enriched through self-critical eyes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, has prepared this widening of the Zen movement, not simply Sanbō Zen. Sanbō Zen probably says this mostly clearly but other schools that have spread themselves in the West somehow profess this human-oriented understanding. Doing *zazen* is free for all people of all religions and without religion. It is a question of your being a human. It is a question of delving deep into your own self, your own existence. It is not about using your intellect or interest but using your meditative faculty, which is built within yourself, as the DNA of human existence, which has not been exploited up to this point in Christianity or any European spiritual movement, apart from some extreme exceptions.

“There are people who say I am a Christian and don’t go to church but they practise *zazen* every day. There is, however, a tiny, elite minority of *zazen* practitioners who say, consciously, I am a Christian but I would like to understand Christianity in a totally new way, not professed in Christianity up until now. Maybe this is a latent sign that something entirely new is coming up.

### **On *jukai***

“In Sanbō Zen, *jukai* has a different colour. Normally, *jukai* is understood as a kind of Buddhist baptism in which you become “Buddhist” and you stay with it, as a confession. In Sanbō Zen, we understand this particular term *jukai* in a very fundamental and original way – original, in a sense that it is the very beginning. We understand *jukai* as your self-expression of readiness and of commitment to engage in this practice.

“Zen practice has nothing to do with whether you are Catholic or Protestant or Muslim or non-believer or whatever. If you are ready to commit yourself to this practice of *zazen*, and if you want to make this promise to yourself, then you can receive *jukai*. Some Catholic people within Sanbō Zen had, in fact, difficulty with this understanding and they have actually left. That is part of our history, too. For those people, *jukai* did seem like a Buddhist baptism and felt that a Christian could not take part. No, we are not doing it for a Buddhist baptism or anything like that, and we have explained this many, many times but they had difficulties with it and left Sanbō Zen. One clarity, and a strong point in Sanbō Zen, is that Zen

practice is free from your religious confession and that's why this position has prospered all over Europe and all over America.

“Sanbō Zen, historically speaking, belongs to the “Harada-Yasutani”-Line of Zen. “Harada” is Sogaku Harada *Rōshi* (1871-1961), who, as a *Sōtō* priest, dared to go to *Rinzai* masters to practise Zen for enlightenment, and “Yasutani” is Yasutani Haku'un *Rōshi* (1885-1973), his main successor, who above all started Sanbō Zen. If I also include the White Plum Sanga (which started with a disciple of Yasutani Haku'un *Rōshi* – independent from Sanbō Zen) and Sanbō Zen-related people, I think that, roughly speaking, at least a half of all people practising *zazen* in the West are affiliated with this Line.

### **Presence of *Rinzai* and *Sōtō***

“The *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* people are also practising *zazen* in Europe and in America, of course, but their main concern is to stay *in* Buddhism, to stay in their *Rinzai* tradition or their *Sōtō* tradition in Japan. Really, the people in the *Rinzai* do not think about authorising, for example, European “Zen masters” to be totally free to go and not only practise *zazen* but also to foster their successors (with the so-called “*kōan*-schooling”).<sup>344</sup> I've never seen it. They must come back to Japan, or go to Japan, and they must be acknowledged in Japan. They cannot belong to an independent school in Europe. I've never witnessed this in Europe.<sup>345</sup> In *Sōtō*, it may be a little different because they don't have any *kōan* schooling. You sit and you practise these Buddhist rites and if you are well versed in them, you can be a *Dharma* heir. It is, if I dare say, rather easy. But in *Rinzai*, it is difficult because in the schooling there is a large set of *kōan*, originally in Chinese or Japanese, that you must complete to be a legitimate master. To do that in Europe and America it is extremely difficult. I don't think that *Rinzai* people are prepared for it – unless

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<sup>344</sup> This learning process involves tackling riddles called *kōan* that cannot be solved through the use of intellect but only through experiential awakening or intuition. It is a core *Rinzai* activity as well as the central Sanbō Zen method.

<sup>345</sup> Sato is correct in saying that foreigners find becoming a *Rinzai*-certificated monk difficult because of obstacles such as the language and having to complete *koan* schooling. Consequently, there are few *Rinzai* temples outside of Japan, but Korinji in Wisconsin is one of them. I interviewed Meido Moore, the abbot, and he spoke briefly about *Rinzai* in the United States. See Chapter Five, section four.



the practitioners go to Japan, you speak Japanese and you become a *Rinzai* monk like Thomas Kirchner.<sup>346</sup> Then you can do it.

### **Commentary**

I was pleased that Sato agreed to an interview because of his eminent position and academic knowledge in both the Christian and Zen Buddhist arenas. He raised several perspectives of *zazen*, some that I had not encountered before, and think it important to expound upon these.

The first issue that I would like to raise from Sato's testimony is the point he made about the enlightenment - or intellectualisation, as he called it - being responsible for the widespread collapse in the belief among Christians of salvation through Jesus Christ. This is an interesting point and one that I have heard before but, nevertheless, hearing it again still startled me.

Sato painted a bleak picture of Christianity on the European continent. I was aware that Christianity had declined considerably in England, but Sato explained that this country still enjoyed a Christian presence and there is evidence of its Christian heritage. This is in stark contrast to, for example, Germany (where Sato runs a *sangha*), which shows few signs of spiritual leadership. Sato did admit, however, that while church membership is in serious decline in Germany, Christianity still plays a role there when it comes to making decisions that involve one's conscience and in building relationships.

Sato also pointed out that Christians who still attend church regularly often do so because it fulfils certain needs in people, such as being part of a community and having a role within that community. Sato believes that, today, it is rare to find someone who attends Mass or

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<sup>346</sup> The *Rinzai* Zen monk Thomas Kirchner has been interviewed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

other church service because they believe in salvation in Jesus Christ.

Sato explained that receiving *jukai* in **Sanbō** Zen has a slightly different emphasis than in some of the other contemporary schools. In **Sanbō** Zen, receiving *jukai* simply indicates that a *sangha* member is ready to make a personal commitment to the practice of *zazen*. Sato did admit, however that some Catholic members within Sanbō Zen left because they saw *jukai* as an initiation into Zen Buddhism and they were uncomfortable with this.

Sato explained some important points about the expansion of the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* movements outside of Japan and why the growth of these two traditional Zen Buddhist schools (particularly *Rinzai*) is limited. Unlike Sanbō Zen and other contemporary Zen Buddhist sects, *Sōtō* and particularly *Rinzai* communities around the world are attached to temples within Japan. These are in control of any long-term, strategic plans to expand their presence outside of the country.

#### **4.12 Madeleine Tacy, O.P.**

*Madeleine Tacy is a Dominican sister who was attracted to zazen more than 40 years ago. She spent almost 20 years practising zazen alone before finding a teacher, a Trappist monk. She received jukai in July 2018 and Dharma transmission in the White Plum tradition in September 2018. I interviewed Tacy because I was interested in learning more from her about living in the present moment and some of the contrasts between Zen Buddhism and Catholicism.*

#### **Zen Mountain Monastery**

“I spent two months at Zen Mountain Monastery when I was on sabbatical towards the end of the last century and the teacher there, John Daido Looi

(1931-2009), was very helpful. He wasn't interested in people becoming Buddhists – he was just interested that they were faithful to their practice, and he was a good example.

“The whole issue of God came up while I was there (*at Zen Mountain Monastery*), and Looi told me the Buddha didn't say anything about God. It was a non-issue. He was concerned about something else. Some branches of Buddhism treat the Buddha as God and some don't. Zen does not. You can get all excited about Mozart and the music he produced but it doesn't mean people worship him. The reverence that you see Zen Buddhists pay to the Buddha is for the teachings, not because he is divine.

“Harada *Rōshi* (1940-), the Zen master who started Sanbokyodan,<sup>347</sup> had a lot of western pupils and he wasn't interested in them becoming Buddhists. He wanted them to become better Christians.

### ***Jukai***

“I have been given the precepts in the White Plum so have taken part in a *jukai* ceremony. I am now a teacher. I have a *rakusu*, which I wear when I am sitting and when I am teaching. There are 16 precepts altogether and many of them pair up with the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments.

“Zen itself, the discipline, is a way to view the world. It's how you become an upright person in the world and how you live as one in the world, and you can't do that unless you know who you are. Zen is very intentional about helping you come to realise who you are but it doesn't have the onus of, shall we say, when you 'step off the line,' that you've sinned in the sense that Christianity does.

### **Non-virtue**

“No matter what Christianity says it is still very dualistic. I'm reading a book right now that uses the term 'non-virtue' to describe those occasions when things go wrong and we do things that are hurtful to ourselves and hurtful to others. They do not call it sin because sin carries with it a whole lot of negative baggage. It's

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<sup>347</sup> Renamed Sanbō Zen in 2014.

got hundreds of years of baggage of who we are emotionally and who we are physically. The teaching in Zen doesn't have that kind of baggage.

"It's the baggage that's the problem in Christianity ... for example, somebody might be angry all the time and their whole body exudes anger. Within Christianity, and in Catholicism, that would be looked at as one of the capital sins, which is the root for other bad things in your life. In Zen, it would be looked upon that, yes, you are angry, but the question becomes where does the anger come from? In Zen you would be told to sit with the anger to see what it really is so that it no longer controls you.

"This is a personal gripe .... You can tell a lot about people by the way they open and close doors. You have people who come in and they are very respectful of the door, and then you have people who come in and slam it, for no reason at all and that's like everything they do in life. In his rule, St Benedict tells his monks to treat their tools the same way they treat sacred vessels for the mass. We've lost this. What Zen does is to help you live in the now and be respectful of what you are doing. Zen becomes a way of life and informs whatever you do.

"Zen looks at all those things that we might call sin – things that belong to us, that stand in the way and control our actions. For example, if I am controlled by my greed, how do I work it out in my life. Zen would say sit with the greed and see where it comes from. It takes the burden off it and means you don't have to be greedy anymore because you have made friends with it and you accept it for what it is. You can put it down and go on with your life. The more you push at something the more it's going to push back at you.

"For a graduate degree I went to a Baptist/Congregationalist seminary. One of the teachers was talking about sin or something but I always remember the example he gave. He said in his tradition – I think he was Congregationalist – the mirror is broken and it can never be repaired so you will always get a fractured picture. In Catholicism, he said, the mirror is dirty but you can clean it up so that you have a reflection of God. I always remember that. It was an interesting example which you can trace all the way back to Augustine. The reformers took it and turned it into pre-destination and it was all downhill after that.

“Zen Buddhism has a ritual to ask forgiveness or make amends. Since there is no deity in Zen Buddhism, the idea of forgiveness of sin is foreign to the practice so to make a comparison is not possible. There is, however, a sense of being connected to all beings and a need to maintain that connection.

### **Christian meditation and *zazen***

“A big difference between Christian meditation and *zazen* is that in the first type your mind is going all the time but when you sit in *zazen* you sit to be quiet. Everything is going to run through your head. You are going to have distractions and things get stirred up emotionally. I think it was Suzuki<sup>348</sup> who said just because you have distractions it doesn’t mean you have to invite them in and serve them tea. We have a choice about distractions and whether we just acknowledge their presence and then go back to being focussed on right now. It sounds very simple to say sit down and be quiet, until you try to do it. That’s what the whole process is. Sitting down means I have to make room in my schedule to do it. Being quiet means you have to let go – but not repress – all the stuff that goes on and wanders around in your mind all the time, and then you have to listen.

### **The present moment**

“Meditation<sup>349</sup> has helped me with focussing on being in the present, because that’s all we’ve got. You can’t go back and fix yesterday – you might want to but you can’t. We can plan for the future, but we have no control over what happens. The only thing we’ve got is right now.

“When you live in the ‘now moment,’ you’re more present to people and you’re more present to what’s going on now. Here’s a mundane example. Everybody has stuff they have to do – the laundry, cleaning, tidying your desk and all of those everyday things. Many times what happens is, especially if you live in a family, you run through why do I have to do this again when he or she or the kids are old enough to pick up after themselves. I have to clear away the dishes again after

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<sup>348</sup> Tacy is referring to Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (1860-1966), the famous Zen master who was instrumental in bringing Zen Buddhism to the West.

<sup>349</sup> Tacy is referring to *zazen*.

telling the children how many times to put them in the dishwasher. You can approach that with thinking you are being put upon and being used, and feel upset and angry underneath. This is a great waste of energy. If you are living in the present moment and working out what is going on, you don't make a judgement, it's just a task that needs to be done. You might need to talk with the child later on, that you're part of the household and that your actions are affecting other people, but that's another conversation.

"Sometimes people's prayer time and their normal life don't intersect. For me, Zen has helped to provide a way to integrate things that are already in Christianity but don't get talked about. They get talked about (*in Christianity*) in the sense of you'll do this and you won't do that but they don't get talked about in the sense of what is really going on and how do I address this and how do I not let it rule my life.

### **Zen Buddhism as a religion**

"I would call some Buddhist groups a religion. Pure Land would fall into that category, but Zen Buddhism is an amalgam of Indian Buddhism and Taoism. Zen's genesis is within Buddhism but it is a discipline that can be separated from the Buddhist part of it. Even within Zen, the Buddhist part is not strictly what you call a religion but an ethical way of living.

"There was a programme in this country about interreligious dialogue between Christian monks and Buddhist monks. The story goes that the Christians and the Buddhist monks had gone off to a meeting together and they were getting along fine. Then the theologians on both sides showed up and that's where the trouble started. I think – and I know other people who have practised think this way – that the enlightenment (*in Zen*) and the mystical experience (*in Christianity*) is basically the same. However, culturally and religiously, they get framed differently.

### **The importance of having a teacher**

"The other big difference between Zen and Christianity is that within Buddhism there is a lot of intentionality put into making sure you are attached to an authorised teacher, that you belong to a lineage. The lineage I belong to goes back

to Fr. Hunt, who goes back to Fr. Kennedy (1933-), who goes back to Bernie Glassman (1939-2018) who goes back to Taizan Maezumi (1931-1995) so there is an intentional line there. You don't find that in Christianity. You find schools of spirituality, for example, the Franciscan school, the very eclectic Dominican school, the Jesuit school and they are reflected, partially, in how they treat their prayer life but there is no intentionality in making sure that someone is connected to someone who is connected all the way back. They tried to do that with the bishops and apostolic succession but we only had really reliable records starting in the fourth or fifth century.

### **On dual belonging**

"I would say I'm a dual believer. Catholicism has a long history of "borrowing" from other traditions and "massaging" the borrowed to fit into Church teaching. St. Thomas Aquinas is purported to have said truth is truth, regardless of its source. I agree with that. Using some Zen methods has enriched my Catholic/Christian life. It has provided a way to deal with distractions by learning to let go instead of engaging in a form of spiritual combat. It has helped me to approach scripture with far less prejudice, expectations, and agenda. It has also helped me to develop a more aware and focused life as well as developing an understanding that an important aspect of prayer is to let go of the image of who God is in order to be open to the Divine as it is manifested in life."

### **Commentary**

Tacy makes a point early on in the interview that the reverence one sees people pay to the Buddha is for the teachings, not because they believe that the Buddha is divine. Presumably, Catholics (and possibly herself in the beginning) have commented on this type of devotion and that is why she has pointed it out. Another one of my interviewees, Kim Boykin, discussed this subject, too. Boykin said that while she does not personally have a particular problem with bowing to the Buddha, some of her students do and she could understand this. While bowing

to the Buddha appears to occasionally be an issue with Christians, I am not sure that the reverence people pay to him indicates divinity. After all, the Catholic faith posits the divinity of Jesus Christ but people do not tend to bow to his statue. I think Tacy is probably correct in that people pay reverence to the Buddha because of the teachings. Having said that, Christians might hesitate to bow as they may believe this to be disloyal to Jesus Christ or it might indicate a general acquiescence to Buddhist doctrine.

Some of my *zazen* practitioner interviewees have discussed the present moment, as has Tacy. She has talked in some detail about focussing on what is happening at a particular moment. It is true that the practice of *zazen* does train a person to live in the present moment, and not the past or the future. There is, however, a similar concept in the Catholic Church with the Sacrament of the Present Moment. Jesuit priest Jean-Pierre de Causade's book on the subject<sup>350</sup> provides an in-depth account of how God's will is to be found in the present moment of the situations we find ourselves in. Very little is heard, or known, about the Catholic perspective.

Tacy prefers the term 'non-virtue' to the Christian notion of sin and explains that, in *zazen*, the approach to addressing the behaviour is different. She gave the example of anger, saying that in *zazen*, one would sit with it and get to know its source, nature and origin so that it no longer had any control. *Zazen*, practised in this way, could be seen as a vehicle to greater self-knowledge. In fact, Tacy did point out that taking one's

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<sup>350</sup> de Caussade, J.P. (1989) *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, New York, United States of America: HarperOne.



path in life required a certain amount of self-knowledge, which *zazen* facilitated. I agree with Tacy that it would be of great benefit for an angry person to resolve deep-seated issues that cause such feelings. However, I think to pardon offences to God as simply acts of non-virtue would bring into serious question the role of Jesus in the salvation of humanity.

Tacy pointed out that a major difference between *zazen* and Christian meditation was that one (the former) involved clearing one's mind of thoughts while the latter was specifically focussed on filling the mind. Indeed, meditation in the Catholic tradition involves turning one's mind to a supernatural truth and arousing in oneself love for that truth. The aim of the period of meditation is to form resolutions from the supernatural truth that has been meditated upon.<sup>351</sup> Some of the higher stages of Teresa of Avila's nine grades of prayer do not necessarily involve discourse.

Tacy raises an important point on the subject of *Dharma* transmission. This handing down, or passing on of the *Dharma*, is considered authentic when the student is given permission to teach from a legitimate teacher within a lineage. It is for this reason that much emphasis is placed upon ensuring that practitioners are associated with a particular teacher and his/her lineage.

There are Catholics who either drift from church to church or who are not part of any regular worshipping community at all. If the same emphasis on community was placed upon Catholics in their churches, it might have a positive effect on preventing people from falling away

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<sup>351</sup> Aumann (1980), 319.

from church attendance and promote more accountability to a particular place of worship.

Tacy rightfully points out that people's prayer lives often do not intersect with their day-to-day living and I think this is true. Certainly, in the Catholic Church, worship is something that is often done only on a Sunday and is neatly compartmentalised and packaged up into a weekly one-hour Mass. What can be learned from Zen is the need for a personal commitment and discipline that permeates an individual's life.

Tacy believes that *zazen* can be separated from Buddhism, and most westerners would probably agree. It is possible that the majority of westerners who are attracted to Zen Buddhism are mostly interested in the *zazen* aspect and not in the wider Buddhist tradition. I am not sure that *zazen* can be severed from its Buddhist roots. One of my interviewees, Meido Moore, conceded was that it is possible for a non-Buddhist to simply take part in the meditation practices of Zen Buddhism, such as *zazen*, but this is not tantamount to separating Zen from Buddhism.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Zen Buddhists' perspectives on *zazen* and Christian prayer

#### Introduction

My second group of interviewees are Zen Buddhists and, like the interviewees I spoke to in the previous chapter, contribute in some way towards answering my research question. Some of the interviewees in this chapter were originally from a Christian background, but not all of them were.

#### 5.1 Ray Cicetti

*American Ray Cicetti grew up as a Roman Catholic but became disenchanted with the Church as an adult. He had been particularly interested in the Christian contemplative tradition but felt this had 'atrophied' so he turned to Zen Buddhism which addressed the existential questions he was interested in. I interviewed Cicetti because he is now a teacher and lay preceptor (meaning that he can transmit jukai) in the White Plum school. I was particularly interested in knowing this tradition's views on jukai.*

#### Background to interest in Zen Buddhism

"At the time (*I became interested in Buddhism*) I wanted a career in psychotherapy. There were a number of psychotherapists also exploring the nature of connection between Zen and Buddhism and psychotherapy, so people like Jay Hayley (1923-2007),<sup>352</sup> Fritz Perls (1893-1970),<sup>353</sup> Carl Jung and Alan Watts. All these folks were exploring bringing the meditative, spiritual tradition into psychotherapy and utilising it. That also interested me, so even as a psychotherapist I began seeing what value there would be in reading more about Zen teachings and meditation in general and how it could apply to healing

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<sup>352</sup> Jay Hayley developed psychotherapy approaches that focussed on practical solutions and measurable improvements.

<sup>353</sup> Fritz Perls was the founder of Gestalt Therapy.

because in the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha was primarily interested in how we put an end to suffering. That was the first question for him, the most essential question, what is this suffering, why do we suffer and how do we stop it. This is what opened the door for him to begin his exploration and that was interesting to me.

“One day, I opened the New York Times and there was a little article saying that *Rōshi* Bernard Glassman had made a Jesuit priest a Zen teacher. Now that also interested me and I thought how beautiful it was. It would never happen in the Christian tradition. Can you imagine a rabbi being authorised as a priest in Catholicism? But in the Buddhist tradition, Bernard Glassman, who was head of the White Plum at the time, wanted to widen the scope and said, if we’re going to be an American Buddhism, why couldn’t a Muslim sheik, a rabbi or a Catholic priest be a Zen teacher also. So, I read that article, and the Jesuit priest was Robert Kennedy, who was located in Jersey City and I said, if I’m going to go further with this practice, that’s the guy for me. I thought I was probably at a point where I needed a teacher and he could understand the confluence between the Buddhist tradition and the Christian tradition, so he would understand me and where I was coming from. So that’s what led me further into the practice.

### **Catholic, Buddhist or both?**

“In my belly I’m a Buddhist but in my heart I’m still Catholic. I’m a Catholic Buddhist or a Buddhist Catholic, I don’t know. What I mean by that is there is an honouring of my roots in Christianity that I couldn’t eradicate and wouldn’t want to. In other words, the teachings of Christ – in terms of serving the poor, helping the sick and being there to help others – are very Christian and they still touch me as being very important but I see the application of those things through the lens of Buddhism, so there’s a coming together of two traditions for me. That’s why I had no interest in becoming a Zen priest. I’m not a Zen priest, I’m an authorised lay *rōshi*. There are these two streams for me – one is my Catholic roots and my upbringing and the other is my spiritual awakening, which I felt was going to be discovered more through my interest in Zen Buddhism.

### **White Plum, a *Sōtō-Rinzai* hybrid**

“One of the first things that is important to know is that the founder of the White

Plum was Maezumi<sup>354</sup> *rōshi* and he blended both *Sōto* and *Rinzai* elements into the White Plum so we have an amalgam of both practices. For example, in the traditional *Sōtō* sect we wouldn't be doing a whole lot of *kōan* study, it would be just straight sitting, working with the breath, or what is called *shikantaza*. But the *Rinzai* tradition is more *kōan* based and we have blended both so, for example, even though we would say White Plum was primarily listed as *Sōto* lineage there are many elements of *Rinzai* in there. My own study was through *kōan*, so we bring elements of both to the White Plum.

### **Meaning of *jukai* in the White Plum**

"*Jukai* is primarily the moral and ethical teachings in Zen, the precepts. Traditionally, there were five precepts given to lay people and they were different for monks. But many teachers, me included, give 16 precepts and I don't give different precepts to lay people. They all get the same. I'm a Zen teacher but I'm also a preceptor so I have been authorised. Another beautiful element of the White Plum, by the way, is that a lay person can transmit the *Dharma*. In some traditions, you can't. For example, at the San Francisco Zen Centre,<sup>355</sup> which is through Suzuki *rōshi*, a lay teacher is not authorised to transmit the *Dharma*. If you are a lay person (*in Suzuki's lineage*), you can become a teacher and you can give talks but you can't transmit the *Dharma*, you can't have descendants. In the Suzuki lineage, I wouldn't be able to be a preceptor so I wouldn't be able to teach the precepts, nor would I be able to make other teachers preceptors. I have, for example, one *Dharma* successor and another in the process as a *Dharma* holder. We're able to do that in the White Plum but not in some other lineages. This was one of the wonderful draws to me. This was due to Bernie Glassman. He really opened it up and I bow to him for doing that.

### **The *jukai* ceremony**

"There is a ceremony involved in receiving *jukai*. Right now I have four students who are studying for *jukai* and they are going through the 16 precepts. They are

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<sup>354</sup> Hakuyū Taizan Maezumi (1931-1995) was born into the *Sōto* school in Japan but moved to Los Angeles in 1956 as a priest at Zenshuji temple. He was unusual in that he is a lineage holder in the *Rinzai*, *Sōto* and Sanbō Zen schools. He founded the White Plum in the 1970s.

<sup>355</sup> The San Francisco Zen Centre, founded in 1962 by Shunryu Suzuki (1904-1971), follows the teaching of the *Sōto* school.

sewing their own *rakusu* and when they are finished with that they will have a *Dharma* chart to draw and write out and they get a *Dharma* name. On the day of the ceremony, the *sangha* will be together and those folks (*who are receiving jukai*) will come in, and I will give a short talk and introduce them. The ceremony is primarily about me asking them to make vows to honour and keep each one of the 16 precepts, so we go through them one by one. Then they come forward and receive their *Dharma* name and *rakusu*. Also, part of the ceremony involves reciting the list of the ancestors, which we chant, so there's a lot of bowing.<sup>356</sup>

### **On initiation into Zen Buddhism**

“Technically, the *jukai* ceremony makes a person a Zen Buddhist. Think of it as a little bit like Confirmation in the Catholic tradition. You get a Confirmation name, you study the basic elements of Christianity. So they get a *Dharma* name and they get a *rakusu*, which is the symbolic robe of the Buddha. Technically, they become Buddhist but, for me, I emphasise that they become *buddhas* rather than *Buddhists*. It's about living a tradition, living a moral and ethical life, applying and manifesting the practices in the way they actually live. So the emphasis is on living a *Bodhisattva* life rather than whether they are a Buddhist or not. I don't particularly care whether they call themselves Buddhist or not. I'm not interested in pushing Buddhism. I'm interested in pushing enlightened beings to help our world. So, yes, technically they become Buddhist<sup>357</sup> but that's not so important. Our community is called the Empty Bowl community in Morristown (*New Jersey*) and all different religions sit with us. We have Catholics, Protestants and Jews and we all sit together.

### **The effects of *jukai***

“In my experience, whether somebody wants *jukai* or not is whether the teachings have moved them, rather than whether they're Catholic or not. If you could say there was a goal in Zen practice it would be the development of your character in the world and that's what *jukai* points to. I don't care how

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<sup>356</sup> In Chapter Six, ‘The nature of *jukai* and its overlap with Catholic sacraments of initiation’, I discuss *jukai* in depth. In section 6.4, I illustrate the ceremony and the different components that are involved.

<sup>357</sup> In the above chapter, section 6.3, I examine whether *jukai* is an initiation rite as a Zen Buddhist. There are different points of view on this and this is discussed in detail.

enlightened people are. What matters to me is the application of that in how you live. We have a history of having a lot of teachers in Zen Buddhism who are deeply enlightened but also deeply flawed and have caused a lot of damage – alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse of students – the whole nine yards. So, it's about character development and how you integrate the teachings into the way you live, day to day ... taking care of your husband, your wife, your neighbour, your dog and that's what I think *jukai* points to, how you live your life, an enlightened life.

### **Commentary**

Cicetti has provided a good explanation of how elements of *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* combined to form the White Plum. However, the main reason I interviewed Cicetti was to learn more about *jukai* in the White Plum and, as a preceptor (meaning he can officiate at a *jukai* ceremony and grant the precepts), he was in a position to be able to do this.

One of the points Cicetti made about the *jukai* ceremony was that it did, technically, make one a Zen Buddhist, although Cicetti was keen to emphasise that the important aspect was how those precepts manifested in the recipient's life.

Cicetti also pointed out the universality of *zazen* and the way in which it brought together people of different faith traditions at the Empty Bowl *sangha*.

## **5.2 Thomas Yuho Kirchner**

*Thomas Yuho Kirchner was born in Baltimore, Maryland, but has lived in Japan for the past 50 years. For most of this time, he has been a Rinzai Zen monk and now resides at Tenryū-ji, a major temple in Kyoto. For several decades, Kirchner has also participated in the East-West Spiritual Exchange, an ongoing series of monastic discourses between Benedictine and Zen monastics. I have interviewed Kirchner*

*because he was raised a Catholic and is, therefore, able to speak from both a Christian and a Zen Buddhist perspective.*

### **Growing up Catholic**

“As a child I was taught the Baltimore Catechism,<sup>358</sup> a conservative catechism that I remember as emphasising guilt, sin, and eternal punishment for minor infractions like eating meat on Friday. I don’t think it was a very effective approach to teaching spirituality to children, and I sometimes wonder if this isn’t part of the reason why so many of my generation have left the Church. This is unfortunate, since I have learned subsequently that Catholicism has much more than this to offer.

“I never felt that I actually left the Church, perhaps because of the acceptance of Zen practice at that time by many Catholic monastics (like Thomas Merton) and non-monastics (like Enomiya Lassalle). That feeling continues, owing in part to my continuing interactions with Catholicism through the East-West Spiritual Exchange. I was drawn to Zen in the years before I came to Japan because of its clear-cut path of spiritual practice, and because of the impression of deep spirituality that I received from Zen masters like Shibayama Zenkei.

“In many ways I feel that Buddhist meditation and spirituality has brought me closer to the Catholic Church. My main difficulty with Christianity when I was young was my notion that Christianity was essentially a matter of belief in the existence of God and the various dogmas of the Church. Belief was something I couldn’t muster. However, it was doubts and questions about the nature of self and existence that drove my spiritual search, and that fostered my interest in the more experiential path of meditation. Zen actually encourages doubt as an aid to meditation. To question is fine, but if you do, then question and doubt until you reach that which can no longer be doubted.

“Oddly enough, however, I found that not long after taking up the serious practice of Buddhist meditation, with its letting go of all self-created concepts and images (including concepts and images of the divine) all doubts about the existence of

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<sup>358</sup> The ‘Baltimore Catechism’ was the primary text used for instruction in the Catholic faith between 1885 and the late-1960s. See [www.thecatholictelegraph.com/are-the-baltimore-catechism-and-catechism-of-the-catholic-church-the-same/15337](http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/are-the-baltimore-catechism-and-catechism-of-the-catholic-church-the-same/15337) [accessed August 16, 2020].



God had disappeared (this is a common experience among Catholics I know who practice Zen). I read the entire Bible from start to finish, and became very interested in the Christian contemplative tradition, particularly the works of mystics like Eckhart and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. I also made a number of visits to Catholic monasteries, including the Trappist monastery in Spencer, Massachusetts, where Fr. Thomas Keating<sup>359</sup> taught Centring Prayer, and did week retreats at the Camaldolese Monastery on Big Sur and the Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Monastery in Oregon. Though I'm not a practising Catholic I retain a deep regard for the Church, and my participation in the East-West Spiritual Exchange has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

### **A Zen Buddhist's view on Christianity**

"I believe that the importance of Christ's existence lies primarily in his teachings on how to live and how to awaken to the Kingdom of Heaven within us. I can't agree with those who say (as I've occasionally heard) that without his miracles and without the Resurrection, Christ's life was meaningless. Important as these events are for Christian faith, I feel that Christ's message would have been equally valid without them.

"Several of my fundamentalist Christian relatives have questioned me on how I see Christ's statement in the Gospel of John that salvation is attained only through him. The meaning of this, though, is open to interpretation I believe – does it refer to Christ as a historical person? The Gospel of John also quotes Christ as saying of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am,"<sup>360</sup> suggesting something transcendent and ahistorical. Again, regarding salvation, Jesus on several occasions identified only two requisites:

On one occasion an authority in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" Jesus replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Thomas Keating (1923-2018) was a Trappist monk and one of the principle developers of Centering Prayer, a Christian meditation drawing largely from the teachings of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

<sup>360</sup> John 8:58

<sup>361</sup> Luke 10:25-28

“The Christians I know who have taken up Zen practice see meditation as addressing both of these points. The choiceless awareness that is central to Buddhist meditation (and, they would say, to the *via negativa* tradition of Christian contemplation as well) is in effect the practice of ‘I am’, and the means of awakening to the unattached consciousness that makes possible the selfless love of God and neighbour.

### **The East-West Spiritual Exchange**

“During the 1960s and 70s the Catholic contemplative orders were filled with men and women drawn to the life of prayer during the monastic resurgence of the mid-twentieth century. Many of these monastics, aspiring to deeper forms of prayer, became interested in the meditative techniques of Buddhism and other eastern religions as a means of restoring the Christian tradition of imageless contemplation – represented by the spirituality of mystics like St. John of the Cross<sup>362</sup> and Meister Eckhart<sup>363</sup> – that was lost during the Reformation. A number of monastics penetrated quite deeply into eastern forms of meditation, even gaining qualifications as teachers. It was in this environment that the East-West Spiritual Exchange program was conceived during the mid-1970s, with Zen monastics attending month-long retreats in Catholic monasteries of the Benedictine orders, followed by similar retreats at Japanese Zen monasteries by Catholic monks and nuns.

“The Exchange programme has continued, but with the great decline in monastic vocations over the past several decades a gradual shift has occurred in makeup of the participants, particularly on the Catholic side. According to my Catholic monastic friends, the present generation of postulants is attracted mainly to the more conservative monasteries, where life centres primarily on theological study and liturgical practice, and interest in meditation – even Christian meditation, let alone Buddhist meditation – is waning. This is the case even though the practice of meditation remains popular among the Catholic laity – these same friends tell

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<sup>362</sup> John of the Cross (1542-1991) was a Spanish friar, Carmelite, mystic and one of the 36 doctors of the Catholic Church.

<sup>363</sup> Meister Eckhart O.P. (c1260-1328) was a German Dominican and theologian whose teachings have much influence among contemplative movements.

me that the retreats they lead outside the monasteries are always well attended. It would seem that in the monasteries, interest in Zen reached a peak in the years after Vatican II and is now withering, replaced by a more pre-Vatican II approach.

“I suspect that the resistance toward meditation among conservative monastics stems from their quite natural tendency to emphasize traditional dogma and other belief systems as an important aspect of faith. From a contemplative point of view, however, while belief certainly has an important part to play in the spiritual life, it is essentially different from faith. As the writer Alan Watts<sup>364</sup> succinctly expresses it: “Belief clings, but faith lets go.” Meditation is, in essence, the radical practice of letting go – the Christian mystics, together with the Zen masters, stress the importance of letting go even of our concepts of truth and the divine.

### **Of Sanbō Zen and its disciples**

“Perhaps the most influential tradition of Zen Buddhism among Catholics is the lay group originally known as the Sanbō Kyodan, but since 2014 called Sanbō Zen. This influence can be traced largely to the Jesuit priest Enomiya-Lassalle,<sup>365</sup> who lived in Japan from before World War II (*during which he experienced the atomic bombing of Hiroshima*) and became interested in Zen as a way to deepen his understanding of Japanese culture. Fr. Lassalle, who I had the privilege of meeting during my early years in Japan, continued his Zen practice for many years following the war and finally completed his training under the Sanbō Zen master Kōun Yamada.<sup>366</sup> The profound enrichment of his spiritual life that he attributed to this practice motivated him to start writing about Zen and Christian spirituality, but his initial works on the subject failed to win the imprimatur of Rome. Following Vatican II, however, the climate changed and he was allowed to guide Catholics in Zen meditation. During the latter part of his life he taught Zen

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<sup>364</sup> Alan Watts (1915-1973) was an early populariser of Zen Buddhism and wrote numerous books and articles on the subject.

<sup>365</sup> Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle S.J. (1898-1990) was of German origin and ordained as a priest in the Society of Jesus in 1927. He was also a Zen master in the Sanbō Zen tradition.

<sup>366</sup> Kōun Yamada (1907-1989) was the second leader of the Sanbō Zen school, following his teacher Hakuun Yasutani (1885-1973).

widely in Europe, where he inspired many monastics, ordinary priests, and laypeople to take up Zen practice.

“Part of the reason for Lassalle’s success was his willingness to work within the boundaries of the Church, even if his efforts occasionally tested and stretched those boundaries. This was less true of Fr. Willigis Jäger,<sup>367</sup> a Benedictine monk who was one of Lassalle’s early students and also a certified teacher in the Sanbō Zen school. Jäger was a powerful leader and effective organizer who established several Zen centres, but who tended to be confrontational toward the Church authorities. He was finally banned from teaching and writing by the Vatican in 2002, though he left his monastery in 2003 and continued his work outside at his own centre. I personally feel that Jäger had no one but himself to blame for his friction with Rome – no such issues arose, for example, in the case of Fr. Johannes Kopp,<sup>368</sup> another early student of Lassalle and certified Sanbō Zen teacher who taught with the support of the Church for many years near Essen, Germany, and whose retreats were attended by large numbers of laypeople from Northern Europe and elsewhere.

“Jef Boeckmans,<sup>369</sup> a Trappist monk who studied Zen under both Lassalle and Jäger and who received sanction to teach by the Sanbō Zen organization in Japan, told me that as a young man he had a deep spiritual experience that inspired him to join the Trappists, but that he’d been unable to truly make sense of until Fr. Lassalle came to speak at his abbey. This encounter provided the impetus for his subsequent Zen practice, which he conducted with the blessing of his abbot while continuing his Trappist vocation. He ended up in charge of his abbey’s very active

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<sup>367</sup> Willigis Jäger O.S.B. (1925-2020) was a German Benedictine monk, Zen master and student of Enomiya-Lassalle. He taught in the Sanbō Zen tradition, and was highly influential in introducing *zazen* to Catholics. Jäger’s easy-to-understand approach to teaching *zazen* appealed to my interviewee Gregory Mayers, C.Ss.R (see Chapter Four, section 4.7) and the two became teacher and disciple. Mayers went on to become a teacher himself and led *zazen* retreats throughout the United States.

<sup>368</sup> Johannes Kopp (1927-2016) was a German Pallottine priest and Zen master in the Sanbō Zen tradition.

<sup>369</sup> Jef Boeckmans (born 1943 in Mortsel, Belgium) became a Trappist monk in 1965 and lived there for over 45 years. He presently resides and teaches in Den Haag.

Zen meditation program, leading two week-long *sanzen*<sup>370</sup> retreats a month, attended mainly by lay Catholics.

“Sanbō Zen hasn’t attracted as many Catholic priests and monastics in the United States as it has in Europe, but one well-regarded Catholic Sanbō Zen teacher was Fr. Patrick Hawk.<sup>371</sup> I never had the privilege of meeting him, but he was highly regarded by those Zen friends of mine who knew him.

“Certain Buddhist scholars in the West have criticised the Sanbō Zen tradition as somehow inauthentic, but I’m not impressed by their arguments. The Sanbō Zen teachers I’ve met – though admittedly a limited sample – have been fine people, well-grounded in meditation practice, and the ones who have continued their training under traditional Japanese Zen masters have all had their *kōan* work recognised as valid.

### **On mindfulness**

“Recently, the subject of mindfulness has been much discussed in Japan—the bookstores display many books on the subject, both translated from the English and written by Japanese authors using ‘mindfulness’ as a borrowed<sup>372</sup> word. There are also many detailed articles on the Internet, including a long entry in the Japanese Wikipedia. I even know of Zen masters who are inviting mindfulness teachers to their monasteries to lecture to their monks on the subject.”

### **Commentary**

For no particular reason, I was surprised to hear a *Rinzai* Zen monk speak so positively about the Sanbō Zen school. After some reflection on the matter, I had perhaps assumed that, because Sanbō Zen was a contemporary outgrowth of traditional Zen Buddhism, members of the *Soto* and *Rinzai* schools might feel some hostility towards it. With Kirchner at least, this was

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<sup>370</sup> *Sanzen* is a term for the one-to-one meetings that take place between Zen masters and their disciples. The word ‘*dokusan*’ is also regularly used for the one-to-one meetings.

<sup>371</sup> Patrick Hawk C.Ss.R. (1942-2012) was an American Redemptorist priest who was also a Zen master and teacher in the Diamond Sangha tradition.

<sup>372</sup> By saying “borrowed,” Kirchner is referring to a word that is not of Japanese origin. Such words are written with ‘*katakana*’ characters, a phonetic alphabet used to write words for which there is no Japanese translation.

definitely not the case. In fact, he spoke highly of the Sanbō Zen teachers that he had met. What was even more surprising was to hear Kirchner endorse the *kōan* work undertaken by Sanbō Zen members, saying that the members he knew who had subsequently practised traditional *Rinzai* Zen in Japan had all had their *kōan* study accepted as a valid basis for further *Rinzai* training.

Kirchner is one of a number of former Catholics I have met who have turned to Zen Buddhism. The reasons for this are varied. Interestingly, Kirchner found that Zen Buddhism re-ignited an interest in Catholicism and, although no longer a practising Catholic, read the Bible, visited some Christian churches and participated in some Catholic retreats.

Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle was a hugely influential, successful transmitter of *zazen* practice and Zen Buddhist ideologies. It was interesting to hear that Kirchner believes some of this success was because he worked within the framework of the Catholic Church and, in doing so, largely remained uncontroversial at the time.

### **5.3 Mike Luetchford**

*Mike Luetchford was born into a Methodist family in 1944 at a time when it was commonplace for people to go to church on a Sunday. Growing up during the 1950s, his family – although not particularly religious – went to chapel and he went to Sunday school. He became involved in Zen as an adult after he was hired by a company in Japan and moved there in 1977. I interviewed Luetchford because he lived in Japan for 22 years and has practised *zazen* for more than 40 years. I had some questions about contemporary expressions of Zen versus the traditional, and Dharma transmission, which I thought that Luetchford might be able to answer.*

## **Introduction to Zen Buddhism**

“I got into Zen about three months after I arrived in Japan. I saw an ad for a Zen seminar and I went along. I was hooked – or, rather, it hooked me. I wouldn’t say I had been searching for a religion or anything spiritual at the time. I was simply dumped in the middle of a new culture and was looking for something to do in my spare time. I met my wife, Yoko, at the Zen seminar. She had been before so I used to joke that she was there, waiting for me. I also met my teacher at the seminar. So, I met my wife and my teacher at the same time.

“If you asked me my religion now, I would have to say I was a Zen Buddhist .... I’m a Buddhist teacher. But then, what constitutes a religion?

## **Dharma transmission and other ceremonies**

“I’m not a member of the *Sōtō* school but my teacher, Gudo Wafu Nishijima<sup>373</sup>, was. To be a member of the *Sōtō* school you have to register and undergo training so it wasn’t something I got into. My teacher was a bit of a rebel and an outsider so I have followed that way, too. In 1989 (while I was still in Japan), I received *Dharma* transmission (*Shiho* in Japanese in the *Sōtō* school). I was my teacher’s first student to receive *Dharma* transmission. *Inka*, or *Inka Shomei*, is the Japanese name for the same ceremony as *Shiho* but in the *Rinzai* school. I also received *jukai*. In the *jukai* ceremony, you vow to keep the Buddhist precepts – there are 16 altogether: 10 ‘normal’ precepts, three ‘general’ precepts and three ‘universal’ precepts. *Jukai* is the first ceremony you take part in when you become a Buddhist. It’s not looked upon as a mystical thing in Japan, like it is in the West. In the West, we have made Zen masters into gods. It is like the word ‘*rōshi*’ – in Japan you would call a wise old master a *rōshi*, but the meaning has become distorted in the West and anybody who has received *Dharma* transmission is called a *rōshi*. I never use this term to describe myself. I’m a teacher.

“So many in the West have mistaken the Japanese cultural traditions of a monk/Zen master with what Buddhism is all about. They wear black robes and do all the ceremonies. Even the word ‘Zen’ has been given a slightly different

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<sup>373</sup> Zen teacher and philosopher Gudo Wafu Nishijima (1919-2014) was ordained in 1973 as a monk and priest in the *Sōtō* tradition.

meaning in the West. In Japan, the word 'Zen' is simply one-half of the word *zazen*. People (*in the West*) have made Zen into something special because they misunderstand. Zen is the Japanese flavour of the Buddhist schools that undertake *zazen*. Not all Japanese Buddhist schools undertake *zazen*, but all Zen schools do. I don't think you can detach 'Zen' from 'Buddhism'.

### **Zazen today**

"With my teacher, I formed a community called Dōgen Sangha in 1987. We try to follow the teachings of Dōgen (the founder of the *Sōtō* tradition in Japan), but without all the embroidery. I pass on *jukai* to people, and if someone has more than 10 years' experience in *zazen* I might give *Shiho* but I don't do other ceremonies.

"We chant a little four-line stanza before a *Dharma* talk and that should be common among those who follow the *Sōtō* tradition because Dōgen suggested that's what we do.

"*Shikantaza* (lit. 'just sitting') is a way of describing *zazen* (lit. 'sitting meditation'). I usually sit for an hour a day but a busy parent might only be able to manage 10 minutes or half an hour a day. *Zazen* is the physical settling of the body and mind.

"Dōgen said that to practice *zazen* is the whole of Buddhism. The whole of Buddhist philosophy came out of *zazen*.

"Dumoulin<sup>374</sup> and others became very involved in Zen and they took it back to their churches. We have even had some of our retreats in Catholic monasteries. What is it about Zen that Christians find so fascinating? What does this very spiritual religion of Christianity find so interesting about sitting, facing a wall and doing nothing? Buddha didn't bring any of the gods that were around at the time into his teaching. It interests me that Christianity and Zen Buddhism should find something in common."

### **Commentary**

Luetchford is a Buddhist teacher in the lineage of Zen

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<sup>374</sup> Heinrich Dumoulin (1905-1995) was a German Jesuit, Zen author and professor at Sophia University, Tokyo.



master Dōgen (1200–1253), who introduced the practice of *zazen* to Japan after searching in China for four years. Luetchford made several comments about westernised Zen Buddhism and how it had evolved. He gave several examples of this evolution. For example, the Japanese word '*rōshi*', used in Japan to refer to a wise old (Zen) master, has come to mean in the West an honorific title given to someone who has received *Dharma* transmission. Luetchford also spoke of the misunderstanding of the word 'Zen' and the way that it had become something beyond, and wider, than its original meaning. I think perhaps Luetchford was making the point that, in the West, the word 'Zen' has been glamorised to the extent that the word itself has acquired deep cultural and philosophical connotations that it does not have in Japan.

After my interview with Luetchford, I keyed 'Zen' into Google and it revealed a broad range of businesses within seconds. Businesses bearing the name Zen include computer companies (Zen Internet, Rochdale; Mr Zen, Farnham), beauty therapists (Zen Nails and Beauty, Southampton; Zen Hair Design, Thame; Zen Beauty Spa, Portsmouth), holistic medicine practitioners (Zen About Town in Alton), well-being (Zen Zone Therapies, Billingshurst); Zen Bodi weight loss, Chichester), home care (Zen Home Solutions, Fleet), dog trainers (Zen Dog and Training, Totton) and surprisingly, a Zen yacht for hire (Zen Dog Motor Yacht Charter, Lymington). There is also the occasional Zen meditation centre.

Luetchford ends the interview by expressing interest in that Christians, with their deeply spiritual practices are attracted to Zen Buddhism. An answer has, perhaps, been found in that *zazen* fulfils a need for contemplative prayer.

## 5.4 Meido Moore

*Meido Moore is a Zen Buddhist priest and abbot of Korinji, a Rinzai Zen monastery in Wisconsin, USA. I interviewed Moore because Rinzai is scarce in the West and I was intrigued as to why this was. I was also interested to hear what a Rinzai abbot thought about the blending that is taking place in Zen Buddhism, particularly in the West.*

### Introduction to Zen Buddhism

“Spirituality spoke to me quite strongly from a very young age. My family was from Catholic roots on the east coast, mostly of Irish origin. Prayer was a big part of my life but I cannot say that I ever had a strong identification as a Catholic or a Christian. I didn’t go through a rigorous or formal formation as a Catholic. It just happened to be the tradition that I was exposed to but if I enter a church today, particularly an older church, it still strikes me deeply somehow. I attended Sunday School, I did First Communion but not Confirmation. It just wasn’t my family’s emphasis, I think. My exposure to Catholicism was more cultural, perhaps, rather than as a spiritual tradition. I expect a lot of Americans would say that. I discovered my own spiritual interests in Buddhism at quite an early age – I would say 12-13 years old and it grew from there.

### On Rinzai Zen in the United States

“One of our teachers, Ōmori Sōgen (1904-1994) of the *Tenryu-ji*<sup>375</sup> line in Kyoto, wanted to spread *Rinzai* Zen here. Ōmori Sōgen is famous in Japan – perhaps the most famous *Rinzai* teacher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a former president of the *Rinzai* university, Hanazono, in Kyoto. He sent his successor, Dōgen Hosokawa (*no relation to the 13<sup>th</sup> century founder of Sōtō Zen in Japan*), to the United States to teach here full time, so he emigrated and that is how our lineage landed here. Hosokawa *Rōshi* is still alive and lives in Hawaii where he settled full time to help plant things here. He was my primary teacher.

“I have visited Japan for several events but all of my real training as a lay person and, later, as an ordained person, was in the United States. My teachers were

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<sup>375</sup> Tenryu-ji is a major Zen temple in the *Rinzai* school.

from Japan but had emigrated to the United States to spread *Rinzai* Zen to the West.

“We didn’t consciously try to change anything about *Rinzai* Zen when it came to the United States. The main change is this body beneath these robes which, of course, isn’t from Japan and I come with all my cultural conditioning and background. But we haven’t changed the training forms or the practice forms. We don’t see them as necessarily Japanese because they contain layers from India and China. It’s just a huge inheritance of practice tools. Because they work, we haven’t felt the need to jettison anything or adjust too much. We speak English as we go about our business, but in our chanting we use the original Sino-Japanese and there’s a particular reason we do that. I think our attitude has been that cultural transformation can happen gradually, naturally, or organically over time and there is no reason for us to force that or try to speed it up. And I’m aware that that’s quite different from the approach of some Zen groups but *Rinzai* Zen in general, and our group in particular, has taken the approach of not hurrying that process.

“I don’t think Zen can be separated from Buddhism. Zen is one teaching line within Buddhism, and it is predicated upon the Buddhist teachings. The practice itself has the intent of bringing to fruition the Buddhist view of how our existence should be transformed. When people talk about Zen in the West, they are usually talking about practice methods like meditation, for example, so some of them can be pulled out and used to get some kind of common benefit. The Zen Buddhist path as a whole, though, is completely intertwined with Buddhist teachings and the two cannot be separated any more than Methodism or Anglicism can be separated from Christianity. But when we talk about the yogic practice or the meditative discipline which Zen preserves, the basic practices within that system are not wholly unlike practices found in many contemplative traditions so there can be borrowing and commonality and sharing at that level. But still, Zen itself is coming from a Buddhist view of our existence and what we’re called upon to do as human beings. So if someone does not subscribe to a Buddhist view, I couldn’t say they’re doing Zen practices and techniques. And that’s fine, too.

“*Zazen* is a general term for seated meditation but there are many, many practices used in *zazen*. The term *zazen* is a little too general to be useful. Some of the practices in *zazen* are aimed at bringing about the sort of realisation that is distinctly Buddhist in character, so not all of them would be applicable to everyone.<sup>376</sup>”

### **On hybrid Zen Buddhist sects**

“The hybrid Zen sects – Sanbō Zen being the most famous – mostly arose because *Sōtō* in Japan underwent some dramatic changes, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Meiji period. Some core aspects of what had been considered important previously, such as the role of the teacher, the experience we call awakening, or *kenshō*, and so on, were de-emphasized. Because of those changes, by mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, there came to be a feeling among some *Sōtō* teachers that they had lost something crucial so they turned to *Rinzai* Zen to reintegrate, or borrow, some training methods in order to rediscover something about Zen practice. That’s why you have *Sōtō* Zen teachers doing a certain amount of *kōan*<sup>377</sup> practice, and integrating that into a combined system.

“From a *Rinzai* Zen standpoint, I have no problem with that, but I have not seen anything they have borrowed or integrated that really retained the *Rinzai* character of practice. It seems like a completely new animal to me. The hybrids are neither *Sōtō* nor *Rinzai*, but something completely new. They have elements of both *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* but they have arrived at something different. It was an attempt at reviving what had become a moribund *Sōtō* institution and a loss of fire, or inspiration, in *Sōtō* practice. I don’t know if they succeeded at that or not. Maybe they have. It is certainly something that has been very influential in the West. In Japan, hybrids such as Sanbō Zen are extremely small and considered to be of no consequence at all. It’s only in the West that they have gained such a footprint. It is interesting that the institutional structures in Japan would make it easier for a *Sōtō* priest to secretly study with a *Rinzai* master, integrate some of it,

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<sup>376</sup> In Chapter Two, section 2.2.1, I reviewed Philip Kapleau’s book *The Three Pillars of Zen*. In this review I summarised from Kapleau’s book five broad types of *zazen*.

<sup>377</sup> A *kōan*, traditionally associated with the *Rinzai* school, is a riddle that cannot be solved through the intellect.

and start a whole new group than it would be to switch over to become a *Rinzai*. The consequences would be much greater to do the latter than the former.

“It’s ironic that the first Zen master to visit the United States at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1897 was a *Rinzai* master and his disciple was D.T. Suzuki<sup>378</sup> who then settled in the Chicago area. So this early arrival of Zen in the United States was from the *Rinzai* tradition but after the war and the American occupation of Japan, what came back to the States as Zen was almost entirely these hybrid lineages. One reason is simply that they had a missionary zeal. I think the *Rinzai* institution in Japan has unfortunately never had much interest in overseas activity, and they still don’t seem to have much today. They don’t oversee anything, and they don’t send any money for anything. They recognise that their lineage has spread to another country and another culture but it’s much like when Zen went from China to Japan – it’s just gone! You didn’t have Chinese monasteries supporting or overseeing Japanese ones, right? We don’t have Japanese monasteries supporting us, whereas the Sanbō Zen organisation and even some *Sōtō* groups do have a little support from Japan, an organizational structure that reaches overseas, but *Rinzai* Zen does not. This is unfortunate, but it is also good!

### **On *Dharma* transmission and other ceremonies**

“*Shiho*, literally, is *Dharma* transmission in the *Sōtō* tradition, but there is a bit of confusion about this in the West because *Rinzai* Zen *inka shomei*<sup>379</sup> is also sometimes called *Dharma* transmission and yet they are two very different things. *Shiho* is a low-level ecclesiastic rank that most *Sōtō* priests will do within a couple of years of beginning their training so it is not certification that you can teach or run a temple. It simply means you are a fully committed priest in training. Yet *inka shomei* is completely the other end of the spectrum. It’s the recognition that you can run a monastery, are a lineage holder, qualified to take one’s own disciples and transmit the lineage in the future. In the West, *shiho* and

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<sup>378</sup> Moore is referring to Soyen Shaku (1860-1919), who I have mentioned in the context of the World Parliament of Religions in Chapter One of this thesis. Shaku’s disciple, Daisetsu Suzuki (1870-1966), also referred to in Chapter One, had a major influence on bringing Zen Buddhism to the West.

<sup>379</sup> *Inka shomei* is traditionally a *Rinzai* ceremony, although this milestone has been ‘imported’ into some of the hybrid Zen systems.

*inka shomei* have become conflated by some groups so you have *Sōtō* Zen folks who receive *shiho* and are viewed as Zen masters or teachers in the West since *Dharma* transmission sounds like what *inka shomei* is – they sound similar and they cause a bit of confusion. It's similar to what you would have if there were two Catholic denominations, one of which uses the word 'cardinal' in the familiar manner as a very high-level cleric, while the other uses the same word 'cardinal' for something basic you do in the seminary. It's a completely different thing, but we have that kind of confusion. I'm not really clear what the usage is in the hybrid groups, however.

"*Shiho*, as I mentioned, is a low-level priest rank and confirms that one has committed to one teacher. It means that now I am a disciple of this person. In *Rinzai*, *Dharma* transmission means a person is empowered to teach the full range of *Rinzai* practices and empowered to transmit the lineage to one's disciples in turn. So, the person who has *inka shomei* is the one upon whom the future of *Rinzai* Zen depends. If *inka shomei* is not transmitted, then the line dies. In a sense, it's like the apostolic succession. In each teaching lineage, there's an energetic blessing that needs to be carried through. There is a body of practice-related material that is passed on. These are like living cultures. If someone receives *inka shomei*, their main obligation is to find at least one successor to carry on the line after them.

### **On *jukai***

"*Jukai* is a general term but we have more specific words for the ceremony than that. *Zaike tokudo* is a *jukai* ceremony for lay people when they receive the precepts. It is roughly equivalent to Confirmation in the Catholic Church and essentially means that I am a Buddhist and these are the ethical guidelines that I am living by. The term, literally, means to stay at home/stay with one's family and attain realization. In *zaike tokudo*, we take refuge in the Buddha, the *Dharma* and the *sangha* and receive the five lay precepts that are common to most of the Buddhist world. *Shukke tokudo* is the monastic or priest's *jukai* and it means to leave one's home or family. In *Sōtō* Zen, interestingly, lay people accept a larger set of 16 precepts that are identical to those that priests receive.

## On prayer

“In the West, people sometimes say that prayer does not exist in Buddhism but that is usually said by westerners who want to stress the – how shall I say it – the non-theistic angle in Buddhism. But certainly, there is prayer. There is an acknowledgement that there are beings in the universe that can intercede for one, that can aid one, for example the enlightened beings called *Bodhisattvas* (Skt, Pāli *Bodhisatta*; Jp *Bosatsu*.)<sup>380</sup> We also have a formal type of prayer every morning in our monastery, where we are praying to different beings and the guardians of the monastery. The *bodhisattva* of compassion and the *bodhisattva* of wisdom are appealed to constantly. I have no problem in calling this prayer because that is exactly what it is, but I understand that some Buddhist folks have resisted using that word because it seems too easily confused with the usage of the word in Abrahamic faiths. But when I talk to my teachers, they have no problem with using the word prayer – it’s what we’re doing.”

## Commentary

Being that the *Rinzai* school is far smaller than its *Sōtō* counterpart, I was surprised when I discovered one of its monasteries, Korinji, in the United States. *Rinzai* is one of the two surviving Zen traditions (*Sōtō* being the other) of the five houses of Chan<sup>381</sup> and I was keen to give this school a ‘voice’ in my thesis. I wanted to resolve a number of questions I had about Zen Buddhist ceremonies as some of the information I had accrued was confusing and even contradictory on occasion. The answers I received have not made the subject any less confusing because there are not only different customs in the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* schools but also in the contemporary hybrid outgrowths of Zen Buddhism.

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<sup>380</sup> While there is a Japanese translation for *Bodhisattva*, westernised Zen sects tend to use the Sanskrit word.

<sup>381</sup> I have spoken about the five houses of Chan in Chapter One. In summary, the five ‘houses’ were Zen schools formed during China’s Tang era (618-907).

One area that I wanted to clarify was the issue of *Dharma* transmission as in the White Plum it appears to be a two-stage process. The first stage in White Plum is *Dharma* transmission and then, some years later, *inka* is conferred as a final seal. I learned that in the *Rinzai* school, *inka*, or to use its full name, *inka shomei*, is in fact *Dharma* transmission and it is conferred during a single ceremony. The two-stage process of *Dharma* transmission in the White Plum appears to be a western trend as the *Sōtō* school follows a different path.

One of the *Sōtō* school's ceremonies is called *shiho*, meaning *Dharma* transmission, but it is a low-level rank in a monastery that simply means the recipient is committed to a teacher. It does not carry with it any of the authority of *inka shomei* in the *Rinzai* school. There are other formal rituals, such as *zaike tokudo* for lay people and *shukke tokudo* for those who hope to be ordained.

Moore discussed the import of *Rinzai* into the United States and commented that he thought little about how his tradition had become westernised. He was not averse to change, saying that if, and when, it did happen, it would be a process of slow evolution rather than a sudden re-invention of their beliefs and practices. I suspect that there have been subtle changes because the psyche of the Western person is different to that of a Japanese and to attract 'vocations' some adaptation, I believe, would have been inevitable. In Chapter Five, I discuss with Thomas Yuho Kirchner of Tenryū-ji monastery in Kyoto possible western adaptations of *Rinzai*.

It was surprising to hear a Zen Buddhist talk about prayer because supplications are usually directed to God or a god. Moore's observation is interesting that those



who propagate the notion that Buddhists don't pray at all are the same people who want, because of their disillusionment with Abrahamic faiths, to stress the non-theistic nature of Buddhism.

Moore says that while the contemporary Zen organisations have imported elements of *Rinzai* and *Sōtō*, they are in fact what he describes as a "completely new animal". They contain elements of New Japanese Religious Movements, a subject that Professor Robert Sharf of the University of California at Berkeley has written about extensively.

## **5.5 Jiryu Mark Rutschman-Byler**

*Jiryu Mark Rutschmann-Byler has lived in Zen Buddhist temples since 1996 and was ordained as a Sōtō priest in 2002 in the lineage of Shunryū Suzuki.<sup>382</sup> Disenchanted with the ease of Zen Buddhist practice in the West, he spent 18 months in Japanese monasteries and wrote the book *Two Shores of Zen*<sup>383</sup> about his experiences there. He returned to the United States in 2004 and is now resident at the Green Dragon Temple at Green Gulch Farm in California. I interviewed Rutschmann-Byler primarily for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to look beyond westernised forms of Zen Buddhism and talk to somebody who had lived in a Sōtō monastery in Japan. Secondly, I wanted to know why people practised zazen.*

### **Introduction to Zen**

"I was born in Argentina and moved to the United States when I was a few years old. My parents were both raised by Mennonite missionaries so they were evangelical Protestant. Both of my grandfathers were pastors. My parents moved back to the States and became Quakers so I was familiar with the Mennonite practice from my grandparents being around and from how strong that had been

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<sup>382</sup> Shunryū Suzuki (1904-1971) was a *Sōtō* monk who emigrated to the United States when he was 59. He founded the San Francisco Zen Centre, of which Green Gulch Farm is an affiliate. He is unrelated to the Zen Buddhist author Daisetsu Suzuki (1870-1966).

<sup>383</sup> Rutschman-Byler, J.M. (2009) *Two Shores of Zen*, self-published in the United States by lulu.com [accessed September 3, 2020].

from my parents literally growing up next to these churches. But I was raised in a Quaker meeting and I went to a Catholic high school, which was interesting to have that little stream, too. All of those fed into it (*my interest in Zen Buddhism*), especially the Quaker form of silent worship rather than the more traditional church services. I was struck when I received meditation instruction that we could have been applying ourselves to the silence in a different way.

“My first exposure to Zen Buddhism was with a group when I was maybe 10 or 11. A group of us went from a Quaker meeting in New Mexico, where I grew up, and we visited a local Zen temple in the mountains and received meditation instruction. I was a kid at the time and the *zazen* instructor said if your nose starts to run, let it run. I remember that and the impact it had on me, a runny-nosed kid. Then I went to college for a couple of years. It was a very small college, just 25 students in the whole place, and one of the classmates was a young man who was the son of a former abbot at San Francisco Zen Centre who grew up here at Green Gulch Farm, where I live now, so I first connected to a Zen centre through him.

“Prior to coming to Zen, I was living on my own and became interested – urgently so – in spiritual issues and was looking for spiritual practices and got involved in some of the neo-pagan things that were swirling around in San Francisco – where I was at the time – and I felt found a great spiritual power but a real lack of groundedness in myself when I was doing those practices. I felt like I was getting less and less embodied – I felt the spirituality was up there and I had to float up to some other plane and that had very deep psychological consequences, that separating from reality. I was getting stretched too far into the spiritual world. As I came to Zen, I found that there was something so nourishing in that it had the same depth, height, you know, and power of spiritual possibility but it never left embodied presence. I needed that unity between the spiritual and material.

### **Zen Buddhist life in Japan**

“There’s various kinds of Zen practice in Japan. The main kind is parish temple practice where there’s a priest, generally male, and his family, usually living in an

inherited temple,<sup>384</sup> serving the congregation out in the community and sometimes even as a second job, but caring for the temple and caring for the religious needs of the community and maybe doing some meditation practice. Generally, such a person has done at least a year at a place like Eiheiiji or Sojiji,<sup>385</sup> doing their intensive monastic practice. Then they have their temple family life, probably a lot like my grandparents' life living next door to their church, having a service now and again, going to people's houses, caring for the dead and what not. That's not training but pastoral care and service of the congregation.

“Then there's also the training places in Japan that are aimed at credentialing these temple sons who are inheriting their father's temple and come from a long line of family care for this temple. They will go to one of these training monasteries for their practice to get their credentials and so there is a certain flavour of the practice at these monasteries where people train and an emphasis on the skills, mostly ceremonial, that you will need in the future. I think our stereotyping of Zen Buddhism in Japan by the West has tended to be of these monastic centres whereas, really, a lot of it is just this local temple life.

“Then there are places that are more mainstream, that maybe don't offer credentials. For example, the first place I was at, Bukkokuji, it's related to the Sanbokyodan (sic)<sup>386</sup> line. There was a teacher there, Tange Harada<sup>387</sup> who was a *Dharma* brother of Sogaku Harada,<sup>388</sup> or actually a *Dharma* relation, perhaps disciple, I forget. Anyway, there are some places where they don't care who comes. You don't need a licence to be there and you don't get the certificate on completion. You're just there to practice so there is a lot of diversity in what

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<sup>384</sup> Japanese Zen temples are usually inherited by the son of the abbot and passed down through the generations.

<sup>385</sup> Eiheiiji and Sojiji are the two head temples of the *Sōtō* school. Eiheiiji is located in the city of Fukui. Lying 300 miles to its east is Sojiji, in the port city of Yokohama, 25 miles south of Tokyo see [www.sojiji.jp/english/](http://www.sojiji.jp/english/) and <https://daihonzan-eiheiji.com/en/> [both web sites accessed August 31, 2020].

<sup>386</sup> Sanbokyodan changed its name to Sanbō Zen in 2014.

<sup>387</sup> Tange Harada (1924-2018) taught at Bukkoku-ji for almost six decades and welcomed foreigners to his temple.

<sup>388</sup> Sogaku Harada (1871-1961) grew up in the *Sōtō* tradition but, unusually, integrated *kōan* study into his teaching. As well as Tange Harada, Sogaku's *Dharma* heirs included Hakuun Yasutani, founder of the Sanbō Zen sect.

those temples offer. And, likewise, in the West there's a whole range of services, too.

### **About practising in the *Sōtō* tradition**

"I've dabbled elsewhere but in Japan I was mostly at three temples – I was at a monastery that was off the radar, a non-certifying monastery and, along with that, was more *zazen* focussed and less formal, less ceremonial, certainly for the western members as they weren't interested in training the westerners for ceremony. The heart of it – *zazen* and *shikantaza*<sup>389</sup> – was practised. There was also *sanzen*<sup>390</sup>, which is more of a *Rinzai* term.

"Then I also practised at a place called Bukkokuji and another temple called Hokyōji. The latter was a certifying temple so there was a mix of temple sons and people who had found their own way to the practice. There was a sense of just being there to get the paperwork and the licence. The striking thing about that, and I think it characterises *Sōtō* Zen in a way, was the intense focus on ritual forms, the ceremonial life. There was not so much *zazen* practice and this is something we would often think about at Tassajara<sup>391</sup> here in the States. We would think about how many, many hours of *zazen* practice we would do and then look at these mainstream *Sōtō* places, the head monasteries in Japan. They were only sitting two or three times a day. We felt that we were doing more *zazen* than they were but missed the feeling of being in one of those monasteries, of this unbroken ceremony unfolding all day long.

"At Tassajara we would do some *zazen* and then we take a break or do some work. We were in this very formal thing for a while, the *zazen*, or ceremony, and then we would just .... wander around, whereas in the Japanese monasteries, it's just completely unbroken. I mean, there's work but even the work is very formal. The main practice is ceremonial, you are engaging in ceremony. There's always a

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<sup>389</sup> *Shikantaza* can be translated as 'just sitting', a type of *zazen* in which the meditator simply sits. This practice is associated with *Sōtō* Zen. It was a key attraction of the Zen master Dōgen, who introduced *Sōtō* Zen to Japan after studying it during a stay in China. In Chapter Eight, Part B, I compare and contrast the thinking of Dōgen with that of William of St Thierry. Within this, I include a brief biography of Dōgen and his spiritual journey.

<sup>390</sup> *Sanzen* is a Japanese word used to describe the one-to-one meetings that take place between teacher and disciple. The word is associated with the *Rinzai* tradition. *Dokusan* is an equivalent word used in the *Sōtō* Zen school.

<sup>391</sup> Like Green Gulch Farm, Tassajara is an affiliate of the San Francisco Zen Center.

form, I mean, how you line up your shoes outside the room you just came into in the order of seniority to whose shoes your shoes go behind to how you move in the temple all day so I just found there was less *zazen*, it was much more rigorous than the training I had done at Tassajara, which had ‘off times’ and a bit of personal space and personal time but those two things in traditional Japanese temple life have been taken away.

### **On the spread of *Sōtō* Zen in the United States**

“I don’t know the breakdown, but my guess would be that *Sōtō* is the largest branch (*of Zen Buddhism*) – there’s definitely more *Sōtō* Zen in the United States than there is *Rinzai* Zen and *Sanbō* Zen. Suzuki *Rōshi*, who founded the San Francisco Zen Center, had a big impact. There are around a hundred certified full members, which means *Dharma* transmitted members. Most – or at least a lot – of the Zen that is happening is these sitting groups all over the place where somebody is practising *zazen* once or twice a week and maybe reading from a book together sometimes. Those groups may not have any particular denomination. And it’s true in Japan, too, as many parishioners there don’t know quite what sect they are following. The distinctions from inside may be important but not such a big deal outside.

“The adaption of Zen to the West started in Japan 150 years ago. It was not like it was a continuous unbroken thing that was unaffected by contact with the West. It was consciously re-invented in the Meiji<sup>392</sup> period and shortly after that era adapted to accommodate western values, to carry the essence of Japanese culture. It wasn’t like it came pure and then the second point is that the inner relations can get lost. Already the West was feeding back to Japan before Suzuki *Rōshi* got here. He was already growing up in a western influenced Zen. Then there’s people in Thai monasteries practising Theravāda and reading Suzuki *Rōshi*! It’s all in the blender.

### **On the motivation for doing *zazen***

“I was just reading about Suzuki *Rōshi* giving a talk and one of his comments was that he can’t figure out why people were meditating. He asked them and he

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<sup>392</sup> The *Meiji* era ran from 1868 to 1912.

would feel that people just made up something. But, then, sometimes they'd say 'I don't know' and he said 'that's right, that's the one.' Of all the answers people gave him about why they do this practice – people sometimes give a very honest answer and just say they don't know or they'd say 'I'm anxious, I can't deal with my mind' or they'd say 'to become a buddha' or whatever else they say, and the answers don't feel quite right but then they say they don't know and Suzuki said, yeah, that's right, so I think people's motivation is something in their life. Most of us are practising out of a motivation to improve ourselves and then, within that, we're offered this teaching that what we're doing in *zazen* is deeper and wider than that. What we're not practising in *Sōtō* Zen is clear and, I think, more clear now than maybe 50 years ago in terms of practitioners who come. There's not an idea of becoming enlightened through meditation, like 'I really want to become enlightened'. People may have that notion but you see it less and less, this kind of naïve, ideological idea that I'm going to sit and meditate and just attain some mental state that's enlightenment. That seems like less of a motivation. *Sōtō* Zen doesn't really have *kenshō*,<sup>393</sup> well, there's some debate about that – but *Sōtō* Zen doesn't emphasise *kenshō* like Sanbokyodan has, where *kenshō* is the motivation that drives you to practice.

### **Commentary**

As I said in the introductory text, one of the reasons I interviewed Rutschman-Byler was that I wanted to investigate what Zen Buddhism looked like in a *Sōtō* monastery in Japan, before it mutated in the West. Rutschman-Byler, having lived in temples in Japan, was able to summarise the three main categories of religious life as:

- a) Temples passed down through generations, inhabited by a Zen priest and his family. The role of these temples is chiefly pastoral.

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<sup>393</sup> A Japanese word that translates, approximately, to 'seeing one's true nature'.

b) Temples that act as a training centre, where formal qualifications are achieved to conduct ceremonies and rites.

c) Temples which act as hospitality centres where they welcome guests.

Rutschman-Byler points out that the western image of Japanese temples being chiefly training centres with rows of monks meditating under the watchful eye of a kyosaku-wielding monitor is a misconception. Most temples are, in fact, family-run, passed down through the generations. I believe that this situation is different in the West, with the generational family temple concept being distinctly Japanese. I also imagine that, in the West, Zen training temples also provide hospitality. Rutschman-Byler also pointed to the harsher temple environment in Japan.

Rutschman-Byler referred to a syncretic, general combining of different expressions of Buddhism. Rutschman-Byler said this is true within Zen Buddhism itself and in the wider Buddhist tradition. He first explained that people in 'sitting' groups are not always aware of which school they were following, and said this is true both in the United States and in Japan. He then also gave an example of monks in a Thai (Theravāda) monastery reading Suzuki's work (*Sōtō Zen*). Another example is the teaching of the popular Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hahn, which draws on different Buddhist schools.

## **5.6 Yuko Yamada**

*Yamada was not brought up in any particular faith but, as an adult, converted to Catholicism and, six years later, entered a Franciscan order. She then became*

*increasingly drawn to zazen practice and eventually left the Catholic Church. She has now taken vows as a Buddhist nun and is based at Shogakuji, a Sōtō Zen temple in Tokyo. I interviewed Yamada because her account of why she left the Church is particularly germane to the subject of this thesis.*

## **Background**

“Before I became a Catholic nun, I was practising Japanese tea ceremony and my mother and grandmother was a tea master and they were teaching tea ceremony in my house. Tea ceremony is based on Zen spirit so I have some kind of connection with Zen Buddhism but I was not so intimate about the practice (*before becoming a Catholic nun*). My parents are Buddhist so I sometimes went to temple for funeral or memorial services for ancestors but I did not think of myself as a Buddhist, I just did it for Japanese culture and just followed my parents. I started going to church when I was at college and I was baptised two or three years after I graduated. I entered a Franciscan convent when I was 29 because I was greatly influenced by the movie “Brother Sun, Sister Moon.”

## **Introduction to zazen**

“I really liked the Catholic monastery and monastic life but after a few years I felt something missing but didn’t know what and I was searching, praying and then a priest came to us to say mass and spoke about *zazen* meditation. I thought maybe this is what I am missing. I never tried *zazen* practice but I knew the word Zen and I remembered that I’ve read some books about it before entering the monastery. I enjoyed monastic life and Catholic prayer but the Japanese element was missing, I felt. I thought *zazen* must be a style of Japanese prayer. That’s why I was interested in *zazen* meditation, but not Zen Buddhism because I didn’t know about Zen Buddhism. I just wanted to try *zazen* meditation.

“We weren’t allowed to practise *zazen* in the monastery and it was cloistered so I couldn’t go out to practise it. It was impossible. I talked about my feelings to my spiritual father<sup>394</sup> and also the abbess of the monastery and they said if you really want to do *zazen* you have to leave. Nowadays, Catholics and Buddhists have a connection (*through inter-faith dialogue*) and they practise with each other, but

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<sup>394</sup> Yamada is referring to her spiritual director.



at that time – it was 20 years ago – we were not allowed to practise *zazen* inside of the monastery so I was in a dilemma. I really liked the Catholic monastic life and I really wanted to continue, but I felt that I have to stay here all my life and if I don't try *zazen* now I might regret it.

### **Leaving the cloister**

"I thought I have this kind of idea but felt that some bigger power pushed me. I didn't understand why I have this kind of feeling and why I have power to get out of the convent. I can't imagine it now but at the time the emotion was very strong so feel some big power pushed me. It was a very difficult decision for me to leave. I liked that Catholic monastery very much and I liked the monastic life so it was difficult.

"I didn't know anything about outside the monastery because it was cloistered so I almost never went out. It was not near my home town so I don't know anybody around there, so I just hailed a taxi and asked the driver to bring me to the temple. The driver asked me which temple but I said I don't know, whichever, I said. Fortunately, he took me to the biggest temple in the town and it was *Sōtō* Zen, just by chance.

"At the temple, I just talked to the abbot and said that I wanted to try *zazen* and that was the only thing I could tell him because I didn't know anything else. He doubted me because, you know, I just came out from the (*Catholic*) monastery and I had nothing. I was wearing the ordinary clothes that I was wearing when I entered the monastery. I entered the monastery in the spring and left in the winter so I was wearing spring clothes in winter and it looked very strange. I had cut my hair and never took off the veil in front of people. I was really ashamed to show the bald hair to people so I was wearing a scarf. I must have looked very strange. So that priest, he doubted me. He showed me a film about very strict Zen practice at a Buddhist convent which was recorded for Japanese TV programme. The priest felt maybe I was afraid but I was very excited and so he finally

suggested I go to the Buddhist convent because his temple wasn't a training monastery, it was a family temple. Japanese monks have a wife and children.<sup>395</sup>

"The priest suggested I go to Nagoya to practise but I cannot go direct there with my outfit, it's too strange, but also he said I needed an appointment to see the abbess to go to the convent. First, I stopped at my parents' home because it was on the way to Nagoya in Shizuoka prefecture, near Mount Fuji. My parents were surprised to see me because they thought I was still in a Catholic monastery and then suddenly I appeared. They are Buddhist so if I will be in a Catholic monastery all my life I cannot come back to my home forever so my parents are very happy to see me after three years away. I wrote a letter to the abbess for appointment and decided to stay home and take care of my parents until I received the reply from the abbess. At that time, I didn't want to become a Buddhist nun, I just wanted to try *zazen*.

### **First *sesshin***

"After about three months, she wrote me back and said to come to *sesshin*. I didn't know anything about *sesshin* but she said to come on this day so I went to Nagoya. *Sesshin* is *zazen* training and it involved sitting all day from 4am to 9pm. I didn't know that. Everybody was just sitting all day in silence, no talking, very strange. At the beginning, I learned how to sit and how to eat<sup>396</sup> – it's very complicated, but finally I could try *zazen*. My mind was very ready but my body was not. It's very hard to keep cross-legged all day. My knees hurt and my back hurt and I didn't know how I would survive for three days.

"When the abbess wrote back she said if you sit *sesshin* for three days she would have an interview with me. I could not say I enjoyed my first experience of *zazen* but something in me changed. After *sesshin* my many thoughts disappeared. I

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<sup>395</sup> Japanese Zen Buddhist monks and nuns are exceptional in that they are allowed to marry and raise families. In the previous interview, Jiryu Mark Rutschman-Byler explained the three main types of temple to be found in Japan. In summary, these are inherited family temples, training temples and centres of hospitality that take in guests for overnight stays.

<sup>396</sup> Meals are taken in Japanese monasteries using a set of different sized bowls that fit inside each other. These bowls are accompanied by chopsticks, a spoon and a spatula for scraping away the last particles of food from the bowls. The bowls and the eating implements are wrapped in a cloth and are intended for an individual's personal use while staying at the monastery. The wrapped cloth and its contents are usually referred to as '*oryoki*' in the *Sōtō* school and '*jihatsu*' in the *Rinzai* school.

completely refreshed myself and I feel something comfortable so I told the abbess this feeling and she said that *zazen* is the core practice of Buddhism. If you want to really understand *zazen* you have to empty your mind because now mind is full of Catholicism. You have many ideas about *zazen* and many delusions so first you have to empty yourself then you can learn new things. I thought this made sense. There was a monthly *zazen* meeting and every month a *sesshin* so I took part in this while I was living with parents. But after three years of my monastic experience, the secular life with my parents was quite difficult for me.

### **Becoming a Buddhist nun**

After two months the abbess called again. I think she had been watching me during *sesshin* and recognised that I already had spiritual practice from my three years in the Catholic monastery and allowed me to enter the Buddhist convent. Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was a prince but he gave up his status, family and all the possessions for searching the truth. If you have great inspiration to study Buddhism you have to give up everything as well, she said. I understood because, when I entered the Catholic monastery, I already gave up everything. I decided to jump into the Buddhist world. She ordained me and accepted me as a novice nun.

“At the time, I didn’t miss the Catholic convent because I was really eager to practise *zazen* but, later, I did miss it a little bit. I am 100 per cent Buddhist now so I don’t go to a Catholic church nor say Catholic prayers, ever. I don’t really pray consciously but I remember the prayers and on some occasions they still come up in my mind. I worked in Paris for three months in 2006 and was living near Notre Dame church so I stopped by there almost every morning before I went to the Zen centre. I am Buddhist now but I still really respect Catholicism. I like the Catholic Church and the atmosphere there. I had no other reason to leave the monastery but *zazen*.

“If I compare the doctrinal contents between Catholicism and Buddhism, there are big differences. However, I rather have practice viewpoint. As my personal faith, the most important thing was this question: “how do I live my life? From this viewpoint, I didn’t really understand the difference between a Catholic

monastery and a Buddhist convent. The daily life is basically the same, you know, morning prayer and daily rituals. Before, I prayed to Jesus Christ and Mother Mary, later to Buddha so I didn't really feel a conflict but I rather felt a kind of confusion, what's the difference, it seems the same. Later, I continued *zazen* practice and studied Buddhism at a university and a graduate school, and I grasped the difference in my own way. In Buddhism, we don't pray to Buddha. Buddha is our true nature. We call it Buddha nature and practice is to realise and manifest it.

"When I was Catholic, I was Catholic and then, when I am Buddhist, I am Buddhist. I don't have two faiths at one time so no conflict,<sup>397</sup> and I don't want to compare the two. Both of them are wonderful religions. I met many serious clergy in both congregations. I'm proud of them and I hope to be one of them."

### **Commentary**

The main point that I would like to raise in Yamada's testimony concerns her conversion from Catholicism to *Sōtō* Zen Buddhism. In the experience I have acquired so far on Catholics who practise *zazen*, those who are members of the *Sōtō* or *Rinzai* schools have tended to abandon their Catholic faith. I am not saying that it is unheard of for a Catholic to practise alongside membership of either of these schools, but I have not encountered it during my research. There are certainly former Catholics who have become members of these schools, and some have been interviewed in this chapter, but they are not practising Catholicism alongside Zen Buddhism as found in the *Sōtō* or *Rinzai* schools. Additionally, none of the *zazen*-practising Christians I interviewed in Chapter Four belong to a *sangha* in the

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<sup>397</sup> An article appeared in *Tricycle* magazine about Yamada's journey. The article's headline was 'One Nun, Two Faiths'. Yamada said that this headline was misleading because it suggested she was wrestling with Catholicism and Buddhism at the same time. Yamada said that this is inaccurate. As Yamada has pointed out in this interview, she practised as a Catholic and then, later, converted to Buddhism. See <https://tricycle.org/magazine/catholic-zen-nun/> [accessed August 2020].

*Sōtō* or *Rinzai* schools. Sometimes, Catholics who join either the *Sōtō* or *Rinzai* schools had distanced themselves from the Church long before coming into contact with Zen Buddhism,<sup>398</sup> although this was clearly not the case with Yamada.

I suspect that a further reason why Christians might find it difficult to practise *zazen* in a *Sōtō* or *Rinzai sangha* is that there is a definite Zen Buddhist ethos attached to these schools and *zazen* is just part of the teaching. Migaku Sato, a *zazen* teacher who I interviewed in Chapter Four, certainly suggested that the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools maintained a Zen Buddhism ethos. I think it would be difficult to join one of these schools, undertake the *zazen* aspect and reject the rest. By undertaking *zazen* in one of these schools, the individual becomes immersed in the wider Buddhist philosophy. This appears to have been the case with Yamada – she wanted to learn *zazen* and the *Sōtō* Zen abbess told her that she must lose her Catholic line of thinking.

In the Sanbō Zen or White Plum traditions, Christians are able to become members. It is a fundamental principle of contemporary Zen schools that *zazen* is compatible with any faith tradition. When a Catholic joins an organisation such as Sanbō Zen, there is no Buddhist doctrine that one is expected to assimilate. In fact, *zazen* is the whole of Sanbō Zen. Without *zazen*, there is no Sanbō Zen. I am curious whether Yamada would have left the Catholic Church and her religious order if her

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<sup>398</sup> When I was researching possible interviewees, I discovered some former Catholics who had left the Church some time earlier for specific reasons, such as the policy of not ordaining women and no longer believing in God. After having a brief discussion with some of them, I discerned that their stories would not contribute in responding to my research question so are not included in this thesis.

spiritual director and abbess had been receptive to the practice of zazen.

## - PART III -

# TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

### Introduction and overview of Part III

After reviewing the interviews that had taken place in the previous two chapters, it became clear that some of the discussion themes had developed into major issues that were worthy of in-depth treatment. I would have liked to have researched each one of these sub-topics because they were all pertinent to this thesis, but there was insufficient space to address more than three subjects at the depth I desired. In choosing which sub-topics to analyse, I considered their relevance to my thesis, relevance to contemporary spirituality and the extent to which they contributed to answering my research question. I have, therefore, selected the following subjects for analysis:

- **The nature of *jukai* and its overlap with Catholic sacraments of initiation**

Many of the Christians I interviewed who practise *zazen* had taken part in a *jukai* ceremony, which some *sangha* consider to be an initiation ceremony into Zen Buddhism.<sup>399</sup> In Chapter Six, I begin by describing when and how *jukai* might take place. I then examine whether there is a relationship between the initiation aspect of *jukai* and the Catholic sacraments of initiation.<sup>400</sup>

- **Zen Buddhist-Catholic interreligious relationships: dialogue and dual belonging**

In Chapter Seven, I look at different aspects of Zen Buddhist-Catholic relationships and ask whether having two masters is possible. I conclude the

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<sup>399</sup> In the spirit of the voluntary nature of *jukai*, the Red Cedar Zen Community, a *Sōtō sangha* in the US state of Washington, emphasises on its website that individuals who wish to formalise their desire to incorporate the precepts into their lives may do so through a *jukai* ceremony. The website states that this step is optional and is the decision of the individual concerned. Other Zen groups have similar policies. See <https://redcedarzen.org/Precepts-and-Jukai> [accessed November 22, 2020].

<sup>400</sup> There are three Catholic sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and the eucharist. This chapter is only concerned with baptism and confirmation.

chapter by examining whether a Catholic's recitation of the Three Treasures is contrary to the teaching outlined in magisterial documents.

▪ **Contemplative prayer *vis-à-vis zazen***

Chapter Eight looks at Christian prayer alongside *zazen* and whether there is a meeting of the two, or even an overlap. I also discuss the contemporary trend towards a universal spirituality. A chief component of this chapter is a 'compare and contrast' discussion between the thinking of Eisei Dōgen, the founder of the *Sōtō* Zen school in Japan, and William of Saint Thierry, former Benedictine abbot who later joined the Cistercians.

In addressing these subjects, particularly those in Chapters Seven and Eight, I have consulted Church documents and they are summarised below. These documents are listed in four groupings: constitutions, declarations, encyclicals and material published by dicasteries of the Roman Curia.<sup>401</sup>

Where there is more than one document in a grouping, they are shown in reverse chronological order.

## CONSTITUTION

- ***Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium (Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964):*** *Lumen Gentium* is one of the four constitutions

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<sup>401</sup> The 16 documents produced during the Second Vatican Council include four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations, all of which are binding to the whole Church. See *A Liturgical Companion to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council* (2016), Introduction by Faggioli, section titled Documents of Vatican II, kindle edition. The 16 documents are often referred to collectively but they have differing levels of authority, solemnity and status. A **constitution** carries the highest authority, and four (including *Lumen Gentium*) were published during the Second Vatican Council. See O'Malley, J. (2008), 2-3. A constitution is issued by a pope, in his name and it addresses matters of concern to the Church. See Hitchcock, H.H. (2002) *The Authority of Church Documents, Adoremus* <https://adoremus.org/2002/09/the-authority-of-church-documents/> [accessed July 8, 2022]. A **declaration** was a further type of Council document which served to set out the Church's position on a specific, new issue or a matter of law, see *A Liturgical Companion to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council* (2016); Imprimatur Very Reverend Ronald A. Hicks, Vicar General, Archdiocese of Chicago, June 2016; Nihil Obstat Very Reverend Daniel A. Smilanic, JCD, Vicar for Canonical Services, Archdiocese of Chicago, June 2016; Introduction by Faggioli, M., section titled 'The Documents of Vatican II', Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, kindle edition. An **encyclical** letter is usually addressed to a specific group of people, such as the bishops, the Church or the world. While encyclicals are one method a pope uses to disseminate teaching on a theological or doctrinal issue, these documents do not usually identify dogma. See Gaillardetz, R.R. (1958), *By What Authority?: a Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful*, Minnesota, United States of America: Liturgical Press, 80.



produced during the Second Vatican Council, and is designated as 'dogmatic'.

*Lumen Gentium* opens with the Synod's announcement that Jesus Christ is the Light of Nations and, because of this, it wished to bring this light to all peoples through the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>402</sup> Drawing on the words of John 1:1-10, the document describes the Church as a sheepfold, with Christ at the entrance.<sup>403</sup> Chapter II is of particular relevance to this thesis as it directly addresses the 'People of God' and illustrates how God desires to unite mankind and extend his salvation to all.<sup>404</sup> Within this chapter is a section devoted to non-Christians, or 'those who have not yet received the Gospel', as the document describes them, and the availability to all of Christ's salvific work. This document clearly states that all peoples are, in fact, united as brothers and sisters under one God. The head of this one people is Jesus Christ.

## DECLARATION

- ***Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate (Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965):*** *Nostra Aetate* is one of three declarations published during the second Vatican Council. It effectively marked the beginning of interreligious dialogue between the Catholic Church and other faiths. Declarations might be regarded as having less power but the changes in Church culture that documents such as *Nostra Aetate* have brought forth have proven that this has not been the case.<sup>405</sup>

This document concerns the Church's relationship with those of non-Christian faiths, making particular reference to Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Jews. It raises some of the existential questions asked by all peoples and highlights some of the uniqueness of the four main non-Christian belief

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<sup>402</sup> *LG*, n.1.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, n.6.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, n.9.

<sup>405</sup> *A Liturgical Companion to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council* (2016) Introductory chapter by Faggioli, M., section on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Liturgy Training Publications (kindle edition).

systems.<sup>406</sup> The document makes the point that the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is good and holy in the world's religions as they all usually contain elements of truth.<sup>407</sup> While these faiths differ from Christianity, other religions often echo themes found in Catholic teaching and are, consequently, treated by the Church with the highest esteem. Finally, the document points out that as God is Father of all, Christians must treat those of other faiths in a brotherly manner.<sup>408</sup>

## ENCYCLICALS

- ***On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, Redemptoris Missio (Pope John Paul II, December 7, 1990)***: In the introduction of this encyclical, Pope John Paul II describes how his contact with non-Christians led him to believe more deeply in the urgency of missionary activity. The wounded world in which we live provides the Church with an opportunity to bring the Gospel to all who inhabit it. This document invites the Church to restore its missionary work in response to St. Paul's impassioned exclamation:<sup>409</sup>

For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For the necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16)

The first chapter, 'Jesus Christ, the only Saviour', is of particular interest, as is the fifth chapter, 'the paths of mission' as this includes a section on dialogue with other religions. The first chapter describes how the Church's mission is founded upon Jesus Christ, as outlined in the words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.<sup>410</sup> The document is a reminder that Jesus Christ is the way to the Father and that he is the sole source of salvation, the one mediator between man and God, a ransom for all

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<sup>406</sup> *NA*, n.1-4.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, n.2

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, n.5.

<sup>409</sup> *RM*, n.1.

<sup>410</sup> The first half of this creed, which is repeated from *RM* n.4, is: "I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father... For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

peoples.<sup>411</sup> The document reminds the reader that Christ's salvation is universal, available to all, and is not restricted to Christians.<sup>412</sup>

Paragraphs 55-57 of Chapter Five describe how dialogue with people of other religions is part of the Church's evangelising mission. In recalling Pope John Paul's Letter to the Fifth Plenary Assembly of Asian Bishops' Conferences of June 23, and L'Osservatore Romano of July 18, 1990, the document states that while the Church recognises all that is good and holy in other faiths, it must remain committed to its responsibility to proclaim that Jesus Christ is 'the way, and the truth and the life.'<sup>413</sup> The document reminds individuals who take part in interreligious dialogue that they must engage with people of other faiths in a spirit of mutually enriching exchange while keeping in mind their own Christian beliefs.<sup>414</sup> All Catholics have a duty to engage in dialogue, but in different ways and to varying degrees.<sup>415</sup>

- ***On the Church, Ecclesiam Suam (Pope Paul VI, August 6, 1964):*** This encyclical describes how crucial it is that the Catholic Church engages with the world. The document describes three main policies that serve to guide the work of the Council. These policies are 'self-awareness', 'renewal' and 'dialogue'. The latter policy is the largest and points out that while the Church must remain distinct from the world, dialogue is essential for dissemination of its message. The document reminds the faithful that the originator of discourse is God himself, who communicates to his people a 'dialogue of salvation' in a variety of ways, such as revelation, the Word and his response to prayer. God's own dialogue of salvation, his motivation, the methods he employs and the approaches he takes, provide a model in which the Church might also engage with the world. Effective dialogue must also bear four characteristics: clarity, humility, confidence and understanding one's audience. The encyclical ends by offering its unequivocal support to all efforts aimed at communicating the Gospel

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<sup>411</sup> *RM*, n.5.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, n.10.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, n.55.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 56.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, n.57.

message through various apostolates. I have included this encyclical because it provided a ground-breaking foundation for dialogue. It served as a basis for other documents related to engaging with people of other faiths, including two that are discussed in Chapter Seven: *Dialogue and Proclamation* and *The Attitude of the Church Toward Followers of Other Religions*. While this encyclical urges engagement between the Catholic Church and the world, it clearly states the place of Jesus Christ in the task of salvation.

#### **DOCUMENTS ISSUED BY DICASTERIES OF THE ROMAN CURIA**

- ***Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue/Pontifical Council for Culture: Jesus Christ Bearer of the Water of Life*<sup>416</sup> (provisionally published on February 2, 2003):** This document is intended to rectify erroneous thinking with regard to different aspects of God, Jesus Christ, spirituality and prayer. While this document concerns the New Age Movement, there are elements of it that can be applied to non-Christian prayer, particularly those related to perennial philosophy.
- **Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith: Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church – *Dominus Iesus***<sup>417</sup> (August 6, 2000): This document opens with a reminder of Jesus' command to proclaim the Gospel and to baptise all nations.<sup>418</sup> However, the Church's missionary activity is being challenged today by relativism, which has had the effect of blurring or confusing certain truths about Jesus Christ and Christian beliefs.<sup>419</sup> This document re-states that Jesus Christ is the one and only saviour of the world.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> See [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_20030203\\_new-age\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html)

<sup>417</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2000) Declaration "*Dominus Iesus*" on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. See [www.vatican.va/congregations/cfaith/documents/](http://www.vatican.va/congregations/cfaith/documents/) [accessed November 2021].

<sup>418</sup> *DI*, n.1.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, n.4.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, n.13.

I have included this document because it re-affirms Jesus Christ's unparalleled salvific mission and will assist me in responding to the question about non-Christian prayer.

- ***Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue/Congregation for Evangelisation of Peoples: Dialogue and Proclamation, Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (June 21, 1991)***: This document was published on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. The 1991 document opens by pointing out *Nostra Aetate*'s emphasis on interreligious dialogue and reminder that the Church is also obligated to proclaim Jesus Christ as the way the truth and the life. The purpose of the 1991 document is to provide further focus on two related, key areas: dialogue and proclamation. This document has been included in this thesis because it clarifies certain points with regard to interreligious dialogue and is, therefore, a source for Chapter Seven of this thesis.
- ***Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation (Orationis Formas) (October 15, 1989)***: This document addresses the subject of non-Christian prayer, particularly eastern methods. Given that many traditional forms of Christian prayer are now no longer practised, the document explains that some Christians are looking at whether their prayer can be enriched by meditation practices that have been imported from non-Christian faiths.<sup>421</sup> Discussed in the document are erroneous ways of praying that have been present since the first century and remain a temptation.<sup>422</sup> The document points out that there are some eastern methods of meditation in existence in the Christian world and these provide a temptation to fuse Christian meditation with non-Christian meditation.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> *OF*, n.3.

<sup>422</sup> *OF*, n.8-10.

<sup>423</sup> *OF*, n.12.

I have included this document because it will assist me in responding to the question concerning the possibility of Catholics participating in non-Christian prayer.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The nature of *jukai* and its overlap with Catholic sacraments of initiation

#### Introduction

In the Zen Buddhist tradition, the *jukai* ceremony is a public event that involves making vows to honour Buddhist precepts and live by the high ethical standards enshrined in them.<sup>424</sup> The *jukai* ceremony is an occasion in which the recipient might invite members of one's family and friends. This also enables them to witness the major step being taken, to understand the level of commitment promised and so encourage them to support their friend or relative in the future.<sup>425</sup> Members of the *sangha*, who would have journeyed with the *jukai* recipient, are also an important presence at the ceremony.

The *jukai* commitment can be regarded as an initiation rite into Zen Buddhism and a few even regard it, erroneously, as being the Buddhist equivalent of the Catholic initiation sacraments of baptism and confirmation.<sup>426</sup> In fact, four of my interviewees used the word *jukai* in the context of Catholic initiation sacraments so I decided to do some simple research on the internet to learn how frequent this usage was. I looked at the on-line chat forums Reddit,<sup>427</sup> Quora<sup>428</sup> and New

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<sup>424</sup> Magida, A. (2006) *Opening the Doors of Wonder: Reflections on Religious Rites of Passage*, California, United States of America: University of California Press  
<https://california.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1525/california/9780520245457.001.0001/upso-9780520245457> [accessed November 18, 2020 through institution].

<sup>425</sup> Anderson, R. (2001) *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts*, Colorado, United States of America: Shambala Publications [kindle edition], Chapter One, section titled 'What Makes You a Buddhist'?

<sup>426</sup> The Catholic sacraments of baptism and confirmation are two of the three sacraments of initiation. The third is the eucharist, but this is not included as it is not germane to this subject. I will address the subject of confirmation in detail later in this chapter.

<sup>427</sup> 'Reddit' is an on-line social platform in which subscribers can post news items and links of general interest. Other subscribers can then make comments and vote on the content. Reddit is continually updated, providing subscribers with a constant source of views, comments and debate.

<sup>428</sup> 'Quora' is an on-line community of subscribers who answer questions posed by visitors to the website. For a full transcript of the Quora posts, see [www.quora.com/How-do-you-get-started-with-Buddhism-Is-there-baptisms-and-rights-like-other-religions](http://www.quora.com/How-do-you-get-started-with-Buddhism-Is-there-baptisms-and-rights-like-other-religions) [accessed March 3, 2021].

Buddhist,<sup>429</sup> and some posts said there was no Buddhist equivalent of Christian initiation ceremonies. However, there were other posts that did equate *jukai* with a Christian initiation sacrament. For example, I discovered a series of posts on Reddit triggered by a person who had “decided” he was now a Buddhist and was “looking to formalise that commitment with the Zen equivalent to Christian baptism.”<sup>430</sup> The remainder of that person’s post, together with a small, relevant selection of the 26 responses is:<sup>431</sup>

**QUESTION:** There are many Zen groups in London. However, all these focus on what seems to be secular meditation classes rather than what I suppose is the equivalent to ‘baptism’.

**RESPONDENT 1:** I am a monk in the White Plum lineage of *Sōtō* Zen in America. There is an equivalent to a baptism; it is called the *jukai* ceremony .

**RESPONDENT 2:** The official ‘baptism’ you speak of would be “the taking of the five precepts” or a similar name, depending on what sect of Zen you talk about.

**RESPONDENT 3:** As far as being baptised as a Buddhist, I'm not aware of any ceremony for lay practitioners. I don't think it is a bad idea, but .....

**RESPONDENT 4:** As far as I am aware, there isn't a 'baptism' per se but there is a process where you get a Zen name – it seemed to me kind of like a confirmation name given to you by a senior practitioner.

There is a similar conversation on Quora:

**QUESTION:** How do you get started with Buddhism? Are there baptisms and rites like other religions?

**RESPONDENT 1:** Nichiren Shoshu and many other sects have an official “acceptance of the precepts” ceremony in which one agrees to become a Buddhist and follow the teachings of the sect. This is more like a confirmation than a baptism, I think.

**RESPONDENT 2:** You may regard “taking refuge” as a baptism in Buddhism. It’s an official statement or declaration of your faith in Buddhism.

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<sup>429</sup> ‘New Buddhist’ is a public chat site where people can post their opinions on subjects of their choosing or they can respond to others’ posts. Much of the content – but certainly not all – has some connection to Buddhism. See <https://newbuddhist.com> [accessed April 2, 2021].

<sup>430</sup> For a full transcript of the posts, see [www.reddit.com/r/Buddhism/comments/9dnr5/ask\\_becoming\\_buddhist/](http://www.reddit.com/r/Buddhism/comments/9dnr5/ask_becoming_buddhist/) [accessed March 1, 2020].

<sup>431</sup> Some of the posts have been edited for clarity and grammar.



On the website New Buddhist, there is further ambiguity, with both respondents to the question below clearly unsure of the difference between Christian and Buddhist ceremonies.

**QUESTION:** Is there a Buddhist version of a Christening? A couple of my friends either became Christians or returned to Christianity in their adult lives and had ceremonies to mark it – Christenings, or something similar. One of them asked me today if there was a Buddhist equivalent.

**RESPONDENT 1:** Yes, there is, the refuge ceremony.

**RESPONDENT 2:** Yes, we got certificates and names and a necklace after our ceremony.

I am cognisant that the above posts have not been generated through scholarly study but, nevertheless, they do reflect the understanding of some ordinary people who are interested in Buddhism. These are probably not isolated incidents and are likely to reflect the thinking of others, too.

Looking at websites does not make the subject any clearer. I found that the Zen in the Woods community in Houston, Texas, has a page on its website describing three levels of formal participation in Zen Buddhism. The third of these levels applies to members of a Zen Buddhist community who have received *jukai*, which it says is “approximately the equivalent of confirmation in a Christian community.”<sup>432</sup>

Yet another example is a website for a Tibetan Buddhist temple and retreat house in Malaysia, Kechara House.<sup>433</sup> The website advertised Kechara’s first ‘Buddhist baptism’ in May 2011 for all children aged 13 and under. The website explains that while the baptism ceremony is associated with Christianity, Buddhism also offers a similar version. One of the instructions for parents who wish their children to take part is to dress them in “nice, white clothing.” In some Buddhist countries, such as Tibet, Cambodia and China, white is the colour of mourning.

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<sup>432</sup> See [www.zen-in-the-woods.com/jukai.html](http://www.zen-in-the-woods.com/jukai.html) [accessed March 22, 2021].

<sup>433</sup> See [www.kechara.com/kechara-house/events/baptising-babies-into-buddhism/](http://www.kechara.com/kechara-house/events/baptising-babies-into-buddhism/) [accessed February 12, 2021].

In another example, a newsletter published by Daifukuji temple in Hawaii advertised a 'Sōtō Zen Buddhist Confirmation ceremony' in which the local bishop would officiate. Every *sangha* member over the age of 16 was invited to take part, when each person would receive a certificate of confirmation, a *wagesa*<sup>434</sup> and a Buddhist name. What was being advertised was, in fact, a *jukai* ceremony but there were elements of it that appeared to be Christian, which I found intriguing. I got in touch with a Jiko Nakade, who runs Daifukuji to find out more as I thought the confirmation ceremony in question might be a hybrid of East and West. Nakade, however, explained that the annual ceremony at Daifukuji is a Hawaii Sōtō Zen Buddhist version of *jukai* with no Christian elements at all and he sent me the programme so that I could see for myself. Nakade explained:

When the Japanese immigrants began to practice Buddhism in Hawaii, they did not have English titles for priests. They borrowed titles like 'Reverend' and 'Bishop' from the Christian tradition. To this day, these titles are still being used. We have even adopted the title 'deacon'<sup>435</sup> to refer to a lay Buddhist who has received training to assist a priest in services and ceremonies. In Hawaii, we refer to priests as 'ministers'.

Later, I also learned that the word 'confirmation' is also imported from Christianity, which I had suspected. However, the content of the ceremony was clearly Zen Buddhist so while the Daifukuji example was not a hybrid ceremony like I had thought, it was interesting to note how the use of imported vocabulary in a situation like this can mislead an outsider. I was, therefore, more cautious when researching my next website after inputting some key words into a search engine and the website of 'Zen Temple Switzerland' was listed in the results.<sup>436</sup> In reading through the temple's website, I could find no evidence of a *jukai* ceremony being offered<sup>437</sup> but what was available was a non-denominational 'baptism', complete with 'godparents'. The bespoke ceremony is tailor-made to the parents' wishes and includes recitation of the heart sutra, incense, cutting

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<sup>434</sup> A narrow strip of fabric, tied at the ends and worn over the shoulders of the wearer.

<sup>435</sup> This is misleading. A deacon in the Catholic Church is not a lay person but holds the position of the first level of ordained ministry. The number of years of formation is likely to vary around the world but in most dioceses in the UK it is five years, made up of a year of propaedeutic discernment and four years' formation.

<sup>436</sup> See <https://zen-temple.net/baptism/> [accessed April 9, 2021].

<sup>437</sup> I checked this with one of the two monks who run the temple and he confirmed that they do not offer a *jukai* ceremony.

strands of hair and/or the making of a footprint for a donation of CHF 700 (approximately £540).

Clearly, there is general confusion about *jukai*, and as the above example has illustrated, about baptism, too, to the extent that it is appropriate for me to include a chapter on this to clarify the situation. This will also prove especially useful to those who are engaged in inter-religious dialogue,<sup>438</sup> as they will almost certainly encounter this issue at some stage during discussions.

I have sought to explain the distinct trajectories of *jukai* and Catholic initiation sacraments by dividing this chapter into two parts. Part A describes the journey that leads a person to *jukai* and explains key elements of the ceremony. I have included a debate in this chapter about whether *jukai* is an initiation rite into Zen Buddhism because this is perhaps why parallels are drawn between that and Christian initiation sacraments. My initial plan was to include in the next chapter the discussion about *jukai* as an initiation into Buddhism because it touches on the subject of dual belonging, which I will be addressing in Chapter Seven. However, after much thought on this subject, I have concluded that it is more appropriately addressed in this chapter. Finally, I describe some of the key components of most *jukai* ceremonies.

In Part B, I contrast Zen Buddhist *jukai* with an exposition of the Catholic initiation sacraments of baptism and confirmation. This is a large area and I stress that I am not offering an exegesis but simply an insight into the Catholic nature of the two sacraments of initiation that people sometimes, incorrectly, associate with *jukai*.

## **PART A**

### **6.1 Why *jukai*?**

An individual's desire to seek *jukai* is the culmination of an inner process of

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<sup>438</sup> Drawing on sources such as the Holy See's Dicastery on Dialogue and Pope Paul II's address to the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue of April 26, 1990, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales interpreted inter-religious dialogue as "...simply living as good neighbours with those of other religions, or working together in matters of common concern, such as in issues of justice, peace, the integrity of creation and so forth. It includes a willingness, according to circumstances, to try to understand better the religion of one's neighbours, and to experience something of the religious life and culture. In other words, dialogue is above all a frame of mind, an attitude."

discernment where a person who has been practising *zazen* in a *sangha* arrives at the realisation that he or she wishes to make a formal commitment. The promises made at the *jukai* ceremony may differ slightly between schools and the particular group, or *sangha*, but what they have in common is that, at the heart of the ceremony, lie the three treasures and Buddhist precepts.<sup>439</sup> While *jukai* is voluntary, it is not an entitlement and is not granted because the recipient reaches a particular age, achieves a certain level of learning or has studied texts. If the recipient's teacher discerns that the student is not seeking *jukai* for the right reasons or is ill-prepared for this step, then the ceremony may not go ahead.<sup>440</sup> *Jukai* is not undertaken lightly and is usually the culmination of several years of general *zazen* practice, along with a period of focussed preparation. After the ceremony, the *jukai* recipient is formally recognised as a member of the *sangha*.

John Tarrant, Director of the Pacific Zen Institute, likens the *jukai* journey to that of a wedding in that both events are the result of considerable private discernment as to whether a long-term commitment is the right path. If the individual does conclude that he or she wishes to commit to following the precepts, there will be a time when the person involved decides that it is appropriate to make a public declaration of this process in the form of *jukai*.<sup>441</sup>

## **6.2 *Jukai* as an initiation rite**

There is a tendency in some circles to describe *jukai* as a 'baptism', and this could be because *jukai* is sometimes seen as an initiation into Zen Buddhism. This makes it easy to draw parallels between *jukai* and Catholic baptism as an initiation into Christianity. While baptism is a clear gateway into the Christian Church, there are differing opinions as to whether *jukai* makes one a Buddhist. For example, in *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts*, Sōtō Zen master Reb Anderson says that the precepts ceremony is a way of formally

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<sup>439</sup> Coleman, J.W. (2002) *The New Buddhism: the Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition*, New York, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 98. There is probably less variation in the traditional *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* schools in the format that *jukai* ceremonies follow. Coleman's comments were made in the context of western trends in Zen Buddhism and are more likely to apply to contemporary schools.

<sup>440</sup> Magida (2006), 200.

<sup>441</sup> *Teisho* delivered in Santa Rosa, California, by John Tarrant on November 15, 1992, titled 'The *jukai* ceremony and the way of the Bodhisattva.'

starting on a Buddhist journey but he does not explicitly state that *jukai* actually makes one a Buddhist.<sup>442</sup>

I was interested in pursuing whether *jukai* is the point at which people choose to call themselves Buddhist or whether it is a gradual realisation that is not attributable to a particular event. It is important for some practising Catholics that they understand precisely how the commitment they have made towards their own faith will grow in a Buddhist *sangha* setting. I contacted Zen teacher and *rōshi* Ray Cicetti,<sup>443</sup> at the Empty Bowl community in Morristown, New Jersey, part of the White Plum school, and discussed the matter with him. He conceded that, in his school, *jukai* is an initiation ceremony, which he describes as “a little bit like confirmation in the Catholic tradition”. However, he stresses the practical application of the precepts and how they are lived out.

I emphasise that they become *buddhas* rather than *Buddhists*,” said Cicetti. “It’s about living a tradition, living a moral and ethical life, applying and manifesting the practices in the way they actually live. So the emphasis is on living a *Bodhisattva* life rather than whether they are a Buddhist. I don’t particularly care whether they call themselves Buddhist or not. I’m not interested in pushing Buddhism. I’m interested in pushing enlightened beings to help our world. So, yes, technically they become Buddhist but that’s not so important.

From a personal point of view, Cicetti may not believe that it is important whether or not the *jukai* ceremony makes the recipient a Buddhist but it is an issue that concerns some Catholics. There are Catholics who practise *zazen* and sit with a *sangha* but feel that it is not appropriate for them to make the formal vows and the long-term commitment that *jukai* involves. Michael Holleran received *Dharma* transmission<sup>444</sup> in the White Plum school in 2009 and runs his own *zendo*, the Dragon’s Eye. He said:

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<sup>442</sup> Anderson, 5.

<sup>443</sup> Cicetti is also a lay preceptor in the White Plum, which means he is authorised to transmit *jukai*. I have conducted an in-depth interview with Cicetti, which can be read in Chapter Five.

<sup>444</sup> It is not usually necessary to undergo *jukai* to receive *Dharma* transmission. They are two separate ceremonies, with different meanings.

I didn't take part in a *jukai* ceremony and I wouldn't do so because that would make me a Buddhist. I am a Catholic. Robert Kennedy<sup>445</sup> and I made a definite and conscious decision not to do so (*to receive jukai*) as it would create confusion among Buddhists and our Catholic confreres. I didn't see myself as a Buddhist priest because I am already a priest, a Catholic priest.<sup>446</sup>

As well as his practice of *zazen*, Holleran spent eight years learning yoga-type meditation with an arhatic yoga teacher and has studied kabbalah<sup>447</sup> so he is clearly open-minded about exploring 'imported' techniques that aid prayer. He has even received *Dharma* transmission in Zen Buddhism and refers to himself as a 'dual believer', yet *jukai* represented a step he was unable to take. I will not further elaborate on the subject of dual belonging here because I will be discussing this in my next chapter.

*Jukai* is clearly a perplexing subject so I did a little further research on the topic. I decided to check a few *sangha* websites, particularly those of the contemporary schools that either originated in the West or which began in Japan but welcomed foreigners, to learn their views on how they regard *jukai* as an initiation ceremony. In my opinion, it is helpful that Christians know in advance what the expectations are of them regarding *jukai* before they begin to sit with a particular *sangha*.

In looking at these *sangha* websites, it is not always obvious whether a particular group regards *jukai* as an initiation ceremony. One of the exceptions, perhaps, is the Toronto Zen Center, which follows Philip Kapleau's teaching and was once part of his Rochester Zen Center network, but is now independent. Not only does the Toronto Zen Center explicitly state that the *jukai* ritual is a Buddhist initiation

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<sup>445</sup> Holleran is referring to Robert Kennedy, S.J., the Jesuit priest who lives in New Jersey and who also belongs to the White Plum school. I reviewed Kennedy's book *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit* in Chapter Two, section 2.1.7 and I have included some of his thinking in Chapter Seven 'Zen Buddhist-Catholic interreligious relationships: dialogue and dual belonging, see section 7.3 'Early Catholic perspectives on Catholic-Zen Buddhist dialogue'.

<sup>446</sup> Holleran and Kennedy are not the only Catholics to decline *jukai*. My interviewee Migaku Sato (see Chapter Four, section 4.11) explained that his *sangha* had lost Christian members who felt that receiving *jukai* was incompatible with their beliefs.

<sup>447</sup> Kabbalah is an ancient form of Jewish mysticism. Holleran was speaking about inter-spiritual practices with Kathy Koller on the meditation talk show 'Radiance' on November 13, 2014 and, as well as Zen, he mentioned his interest in yoga and kabbalah. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8rWdpncfSY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8rWdpncfSY) [viewed January 2, 2021].

ceremony but describes it as ‘essential’ to one’s journey.<sup>448</sup> I was also concerned about this information because any Christians in the *sangha* might feel pressure to take a step with which they were not comfortable.

I decided to contact the Toronto Zen Center to clarify the position regarding *jukai* and Christians and sent an email to the address for general enquiries. The abbot, Taigen Henderson, responded straight away, and we had a brief exchange of emails (which I understood was his preferred method of communication).

Henderson said:

As far as my understanding goes, one can practice under any tradition and Right View is non-dual, not a particular view reserved for those who call themselves Buddhist. So there is no Buddhist view, just those who follow the precepts and practice. However, most Christians who I have taught (westerners) do find that they have difficulty with Buddhist rituals. I don’t have a problem (and again this is an individual, not a ‘Buddhist perspective’, since there is no such thing) with a Christian taking the precepts, but many Christian ministers ask that their parishioners not do chanting, bowing and other Buddhist rituals and some even may think it is unholy.

In response to my question to Henderson on whether Christians could forego receiving *jukai* if they felt uncomfortable about this ceremony, Henderson said that it was “absolutely” permissible. I also asked Henderson if *jukai* was an initiation into Buddhism and he responded that it is the “traditional acknowledgement and commitment that one will follow the Way of the Buddha”. I thought this response did not fully answer my question, and perhaps even slightly contradicted the Toronto Zen Center’s website, so I asked for further clarification. His response was:

In one sense there is no such thing as a ‘Buddhist’. That is what I was pointing to... not trying to skirt the question as you put it. When you think about it, there is not a ‘Buddhist’ answer to the question because a real practitioner of the Buddha’s way does not hold to fixed views (such as ‘I am a Buddhist’). So yes, *jukai* is the ceremony that one takes to indicate

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<sup>448</sup> The website of the Toronto Zen Center says: “Those who participate in the *jukai* ceremony are expressing their intention – as Buddhists – to follow the path of Buddhism, by first making repentance, and then vowing to uphold the Buddhist precepts. *Jukai* is the single most important ceremony for a Buddhist, and is essential for those who wish to continue in their practice of zen.” See <https://torontozen.org/events/jukai.html> [accessed November 22, 2020]. In the glossary section of the website, *jukai* is defined as: “Ceremony of receiving (*ju*) the Buddhist Precepts (*kai*) from an ordained teacher. This is a formal initiation into Buddhism, making one a member of the Buddha’s family.”

that they intend to follow the precepts and the Way of the Buddha, but you don't really become anything.

In saying that there is no such thing as a 'Buddhist', Henderson may well be referring to the western colonialists' construction of Buddhism as a religion.<sup>449</sup> Clearly, whether or not *jukai* is looked upon as an initiation into Zen Buddhism very much depends upon the school and, sometimes, even the individual, as Cicetti inferred. It is apparent that one does not necessarily need anything to make one a Buddhist. I was still not completely satisfied with Henderson's response because of its clear contradiction with the website. In addition to that, there are also many people who call themselves 'Buddhist' and are happy to do so.

Reb Anderson of the San Francisco Zen Center, however, does have an explanation as to why some North Americans might avoid the term 'Buddhist'. In his book *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts* Anderson says that there is a reluctance among *jukai* recipients to claim they are Buddhist because Americans, in particular, do not like to be categorised as an 'ist'. Such people, Anderson has found, are willing to say that they are following the Buddha's teachings but they do not consider themselves Buddhist. Other people, said Anderson, do not refer to themselves as Buddhist because they wish to avoid being part of an institution. Anderson sometimes asks people who have just received *jukai* whether they consider themselves Buddhist and most respond that they do not. He then asks them if they consider themselves Zen students and, to this question, they often say that they do. If he then asks if the *jukai* recipients feel a responsibility in practising the precepts, virtually all respond that they do.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> The term 'Buddhism' as a religion is said to have been devised by western scholars around 1820 when colonists observed distinct groups of people yet all observed the teachings of Gautama. See Almond, P.C. (1988), *The British Discovery of Buddhism*, New York, United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 10.

<sup>450</sup> Anderson, R. (2001) *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts*, Colorado, United States of America: Shambhala Publications, Inc. [kindle edition], 5



Migaku Sato,<sup>451</sup> who I interviewed in Chapter Four, explained that the Sanbō Zen school views *jukai* simply as a public declaration of a recipient's formal intention to commit to *zazen*. Sato said:

Normally, *jukai* is understood as a kind of Buddhist baptism in which you become 'Buddhist' and you stay with it, as a confession. In Sanbō Zen, we understand this particular term *jukai* in a very fundamental and original way – original, in a sense that it is the very beginning. We understand *jukai* as your self-expression of readiness and of commitment to engage in this practice (*of zazen*).

Zen practice has nothing to do with whether you are Catholic or Protestant or Muslim or non-believer or whatever. If you are ready to commit yourself to this practice of *zazen*, and if you want to make this promise to yourself, then you can receive *jukai*. Some Catholic people within Sanbō Zen had, in fact, difficulty with this understanding and they have actually left. For those people, *jukai* did seem like a Buddhist baptism and felt that a Christian could not take part.

Sato did not say exactly what objections Christians had over participating in a *jukai* ceremony. Reasons could include uncertainty about the possibility of entering into dual belonging, which I have already pointed out that I will be addressing in the next chapter, the possible time commitment of membership to both a Catholic worshipping community and a *sangha*, a personal preference to undertake *zazen* but not wishing to go any deeper and a reluctance to 'go public' with a Buddhist practice because of the recipient's high profile in another religion.

It is unlikely that the debate on *jukai* as an initiation ceremony can ever be agreed sufficiently to be able to make a decision that would apply across all Zen Buddhist schools because there is no official, central Buddhist 'voice'. Zen Buddhist schools have become extremely fragmented, particularly the contemporary outgrowths, making generalisations difficult. Christians who do not wish to undergo *jukai* might discuss this with their teacher or *sangha* leader when they first join a *zazen* group.

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<sup>451</sup> A full transcript of my interview with Sato can be found in Chapter Four.

### 6.3 The *jukai* ceremony

In the previous section, I put forth some of the arguments as to whether *jukai* is an initiation into Zen Buddhism and, if it is, how a Christian might respond. In this section, I turn to the *jukai* ceremony itself, pointing out some of its main components. There are some common features to *jukai* that tend to be shared across the Zen Buddhist schools, but the exact design of those features can differ among groups.

Whatever school the *jukai* recipient belongs to, there will almost certainly be a period of focussed preparation prior to the ceremony. There is variation among schools and *sangha* in the length of time an individual has been practising *zazen* before requesting *jukai*, although most would have at least three years' experience.<sup>452</sup> After being given permission to take the vows, there is usually a period of six months' preparation and practice before the ceremony.

Preparations for *jukai* include studying the ceremony and carrying out special practices, such as prostrations. Sometimes there is a week-long meditation retreat immediately prior to the ceremony, including lectures and discussion on the precepts and time for individual study.<sup>453</sup>

#### 6.3.1 The precepts

The precepts are a set of ethical values that guide *sangha* members in their daily lives, even though they may never formally receive *jukai*. The difference that *jukai* makes is that the *sangha* member has made a public vow to uphold the precepts and to conduct one's activities accordingly. The precepts are a model for living that aids towards achieving a harmonious balance in life. The precepts are not a guarantee of this and it is entirely possible that this balance can be achieved without ever receiving *jukai*. The aim is, however, that the vows made at the ceremony will become an integral part of the recipient's life.<sup>454</sup> Reciting the

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<sup>452</sup> Magida (2006), 204. John Daido Looi (1931-2009), the founder of Zen Mountain Monastery, first received *jukai* when he became a Buddhist, and it involved no ceremony at all. His teacher simply made the rest of the *sangha* aware that Looi had a new name. Four years later, in 1975, his second teacher actually conducted the ceremony. After reading Looi's account of his first *jukai*, one is left with the impression that the absence of a ceremony was not normal practice.

<sup>453</sup> Anderson (2001), 3.

<sup>454</sup> *Teisho* given by teacher Keizan Scott on July 12, 2010 to members of Stonewater Zen Sangha in Liverpool on the three ways that they can deepen their commitment to Zen practice.

precepts is not reserved solely for *jukai* as groups may include them in other ceremonies, too.<sup>455</sup>

There are 16 precepts and these are divided into three categories: The Three Refuges, The Three General Precepts and The Ten Cardinal Precepts.<sup>456</sup> In many schools, including most *sanghas* in the traditional *Sōtō* sect, those wishing to receive *jukai* promise to observe all 16 precepts, regardless of whether the recipients intend to remain as lay people or whether they are to be ordained. In some schools and *sangha*, the number of precepts received depends upon whether the person receiving *jukai* is a lay person or ordained.

Most *sangha* groups require those intending to receive *jukai* to undertake an in-depth study of the precepts in advance of the ceremony. Before *jukai*, some Zen centres even offer short courses to deepen individuals' understanding of the precepts before making the commitment. The North Carolina Zen Center, for example, runs a six-week, one-hour course on the 16 precepts for those who are about to receive *jukai*.

The 16 precepts are:

**The Three Refuges**<sup>457</sup>

I take refuge in Buddha  
*before all beings,*  
*immersing body and mind*  
*deeply in the Way,*  
*awakening true mind.*

I take refuge in *Dharma*  
*before all beings,*  
*entering deeply the merciful ocean*  
*of Buddha's Way.*

I take refuge in *Sangha*  
*before all beings,*  
*bringing harmony to everyone,*  
*free from hindrance.*

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<sup>455</sup> Anderson (2001), 2.

<sup>456</sup> The title of each group of precepts and the wording varies between schools. This interpretation of the precepts was taken from the website of the San Francisco Zen Center, see [www.sfzc.org/offerings/establishing-practice/sixteen-bodhisattva-precepts](http://www.sfzc.org/offerings/establishing-practice/sixteen-bodhisattva-precepts) [accessed November 26, 2020].

<sup>457</sup> In some groups, this is called the 'Three Jewels' or the 'Three Treasures'.

### **The Three Pure Precepts**

I vow to refrain from all evil.

I vow to make every effort to live in enlightenment.

I vow to live and be lived for the benefit of all beings.

### **The Ten Cardinal Precepts**

I vow not to kill.

I vow not to take what is not given.

I vow not to misuse sexuality.

I vow to refrain from false speech.

I vow to refrain from intoxicants.

I vow not to slander.

I vow not to praise self at the expense of others.

I vow not to be avaricious.

I vow not to harbor ill will.

I vow not to disparage the Three Treasures.

**6.3.2 The *rakusu*:** It is customary for a *jukai* recipient to sew a *rakusu* prior to the ceremony, although it is sometimes possible to purchase this garment.<sup>458</sup> A *rakusu* is a flat, oblong-shaped vestment that is symbolic of the Buddha's garment. There is a wide, fabric loop attached to one long side of the garment to enable it to be passed over the head and worn on the chest. In some schools, the *rakusu* is a different colour depending upon the holder's state in life, such as lay person, *Dharma* holder, trainee priest or fully fledged priest.<sup>459</sup> The back of the garment is usually made of white cloth.

The *rakusu* is made up of small rectangular and square pieces of cloth, stitched together. Where the sewing of the *rakusu* is required, there are usually stringent needlework instructions to follow, down to the type of stitch one must use.

Sewing the *rakusu* is often a community event, where those about to receive *jukai* gather to sew their *rakusu*, sometimes overseen by a sewing teacher.<sup>460</sup> There is, perhaps, scope in some schools to infuse into the *rakusu* some element of the

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<sup>458</sup> To quote from the North Carolina Zen Center's website: "Some participants choose to sew a *rakusu*, a vestment signalling their commitment to the precepts, in preparation for *jukai*," implying that a *rakusu* is optional. A *rakusu* can also sometimes be purchased, although the sewing of the garment is an important part of *jukai* preparation.

<sup>459</sup> In the Red Cedar Zen Community, for example, those wearing a dark blue *rakusu* are lay practitioners. Those with a black *rakusu* are novice priests, having completed priestly ordination but not yet received *Dharma* transmission. Those with a brown *rakusu* are fully ordained priests who have received *Dharma* transmission. A green *rakusu* is worn by lay teachers who have practised for many years and received 'lay entrustment'. See <https://redcedarzen.org/goingfurther#jukai> [accessed November 28, 2020].

<sup>460</sup> Magida (2006), 199.

wearer's own life. For example, one of my interviewees, an Anglican priest and member of the White Plum, who I am referring to as "Myotai" to protect her identity, made her *rakusu* out of the same cloth as her clergy shirts, symbolising the convergence of her Christian ministry and *zazen* practice. When the *rakusu* is finished, and prior to the *jukai* ceremony, it is usually passed to the teacher who writes the recipient's new *Dharma* name on the back and then presents the *rakusu* during the ceremony.

**6.3.3 The *Dharma* name:** During the *jukai* ceremony, the recipient receives a *Dharma* name, usually chosen by the individual's teacher to reflect the personality of his or her disciple. Sometimes, the *jukai* recipient is not informed of the *Dharma* name until the ceremony. The *Dharma* name is usually written between the first name and the surname. After *jukai*, recipients are usually addressed by their *Dharma* name within the *sangha*.

It is customary that the *Dharma* name is Japanese. Many western teachers have difficulty with this task because of language and cultural differences so the San Francisco Zen Center, in conjunction with the *Sōtō* Zen Buddhist Association, prepared a booklet on the subject. According to this booklet, the custom regarding Buddhist names has, apparently been changing in that some Zen centres have started to use English *Dharma* names, although the booklet does suggest that Japanese names are still preferred by most people.<sup>461</sup>

**6.3.4 The lineage chart:** When the disciple receives *jukai* he or she is traditionally presented with a lineage chart showing a red, unbroken line starting with the Buddha and linking all his successors over the course of 2,500 years through to the disciple's teacher. Finally, there is a red link from the teacher to the disciple's *Dharma* name.<sup>462</sup> The lineage chart, or *kechimyaku*, as it is called in Japanese, shows where the new *jukai* recipient fits within the chain of succession, from Siddhārtha to the first Indian successors, then the Chinese successors when Zen Buddhism moved to China, followed by Japanese successors. Finally, once

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>462</sup> *Teisho*, Keizan Scott.

Zen had spread to the West, the first American and European successors started to appear on the *kechimyaku*.<sup>463</sup>

**6.3.5 Repentance:** Westerners may be surprised at the role that repentance frequently plays in the *jukai* ceremony and in the life of the recipient.<sup>464</sup> Whether practised alone or within a community setting, confession “re-awakens the heart of compassion and the appreciation of others’ virtues.”<sup>465</sup> In the context of the *jukai* ceremony, confession prepares the mind and body to enable the individual to accept the precepts worthily.<sup>466</sup> The confession aspect of the ceremony would include the recitation of a repentance verse, such as the following:

All my ancient twisted karma  
From beginningless, greed, hate and delusion  
Born through body, speech and mind  
I now fully avow.<sup>467</sup>

Highlighting the purification and new beginning aspect of *jukai*, the Toronto Zen Center also points out on its website that it is customary to “clean one’s living quarters and to bathe before receiving *jukai*.”

Having described the journey to *jukai* and some elements of the ceremony, I now turn to Part B of this chapter and provide an overview of the Catholic initiation sacraments.

## **PART B**

### **6.4 Christian baptism**

The magisterial document *Lumen Gentium* is a key document published towards the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1964, and it reveals much about God’s plan for salvation for all peoples. Baptism, one of the Catholic Church’s three sacraments of initiation, forms the gateway to Christian life and provides access

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<sup>463</sup> Anderson (2001), 195.

<sup>464</sup> Acts of repentance are carried out at other times, individually and in groups, but they are particularly appropriate during *jukai*.

<sup>465</sup> Anderson (2001), 28.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. There are different versions of this repentance verse. This one is taken from the Ocean Gate Zen Center of Santa Cruz, California, which calls the words of repentance the Verse of Atonement. See [www.oceangatezen.org/practice/bodhisattva-precepts/](http://www.oceangatezen.org/practice/bodhisattva-precepts/) [accessed November 30, 2020].

to the other six sacraments.<sup>468</sup> Baptism is the path to eternal life for those who have heard the Gospel and who have been given the opportunity to receive this sacrament. The document emphasises that salvation is available to all God's people, regardless of whether they are Christian for he created them all. *Lumen Gentium* makes it clear that non-Christians and people who are searching for God are included in his plan of salvation. Those who have not yet heard the Gospel but who live upright lives and those who have not yet made a formal declaration of their faith in God are also part of his plan for salvation.<sup>469</sup> Baptism has become part of the tradition of the Church, following the command by Jesus to make disciples from all nations, and to baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

A key milestone in the formal institution of baptism as a sacrament is the encounter in the River Jordan between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. First, a few salient points about John's ministry. There were ritual washings in the Old Testament, but these were often conducted prior to entering a religious community or progressing to a higher state in life and thus were not forerunners to Christian baptism.<sup>470</sup> The origin of John's ministry is unclear, but it may have originated from Jewish rituals carried out in the Essene community, a Palestinian religious sect that flourished around the time of Christ. Another is that the practice was an outgrowth of Jewish initiation rites for gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism.<sup>471</sup> There is, however, little evidence to support either argument.<sup>472</sup> It is even possible that the ritual was conceived by John the Baptist himself.<sup>473</sup> Whatever its source, John's baptism was the precursor to Christian baptism and elements of it were carried through into Christian practice. These included the use of flowing water, repentance and orienting one's life towards the will of God.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> *LG*, 14.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>470</sup> Neunheuser, B. (1964) *Baptism and Confirmation* London, England: Burns & Oates, 8-9.

<sup>471</sup> Maxwell, E.J. (1999) *The Rites of Christian Initiation: their Evolution and Interpretation*, Minnesota, United States of America: The Liturgical Press, 7.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>474</sup> Vorgrimler, H. (1992) trans Maloney, L.M., *Sacramental Theology*, Minnesota, United States of America: The Order of St. Benedict/Liturgical Press, 103.

John preached a baptism of repentance and people who stepped forward asked him if he was the Messiah but he responded that he only baptised with water, that the one who was to come would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire.<sup>475</sup> Jesus then came to John for baptism and when he emerged from the water, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove and the voice of God was heard: “This is my Son, the Beloved; he is my Chosen One.”<sup>476</sup>

Jesus, who had no need for forgiveness, accepted baptism from John and sanctified the water. Christ had transformed ordinary water into a medium that could reconcile man with God. The scene is evocative of that time in the book of Genesis, when the Spirit of God hovered over the water. Now the Holy Spirit moves over the waters of baptism.<sup>477</sup> Through Christ’s sanctification of the waters of the River Jordan, that moment in Christianity’s 2000-year history is made present again at every baptism that has taken place since.

I have spoken of the essential nature of water and the Holy Spirit during baptism. However, there is a third component: the crucifixion. Without water, the Holy Spirit and the crucifixion, baptism would not exist as all three must be present.<sup>478</sup> In recalling the crucifixion, a person who is baptised into Christ is united with him in death and in the resurrection.<sup>479</sup> As the catechumen is immersed into the sacred water<sup>480</sup> of baptism he dies to his old self, dead to sin, and rises to eternal life.<sup>481</sup>

Herbert Vorgrimler believes that the synoptic gospel writers’ inclusion of the appearance of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ baptism is of vital importance to sacramental theology. The revelation of God at Jesus’s baptism was

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<sup>475</sup> Lk 15-17.

<sup>476</sup> Matt 13-17.

<sup>477</sup> Schmemmann, A. (1995) *For the Life of the World*, New York, United States of America: St. Vladamir’s Seminary Press, 72.

<sup>478</sup> Schaff, P., ed., (2009) *Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Michigan, United States of America: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing [kindle edition], On the Mysteries (by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan) Chapter IV:21.

<sup>479</sup> Romans 6:3-5.

<sup>480</sup> Neunheuser implies that the ritual washings prior to John the Baptist’s ministry were self-administered. “It is he (John the Baptist) who carries out the immersion of the baptismal candidate – there is no longer any self-immersion on the part of the one baptised.” See Neunheuser, 9.

<sup>481</sup> Schaff IV:21. Cf Romans 6:3-4.



carefully recorded by the evangelists because they wanted to make a point that would have been lost if Jesus had received a ritualistic washing alone. Jesus' baptism transformed John's immersion bath of repentance and preparation for the coming of God's kingdom into a solemn act which revealed his divinity. By undergoing baptism himself, Jesus gave his consent to the practice.<sup>482</sup>

Leaders of the first Christian communities responded to Christ's call, made disciples and administered baptism from the earliest days of the Church. Evidence of this fruitful spreading of the new Christian faith can be observed in the book of Acts.<sup>483</sup> Chapter Seven of the *Didache*<sup>484</sup> includes a section on instructions for the conducting of baptisms and stipulates that the catechumen be baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in 'living' (running) water. If running water was not available, it was acceptable to pour water over the head of the catechumen three times while reciting the words of the Trinity.<sup>485</sup>

Within two generations of Jesus' death, baptism had become established as a common practice, as this extract from the First Apology of Justin Martyr (circa 100-165) illustrates.

And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things

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<sup>482</sup> Vorgrimler, 103.

<sup>483</sup> See, for example, Acts 2:38-41, 8:12, 16, 36-38; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8, 19:3-5

<sup>484</sup> A manual, also known as *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, which contains instructions for Christian living and formation. See *Britannica Online* [www.britannica.com/topic/Didache](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Didache) [accessed April 1, 2021]. There is speculation among scholars as to the precise date the text was written. J.D.C. Fisher believes the *Didache* is unlikely to have been written later than the beginning of the second century because of the language used. It may have been written much earlier than this. Fisher asserts that a higher value could be placed on the *Didache* if its precise origins and date that it was produced could be determined. See Fisher, J.D.C. (1978) *Confirmation: Then and Now*, London, England: S.P.C.K., 2.

<sup>485</sup> See [www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm) [accessed March 17, 2021].

are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.<sup>486</sup>

Quintas Tertullian (circa 155-240) was an early Catholic apologist and his treatise *On Baptism* (published circa 200) is the oldest-surviving work on this subject so it is an important source of knowledge about sacramental life in the early Church. His statement below is a witness to the continued practice of baptism in the early Church.

Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and committed to eternal life!<sup>487</sup>

Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible mark, a ‘stamp’ that remains on the person even after death.<sup>488</sup> Karl Rahner believed that the indelible mark is the reason why baptism, when validly administered, cannot be repeated.<sup>489</sup> This indelible spiritual mark configures a baptised person to Christ. The Christian no longer lives for himself but belongs to Christ. Baptism incorporates a person into the Church and sets him apart as a Christian. The baptised person is reborn as a child of God and must now be ready to be a witness for his newly found faith.<sup>490</sup>

The water used in the ceremony is the “matter” of the sacrament, but Schmemmann says this should not be looked at in isolation for there is much symbolism here. Water is not only essential to the existence of life and its continuance, but it also means purity. The water, then, is representative of the world and the fragility of human life. The blessing of the water at the beginning of the baptismal ceremony transforms the matter into something that is of universal salvation.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Justin Martyr (2012) *The Writings of Justin Martyr (Annotated)*, Logia [Kindle Edition], Chapter LX1.

<sup>487</sup> Tertullian, Q. (2015) *On Baptism*, Minnesota, United States of America: Lighthouse Publishing, 6.

<sup>488</sup> Three of the Catholic Church’s seven sacraments leave an indelible mark. The other two are confirmation and holy orders.

<sup>489</sup> *Sacramentum Mundi Online* Edited by Karl Rahner et. al. See <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/sacramentum-mundi> [accessed March 16, 2020].

<sup>490</sup> *LG*, n.11.

<sup>491</sup> Schmemmann, 72.

By the end of the fifth century, a doctrine on baptism had been fully developed, with all the elements revealed in the New Testament integrated with those from patristic theology to create a succinct interpretation that can be summarised as:

A sacred action whereby Christ's redemption, his death, and his resurrection are given to us here and now, initiating us into Christian life by a concrete, tangible, symbolic confession of the faith, so that we may be made conformable to the crucified and risen Lord. What once happened to Christ now happens to us in baptism, so that we may be reborn to a new life; and the Holy Spirit, sent by the risen Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father, fills and consecrates the water, so that this sensible element may wash us immaculate and clothe us in splendour.<sup>492</sup>

## 6.5 Catholic sacrament of confirmation

At the beginning of this chapter, I explained how some people had made references to a 'Buddhist confirmation', a term that can cause confusion.

Confirmation is an inherently Christian ritual that, like baptism, generates an ontological<sup>493</sup> change in recipients to guide them through this life and into the next. In this section, I will demonstrate the Catholic nature of confirmation<sup>494</sup> by discussing the origins of the sacrament and its evolution.

Together with baptism and the Eucharist, confirmation makes up the Catholic Church's three sacraments of initiation. All sacraments, by definition, were instituted by Jesus Christ, so confirmation – like baptism – has a history that can be traced back to the beginning of the Christian Church, although confirmation was not recognised as a sacrament at that time. A Catholic's full entrance into Christianity is incomplete until all three of these sacraments has been received. Confirmation is an important step for the Catholic<sup>495</sup> and it is regarded as the

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<sup>492</sup> *Sacramentum Mundi Online* Edited by Karl Rahner et. al. See <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/sacramentum-mundi> [accessed March 16, 2020].

<sup>493</sup> A permanent change to the nature of a person's being. There are three sacraments that involve an ontological change: baptism, confirmation and holy orders.

<sup>494</sup> Confirmation practices vary greatly. In the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church, the sacrament of confirmation usually follows immediately after baptism, as it also does in the Orthodox Church. I am speaking of the Roman rite, which is practised throughout much of the Catholic world. Many Christians of non-Catholic sects do not recognise confirmation at all. Some Protestant denominations see confirmation as a non-sacramental ceremony. See Vorgrimler, 127.

<sup>495</sup> In *Sacramentum Mundi Online* Rahner refers to confirmation as being born again through the Spirit. See page 406.

completion of baptism. In fact, canon law<sup>496</sup> stipulates that confirmandi<sup>497</sup> must renew their baptismal promises during the rite of confirmation.<sup>498</sup> These promises are usually first made by the parents and Godparents on behalf of the catechumen, often a baby, but in confirmation, an individual renews those promises for him- or herself. Confirmation provides young people<sup>499</sup> with the opportunity to make their own personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ. As *Lumen Gentium* says, confirmation ‘more perfectly’ binds candidates to the Church and provides them with the power and conviction to be true witnesses of Jesus Christ.<sup>500</sup>

Echoing some of Rahner’s comments in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Marian Bohlen, O.S.U. says in her book *The Mystery of Confirmation* that, theologising aside, one must remember that this sacrament is a gift – God’s gift – of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is not an optional extra, a ‘bolt-on’, but an important and integral part of spiritual formation. Baptism, the first rite of Christian initiation, is the dying and rising to Christ as a child of God. A seal – the seal being the Holy Spirit himself – is given in the sacrament of confirmation.<sup>501</sup>

Today, when baptised young people are confirmed in the Catholic Church’s Latin rite,<sup>502</sup> the sacrament takes place at a separate ceremony, usually in a group, and some years after their baptism. There is considerable leeway in the age of confirmandi and it varies from one diocese to another. The more that the

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<sup>496</sup> See Canon 891 of the *Code of Canon Law*. See [www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib4-cann879-958\\_en.html#CHAPTER\\_III](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann879-958_en.html#CHAPTER_III) [accessed April 1, 2021].

<sup>497</sup> Those who are to undergo the rite of confirmation.

<sup>498</sup> Vorgrimler (1992), 128.

<sup>499</sup> Canon 891 of the *Code of Canon Law* stipulates that the faithful should receive the sacrament of confirmation ‘at about the age of discretion’, although the Conference of Bishops is free to specify another age. If the individual is in danger of death or if there other ‘grave cause’, these age restrictions may be waived. See [www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib4-cann879-958\\_en.html#CHAPTER\\_III](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib4-cann879-958_en.html#CHAPTER_III) [accessed April 1, 2021]. Most dioceses in the West confirm young people in their early teens, but an adult convert could be considerably older.

<sup>500</sup> See *LG*, 11.

<sup>501</sup> Bohlen, M., O.S.U. (1966) *The Mystery of Confirmation: a Theology of the Sacrament*, London, England: Darton, Longman and Todd, 169.

<sup>502</sup> The worldwide Catholic Church is made up of one Latin rite and 22 Eastern rites. Each of the rites follows its own liturgy and functions semi-autonomously but is in full communion with the Catholic Church. The Eastern rites are practised by small pockets of communities and are located mainly in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and some parts of Africa. The Latin rite is, by far, the largest, the most widespread around the world and comprises more members than the sum total of all the Eastern rite churches. For more information, see *New World Encyclopedia*, [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Roman\\_Catholic\\_Church](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Roman_Catholic_Church) [accessed April 6, 2021].

confirmation ceremony is viewed as a public declaration of faith, personal adoption of baptismal promises and witness to the faith, the greater the tendency to delay confirmation until the candidates are on the cusp of adulthood.<sup>503</sup> People who have reached 'the age of reason' and who convert to Catholicism from another faith (or from none)<sup>504</sup> receive the sacrament of confirmation at the same time as baptism. This second pathway into full membership of the Catholic Church – baptism and confirmation taking place at the same time – mirrors the tradition of the early Church.<sup>505</sup> To expand on this, the first people to become members of the new Christian Church tended to be adults who received a water baptism followed by a 'Spirit' baptism as can be seen in this text from Acts.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered: "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked: "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said: "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all. Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. *Acts 19:1-8*

The laying on of hands imparts the gift of the Holy Spirit on recipients to strengthen them in their power and courage to be strong witnesses, and this is evidenced in the last sentence of the above scripture. The reading also reveals a distinct separation between water baptism and the laying on of hands. Paul baptises in the name of Jesus because the baptism the disciples had received was John's and was simply one of repentance. Paul then lays on hands. The Jerome

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<sup>503</sup> Vorgrimler (1992), 128.

<sup>504</sup> Today, these are usually adults who wish to become Catholics and who have gone through a process of catechesis as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme. This parish-led initiative usually begins each autumn and, reflecting the custom of the early Church, culminates at Easter with baptism (if this has not already been 'validly' received) followed by confirmation. The Catholic Church recognises baptism in other Christian denominations if it is undertaken while reciting the trinitarian formula. The validity of baptism in another Christian denomination can be verified by checking the wording of the baptismal certificate. If the certificate is not available, and obtaining a copy is not possible, a 'conditional' baptism can be conducted.

<sup>505</sup> This is, in fact, still the practice for both infants and adults in the Orthodox Church and the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church.

Commentary states that Paul was reinforcing how the baptism process should be undertaken: first, baptism in the name of Jesus, followed by the laying on of hands.

In his work *On Baptism*, Tertullian explicitly states the steps of the baptism ceremony: water bath, anointing and laying on of hands, all undertaken in a single liturgical ceremony, indicating that this system was present during the third century and beyond.

When we have issued from the font, we are anointed thoroughly with a blessed unction. . . The unction runs carnally, but profits spiritually . . . . In the next place the hand is laid upon us, invoking and inviting the holy spirit through benediction.<sup>506</sup>

In his work *The Apostolic Tradition*, believed to have been written in AD 215, Hippolytus not only makes it clear that laying on of hands is the preserve of the bishop, but reinforces the separation of baptism from the laying on of hands.

And the bishop shall lay his hand upon them [the newly baptised], invoking and saying: 'O Lord God, who did count these worthy of deserving the forgiveness of sins by the laver of regeneration, make them worthy to be filled with your Holy Spirit and send upon them thy grace [in confirmation], that they may serve you according to your will.'<sup>507</sup>

The imposition of hands remained the responsibility of the bishop and was reinforced at the Council of Elvira (300-303c) in Spain.<sup>508</sup> The synod makes reference to Canon 38, which is mainly directed towards permitting a lay person to administer baptism when in danger of death, but this canon makes a point relevant to this thesis in that if the sick person recovers, he or she should come to the bishop for the laying on of hands.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Tertullian, from Chapter VII: Of the unction and VIII: Of the imposition of hands.

<sup>507</sup> Burton, S.E. (2020) trans *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* e-book, see [www.gutenberg.org/files/61614/61614-h/61614-h.htm#ch4](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/61614/61614-h/61614-h.htm#ch4), 22. This e-book included Burton's translation of Hippolytus's work.

<sup>508</sup> Vorgrimler (1992), 125.

<sup>509</sup> Dupuis, J., S.J. Ed. (2001) *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 579.

Innocent I in his letter to Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio in 416 reinforces that anointing (of infants<sup>510</sup> with chrism) can only be done by priests during the washing part of baptism (confirmation had not, at that stage, been recognised as a separate sacrament). The chrism the priest uses must have been consecrated by the bishop. The letter underscores that priests are not able to use the same oil – the chrism – to sign a baptised person on the forehead. As its authority, the letter makes reference to Acts 8:14-17, when Peter and John were “directed to confer the Holy Spirit to those who were already baptised.”<sup>511</sup> Vorgrimler made an important point in stating that this was when baptism and signing was separated and the sacrament of confirmation born.<sup>512</sup>

It took several more centuries, however, before confirmation became recognised as a sacrament in its own right and, when it did happen, it was because practicalities forced the issue. As dioceses grew larger and the number of Christians increased, it became more difficult for a bishop to be present at every baptism. In the Roman rite, it became common practice for the washing part of baptism to take place and the laying on of hands to be deferred until a later date. In the Orthodox Church, the problem of bishop availability was solved by the priest being granted the power to confer confirmation.<sup>513</sup>

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by introducing a perception that *jukai* is sometimes regarded as a Buddhist equivalent to Catholic initiation sacraments. I did this through stating that some of my interviewees had spoken of *jukai* being a Buddhist baptism or confirmation, that *sangha* websites had made references to it and discussions had taken place on the subject through internet question and answer forums. During my enquiries, it also emerged that *jukai* was sometimes – but not always – seen as an initiation into Zen Buddhism. This could be one reason why

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<sup>510</sup> According to E. Yarnold, S.J., during early Christianity, the newly baptised were called infants, regardless of their chronological age, see *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Christian Initiation* (1971) Slough, England: St Paul Publications, 30.

<sup>511</sup> Dupuis (2001), 581

<sup>512</sup> Vorgrimler (1992), 109.

<sup>513</sup> Bohlen (1966), 113-114

*jukai* is sometimes, inaccurately, referred to as a Buddhist baptism or Buddhist confirmation.

It is true that Catholic baptism provides access to the Christian life, just as *jukai* can sometimes be an entrance into Zen Buddhism. However, it is not possible to draw further realistic parallels between the meaning of the two ceremonies. The sacrament of baptism is a 'water bath'<sup>514</sup> in which catechumens die to their old self and are reborn into a new life in Christ. Water is an indispensable part of a Christian baptism. Many *jukai* ceremonies also make use of water but it is not central in the way that it is in the sacrament of baptism. It is difficult to make generalisations about *jukai* ceremonies because there is no central 'voice' on Buddhist liturgy. The *jukai* ceremony is, at its core, a public promise to uphold the Buddhist precepts that can be made by anyone who is serious about *zazen* and who has completed a period of discernment.

Whether or not *jukai* represents a step into Zen Buddhism appears to be a matter of personal choice. For some, it makes one a Buddhist, for others it does not. In baptism, a catechumen undeniably becomes a Christian. Anyone being baptised who is over the recommended confirmation age (which can vary by about five years according to region) would also automatically receive this sacrament, too, at the same liturgical celebration. In the Roman rite, those who are under this age, such as a baby, infant or a young child, are baptised but confirmation would be deferred until they had reached an age when they are able to make their own faith commitments. It is not possible for a catechumen to receive baptism purely on the understanding that he or she is going to simply follow the way of Jesus Christ. Baptism is permanent and irrevocable, as is confirmation.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an insight into *jukai* and Catholic initiation sacraments to illustrate that they do not overlap in any profound way and cannot be equated. They each have merit in their own particular tradition

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<sup>514</sup> Usually undertaken by a symbolic pouring over the head, although full immersion is sometimes conducted.



and I have not intended to compare them in a way that favours one system over another.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Zen Buddhist-Catholic interreligious relationships: dialogue and dual belonging

### Introduction

In Chapter One, I raised the subject of the first Parliament of the World's Religions, an interreligious gathering of enormous proportions held in Chicago in 1893 that would still be a topic of discussion and source of literature more than a century later. This event is significant as it would later be regarded as the genesis of global interreligious dialogue.<sup>515</sup> Today, engaging in interreligious dialogue has become a crucial component to world peace.<sup>516</sup> Because of the high-profile nature of interreligious relationships, as evidenced in part by literature published on the subject, I have chosen to include a chapter on the subject in this thesis. This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part A, I begin by providing some background to different aspects of interreligious dialogue and the context in which I am writing. I then describe what effect the Second Vatican Council had on interreligious dialogue. The main part of this chapter, however, is the presentation of some of the thinking of key contributors to the development of interreligious dialogue from the Second Vatican Council to the present day. Within this, I devote considerable space to the subject of dual belonging because some of my interviewees spoke from the perspective of someone who was nourished by both Christian and Zen Buddhist thinking. Because interreligious dialogue and dual belonging are both major subjects, I did consider separating the two and focussing on just one of these topics but they are integrally linked. I think that this approach, therefore, provides a more complete analysis. Part A concludes with three questions that arose during the first half of this chapter. In

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<sup>515</sup> Website of the Parliament of World's Religions see <https://parliamentofreligions.org> [accessed May 6, 2021].

<sup>516</sup> At an address at the United Nations General Assembly on November 7, 2001 the Swiss priest Hans Küng (1928-2021) is quoted as saying: "No peace among nations without peace among religions. No peace among religions without dialogue among religions."

Part B, I will respond to those questions with assistance from magisterial documents and one of my interviewees, Kevin McDonald, archbishop emeritus of Southwark diocese. I have chosen to include McDonald's comments because of his knowledge of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* and his extensive experience in interreligious dialogue.

After my interviews had been completed, and upon reflecting on the interfaith dialogue aspect, I was interested to learn the practical application of the theology on interreligious dialogue at a local level. I contacted Canon Vincent Harvey, who leads the diocesan interreligious group at Portsmouth diocese, to learn more about some of their activities in their respective geographical areas. This interview is attached to this thesis as Appendix II.

## **PART A**

### **7.1 Interreligious dialogue: background and context**

In May 1991, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples issued a joint document titled *Dialogue and Proclamation*. The document complements a paper produced by the Secretariat for Non-Christians, the previous name for the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The name of that paper was 'The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission' and it was published in May, 1984.<sup>517</sup>

The 1991 document elaborates upon the 1984 paper and focuses on two specific areas: 'dialogue' and 'proclamation', both of which are of equal importance to the Church. The 1991 document outlines three different understandings of dialogue. Firstly, at the human level, dialogue could be understood as two-way communication aimed at achieving a common goal or information exchange. Secondly, dialogue could be the infusion of friendship and respect into all evangelising activities of the Church. Lastly, *Dialogue and Proclamation* quotes from the 1984 document and interprets dialogue in the context of pluralism as follows: "All positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals

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<sup>517</sup> To view a copy of the 1984 paper, visit [www.cam1.org.au/Portals/66/documents/Dialogue-Mission-1984.pdf](http://www.cam1.org.au/Portals/66/documents/Dialogue-Mission-1984.pdf) [accessed February 26, 2022]. The document makes reference to Pope Paul IV's aspirations for dialogue outlined in *Ecclesiam Suam*, published in August, 1964.

and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment.”<sup>518</sup>

There are variations of interreligious dialogue, such as that between Sunni Muslims and Theravāda Buddhists, Vaishnavist Hindus and Evangelical Christians, Sikhs and Tibetan Buddhists, and so on. Then there are other forms of dialogue that are focussed on particular themes, such as peace and social action, and dialogue written from particular perspectives, such as feminist, anthropological, sociological, theological, phenomenological and philosophical perspectives, among others.<sup>519</sup> This chapter is concerned with dialogue between Catholic Christians and Zen Buddhists.

*Dialogue and Proclamation* states that the 1984 document described above groups all the interreligious activities into four broad areas.

a) The *dialogue of life* is taking place when people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. This type of dialogue could simply involve visiting each other's homes.

b) The *dialogue of action*<sup>520</sup> is in progress when Christians collaborate with others for the protection of human rights and the liberation of people.

c) The *dialogue of theological exchange*<sup>521</sup> is the most familiar type of dialogue. It involves participants seeking to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.

d) The *dialogue of religious experience* involves those well-established in their own faith traditions discussing subjects relating to their experiences of spirituality and the divine.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> *DP*, n.9.

<sup>519</sup> D'Costa (2016), 1-7.

<sup>520</sup> The 1984 document calls this type of dialogue 'the dialogue of works'.

<sup>521</sup> The 1984 document calls this 'the dialogue of experts'.

<sup>522</sup> *DP*, n.42.

## 7.2 Effect of the Second Vatican Council on Zen-Catholic dialogue

In 1943, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical called *Mystici Corporis Christi*,<sup>523</sup> on the Mystical Body of Christ. The encyclical emphasised how important it was to pray for the Church's members. The document made reference to those who have not been illuminated by the Gospel and those who, on account of 'regrettable schism',<sup>524</sup> are separated from the Church. A desire is expressed that those who are not Catholic consider withdrawing from their uncertain state, where they cannot be sure of salvation. Pius makes reference to the presence of heavenly gifts that can only be enjoyed by members of the Catholic Church.<sup>525</sup>

The picture painted of the Catholic Church in 1943 was far different to the one projected just 21 years later when the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* was published. Unlike *Mystici Corporis Christi*, *Ecclesiam Suam* reflects the spirit of the Council in that it expresses a desire – an urgency, even – to engage with the world.<sup>526</sup> This document stresses the importance of dialogue with other Christians and with those described as 'emerging' nations.<sup>527</sup>

As well as establishing the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1964, the following year the Second Vatican Council published *Unitatis Redintegratio*,<sup>528</sup> which encouraged Catholics to take an active role in ecumenism. To emphasise the proactive nature of ecumenical relations, the bishops added that Catholics must make the initial approach in such dialogue, and that this is the responsibility of both the clergy and the faithful.<sup>529</sup>

## 7.3 Early Catholic perspectives on Catholic-Zen Buddhist dialogue

By 'early' Catholic-Zen Buddhist dialogue, I am particularly referring to the years

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<sup>523</sup> Pope Pius XII (1943) *On the Mystical Body of Christ Mystici Corporis Christi*. [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xiiencyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_29061943\\_mystici-corporis-christi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xiiencyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi_en.html) [accessed November 2, 2021].

<sup>524</sup> *MC*, n.102.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>526</sup> *ES*, n.3.

<sup>527</sup> *ES*, n.13.

<sup>528</sup> See [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_unitatis-redintegratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html) [accessed January 8, 2022].

<sup>529</sup> Cornille, C. ed. (2013) *The Wiley Blackwell Guide to Inter-religious Dialogue*, Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 7.

immediately following the Second Vatican Council, because I think it is of interest how those initial, tentative ventures into dialogue have evolved into today's highly developed, theologised systems of thought about Catholics' engagement with those of other traditions. While the focus in this chapter is on present-day interreligious relationships, I will precede this treatise with a brief discussion on some early Catholic perspectives on dialogue between Zen Buddhists and Catholics. I am focusing on the thinking of two particular Jesuit priests: Robert Kennedy and William Johnston because they were early pioneers of interfaith dialogue.

**Kennedy**, whose book *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit* I reviewed in Chapter Two, was a friend of Johnston and their respective ministries had much in common. Kennedy, for example, also spent some years in Japan, where he – like Johnston – was ordained. As well as writing *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit*, Kennedy wrote *Zen Gifts to Christians*. Kennedy is now resident in the United States where he sits with Zen students at the Morning Star Zendo in Jersey City.

I have given **Johnston** some prominence in this chapter because he spent virtually all his adult life in Japan. He is of special interest because he wrote numerous books and gave interviews during his lifetime, so leaving a legacy of an early interreligious communicator in the years leading up to, and after, the Second Vatican Council. In the years immediately after the Second Vatican Council, Johnston regarded interreligious dialogue as a serious duty. As a missionary in Japan he attended meetings between Christians and Zen Buddhists throughout the country. They were not official meetings but informal get-togethers held in friendship, where both parties exchanged information and were respectful of the other's beliefs.<sup>530</sup> Johnston's first experience of *zazen* was at Engakuji, a temple in the Japanese city of Kamakura, when a student invited him to come and meditate. Johnston would then regularly visit Engakuji temple on a Sunday afternoon to meditate. In that era, it was unusual to see a Catholic priest – and a *gaijin*<sup>531</sup> at that – meditating in a Zen Buddhist temple.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Johnston (1997), 10-11.

<sup>531</sup> 'Gaijin' literally means 'outside person' and is used to describe a foreigner. It is not discourteous to refer to a non-Japanese as such a person.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 3.

My interviewee Kevin McDonald spoke of his affection for Johnston and his writings but said that the Irish Jesuit's journey, along with that of other pioneers in east-west dialogue, were personal spiritual trajectories.

There are those who have gone to India and Japan – people like Henri le Saux and Bede Griffiths – and explored the relationship between Christian prayer and the prayer of other religions. I am very fond of William Johnston and he engaged with a Zen group in Japan so there are those realities as well which are very much personal spiritual journeys. Also, Thomas Merton. There is obviously a lot of interest and respect for what they did and certainly Merton and Johnston have been hugely inspirational to many people. It was very much, for those people, a kind of personal journey.

William Johnston did his doctorate on the *Cloud of Unknowing*<sup>533</sup> and translated it into modern English. Obviously, for him and his own journey, the connectedness between the spirituality of the *Cloud* and his experience of Buddhism was very important. People like Bede Griffiths would have things to say about their experience but they are witnessing to their own particular experience. I, as a bishop and former Church official, have not been involved in anything like that so I can only speak about what the Church has said and what the Church teaches.<sup>534</sup>

It appears, however, that Johnston may have engaged in a hybrid *zazen* practice that incorporated elements of Christian prayer. In fact, in the interview with Shusaku Endo that I footnoted earlier in this chapter, Johnston referred to his practice as Zen-influenced Christian contemplation. Furthermore, in his autobiography, Johnston admitted to not practising *zazen* as a Buddhist might.<sup>535</sup> What Johnston was probably referring to were practices such as reciting the 'Jesus prayer'<sup>536</sup> during *zazen*, a habit that irked his teacher, Kōun Yamada, and resulted in their parting.<sup>537</sup> Johnston also began organising *zazen*-style meditation before the Blessed Sacrament for former Buddhists who he had

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<sup>533</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing* was written in Middle English by an anonymous author in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>534</sup> A full transcript of the interview with Kevin McDonald, undertaken on October 19, is available in Chapter Four.

<sup>535</sup> Johnston (2006), 117-118.

<sup>536</sup> The words of the Jesus prayer are: Lord, Jesus, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

<sup>537</sup> Johnston (2006), 136. Practice that is not orthodox is called *gedo* (outside, or unorthodox) Zen.

baptised and for people who had no beliefs at all.<sup>538</sup> A Buddhist Zen master would probably describe Johnston's practice as '*gedo*', or unorthodox, Zen.

While Johnston admitted that carefully thought-out theology does have a place in dialogue, he firmly believed that effective communication with non-Christians could not be achieved through discussion alone. Johnston held that true Buddhist-Christian dialogue was based on religious experience, declaring that "the greatest union will be found when Buddhists and Christians meditate together."<sup>539</sup>

Kennedy was also committed to interreligious dialogue and shared Johnston's point of view that effective Christian-Buddhist communication is achieved through meditating together.

We know that our attempts at interreligious dialogue since Vatican II show that neither a purely intellectual nor a purely institutional dialogue is likely to bear fruit. Rather, we need to place an emphasis on religious experience, on our actually sitting together.<sup>540</sup>

McDonald would agree with neither Kennedy's nor Johnston's point of view that an experiential type of interreligious dialogue was needed for a rewarding outcome. McDonald has been involved in interreligious dialogue for much of his priesthood and has engaged in fruitful discussions with people of non-Christian religions without feeling the need to participate on a spiritual level. He said:

If you're saying that with Buddhists you can't have a genuine dialogue unless you identify with, and join in with, their prayers, I don't see that. There have been all sorts of important interreligious dialogues that have been very fruitful, in which people have talked about their prayer, talked about how they pray, while acknowledging that the metaphysical and theological context and framework for that prayer is entirely different.

Communication between Zen Buddhists and Catholics has become much more intellectualised, sophisticated and 'theologised' since the tentative early contact around the time of the Second Vatican Council. Today, there are many different

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Johnston (1981), 9. Much of Johnston's discussion on interreligious dialogue focussed on an experiential approach. However, even in 1984, the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* showed that interreligious dialogue was already broader than this. *Dialogue and Proclamation* described four types of dialogue and these can be read in Chapter Seven, section 7.1.

<sup>540</sup> Kennedy (1995), 128.



aspects of interreligious dialogue but, because of space limitations, it is not possible to include an in-depth analysis of them all in this chapter. However, the subject of dual belonging is an increasingly common phenomenon so, in the next section, I have chosen to devote some attention to this topic.

#### **7.4 Is having two masters possible?**

Forty years ago, William Johnston asked himself a question: is it possible to be both a Buddhist and a Christian at the same time? He added that Christians were practising *zazen* and wanted to incorporate elements of Buddhism into their prayer lives, so the question was relevant and timely. This is how Johnston responded:

While I myself believe that Buddhism and Christianity have many good things to offer one another, I also believe that both religions have their own identities and that a merging of the two is not possible at this point in history. And I think that most authentic Buddhists will agree with me on this point. For the Buddhist, commitment is summed up in the triple invocation that echoes through Buddhist literature and through Buddhist life:

I put my trust in the Buddha  
I put my trust in the *Dharma*  
I put my trust in the *sangha*

Here the Buddha is the true self, the *Dharma* is the great collection of Buddhist teachings and the *sangha* is the Buddhist community. In committing themselves totally to this triple treasure Buddhists believe that they will find liberation and salvation. Christians, on the other hand, have their own triple treasure:

I put my trust in Jesus  
I put my trust in the gospel  
I put my trust in the Church.<sup>541</sup>

And through this total commitment Christians hope for salvation and for eternal life.<sup>542</sup>

Johnston's response to his own question provided an interesting perspective to his point of view on what was to become more widely known as 'dual

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<sup>541</sup> In Johnston's 'Christianised' version of the Three Treasures, I do not think he intended to create an alternative that Christians would feel comfortable in reciting. I think Johnston was demonstrating that it was inappropriate for Christians to put their trust in the Buddha, *Dharma* and *sangha* as they put their faith and hope in Jesus, the Gospel and the Church.

<sup>542</sup> Johnston (1981), 22-23

belonging'.<sup>543</sup> Johnston was deeply committed to both *zazen* and interreligious dialogue but in none of his books does he describe himself a Buddhist, imply he was a dual believer or infer that he was a 'hyphenated' Christian. It is true that these were early days in discussions about belonging but Johnston made no suggestion that this was the direction in which he was moving.

In the ensuing decades, inter-religious dialogue has evolved and it has entered into a phase in which participants are receptive to change, one in which their beliefs may be challenged and transformed.<sup>544</sup> This is not to say that Johnston was not receptive to change because he certainly was and allowed elements of Zen Buddhism to enrich his Catholic faith.<sup>545</sup> However, Johnston drew clear boundaries between Zen Buddhism and Catholicism. He was an advocate of using Zen Buddhist principles to enrich Christian prayer but he recognised that the foundations of Christianity and Buddhism were inherently different.<sup>546</sup> My interviewee Migaku Sato would probably say that Johnston was speaking during a time in Christianity when people more readily accepted Catholic customs, traditions and practices and were less inclined to question them. Sato said that when Enomiya-Lassalle was conducting *sesshin*, about half of the participants were actively Catholic. The remaining half was made up of a mixture of people, including a proportion of non-Christian Zen practitioners. Sato explained that in just two decades, Christianity had changed considerably, with the proportion of active Catholics gradually diminishing over the years and the Zen Buddhist or 'other' contingent remaining stable or even growing in number. Sato said:

In the 1970s or 1980s, Fr. Enomiya-Lassalle carried out so many *sesshin* in Germany within the framework of the Catholic Church. About one half of the people were Catholic but since that time we have seen a huge decline, a radical decline, of the Catholic Church but this Zen movement survived ....First there were Catholic people practising Zen and then there were other people practising Zen, and they were side by side in terms of

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<sup>543</sup> Rose Drew also provides further synonyms: multi-religious identity, multiple religious identity, multiple religious belonging, hyphenated religious identity. See Drew, R. (2011) *Buddhist and Christian? An Exploration of Dual Belonging*, London, England: Routledge, 2.

<sup>544</sup> D'Costa, G., and Thompson, R., (2016) *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations*, Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 1.

<sup>545</sup> Johnston (1997), 2

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

numbers, but Zen remained intact, or became more present than before, but Catholicism didn't.<sup>547</sup>

Abraham Vélez de Cea, who has been teaching Buddhism and world religions at Eastern Kentucky University since 2006, believes that belonging is an advanced form of dialogue on the theology and spirituality of a particular faith tradition. However, he asserts that it would be erroneous to assume that belonging is an inevitable result of interreligious dialogue. For example, dialogue could have the effect of making some people withdraw from dual belonging and cause them to return more fully to their original religious tradition.<sup>548</sup>

Rose Drew believes that dual belonging is an increasingly common phenomenon and can occur when Christians engage so deeply with the practices and the teachings of another religious tradition – in this case Zen Buddhism – that they feel a sense of identification with it.<sup>549</sup> Drew said:

Dual belongers are those who have, in the dialogical process, come to identify roughly equally with both perspectives and they, therefore become microcosms of the dialogue as a whole, grappling with the challenge of mutual transformation from *both* directions."<sup>550</sup>

Paul Knitter, emeritus professor of Union Theological Seminary, provides an explanation as to what might cause dual belonging but, in contrast to Drew and Vélez de Cea, he does not specifically associate it with interreligious dialogue. Knitter believes that a spiritual indigence, a vacuum, can result when an individual's original religion fails to address certain life problems. The individual then finds that another religion fulfils that need and this can result in dual belonging. Knitter also says that an individual can become attracted to 'bolting on' another religion after becoming aware of the existence of other religions. This awareness can lead to a desire to explore other religions.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> See Chapter Four for a full transcript of this interview, undertaken on August 16.

<sup>548</sup> D'Costa, G., et. al. (2016) chapter titled 'An Alternative Conception of Multiple Religious Belonging: A Buddhist-Christian Perspective' by Abraham Vélez de Cea, 163.

<sup>549</sup> Drew, 4.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 493.

This openness to the spirituality and practice of other religions is what lies behind one of my interviewee's preference for the term 'inter-spiritual practice' over 'dual belonging'. The interviewee, Ellen Birx, says:

I am both Christian and Buddhist, but I don't like the phrase 'dual belonging'. I prefer to say 'inter-spiritual practice'. It's not just dialogue or sharing ideas of different theologies and philosophies, but actually practising. I think that inter-spiritual practice is important because many people are born into more than one culture. Some marry into inter-spiritual practice and some simply choose it as they move along through life and encounter different traditions. It's really important for people to feel liberated from the pressure to choose just one tradition.<sup>552</sup>

I suspect that Birx dislikes the term 'dual believer' because she finds being compartmentalised into specific faith traditions restrictive and does not allow her the freedom to continue her wide exploration of different belief systems. However, she was not the only one of my interviewees who disliked the term 'dual belonging', albeit for a different reason. 'Myotai' prefers not to use the term as she finds it can be misleading but concedes that it is a phrase that people recognise and thus assists them in understanding her particular stance in spirituality.

I don't find the phrase 'dual believer' remotely helpful as it comes with pre-suppositions, most of which I want to challenge. Having said that, I have written material as a dual believer because I was asked to do so. I'll wear the badge of a dual believer for somebody if that's a helpful thing for me to do and if that puts me in a category that's helpful for the person to understand.<sup>553</sup>

Vélez de Cea does not comment upon the word 'dual' but he does, however, point out that the term 'multiple' (to describe a belonging to more than two religions) is highly misleading because it brings to mind a "personality disorder, division or fragmentation".<sup>554</sup> His own belonging is interreligious, so Vélez de Cea prefers the term 'interreligious belonging'.<sup>555</sup> He also favours this term because of its easy

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<sup>552</sup> Interview with Ellen Birx on July 8, 2020. A full transcript of this interview can be found in Chapter Four.

<sup>553</sup> See Chapter Four for a full transcript of this interview, undertaken on July 9, 2020.

<sup>554</sup> D'Costa, G., et. al. (2016) *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations*, chapter titled 'An Alternative Conception of Multiple Religious Belonging: A Buddhist-Christian Perspective' by Abraham Vélez de Cea, 161.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

association with interreligious dialogue. Vélez de Cea also believes that interreligious believers are particularly well-qualified to engage in dialogue because, having the experience of being part of the other tradition themselves, they can see theological issues from both sides of the debate.<sup>556</sup>

In his article 'Without Walls=Multiple Belonging', Paul Knitter discusses an alternative concept that people who object to the phrase 'dual' or 'multiple' belonging might find more acceptable. This concept is 'theology without walls', which Knitter says is a synonym for 'double' or 'multiple religious belonging'. The term 'theology without walls' was created in 2014 by Jerry Martin, in response to finding that truths do not exist in Christianity alone. In addition, Martin believes that the increasing number of 'nones' and the 'spiritual not religious' contingent demand a theological approach unfettered by imposed doctrine and inflexible rituals.<sup>557</sup> After he was introduced to the term, Knitter, a dual believer, agreed that 'theology without walls' was a more apt expression of his practice. He said:

I finally come to the pivotal point of my reflections: *The growing phenomenon of what is called "double (or multiple) religious belonging" is an example of what Martin and others are proposing as theology without walls* (Knitter's italics). Reading and pondering Martin's description of a theologian without walls, I realized that I am an example of what he is describing. What I was trying to do in my thesis, I think, was an example of trying to be a theologian without walls. I am suggesting that the practice of double religious belonging is a synonym for, or lays the foundation for, the practice of theology without walls.<sup>558</sup>

The principle of theology without walls is that it bypasses the barriers erected by the theology of individual faith traditions. When these walls are removed, all that remains is simply theology.<sup>559</sup> Theology without walls is a transreligious movement, enabling its followers to examine matters of universal concern unhampered by doctrine. This is a growing area of spiritual theology, with many emerging perspectives, but further exploration is for another thesis.

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.,163.

<sup>557</sup> Martin, J.L. (2020), *Without Walls: the Transreligious Imperative*, Oxfordshire, England: Routledge, 3.

<sup>558</sup> Knitter, P. (2016) 'Without Walls=Multiple Belonging', *Journal of Ecumenical studies*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Volume 51, Number 4, 487-498.

<sup>559</sup> Martin (2020), 1-2.

Dual belonging is a fragmented subject, highly complex, and there are different interpretations of it, making it difficult to come to a common understanding. Sometimes, one's own understanding of dual belonging evolves over time and the original interpretation becomes superseded by new knowledge. This has been the case with Knitter. He originally defined double belonging in his seminal book *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian*. In the first version of this book, Knitter defines double-belonging as maintaining a primary belief in one religion but finding enrichment through a second religion.<sup>560</sup> However, he has since concluded that a true double believer no longer feels like a visitor in the exploration of a second religion. The second religion is just as much home for the individual as the original religion.<sup>561</sup> It took a little while before Knitter felt at home in both Christianity and Buddhism, but when he did, he said in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* that he felt compelled to re-write the conclusion of *Without Buddha*. He said:

As I began my practice and study of Buddhism, I certainly felt that I was a Christian explorer in a foreign land. I called myself a "Buddhist Christian," not a "Christian Buddhist." Christianity was the noun, the substantive, the soil in which I was rooted, but as I continued my living and growing as a double believer, that changed. So, in the conclusion to the second edition of *Without Buddha*, I had to confess that I do not think I have a primary identity or primary allegiance. Yes, I have spent many more years as a Christian than as a Buddhist, and Gregorian chant makes me tingle in ways that Tibetan chanting does not. But, as I say in the new conclusion, for me now, neither Jesus nor Buddha comes first. They both do.<sup>562</sup>

Like Knitter, Catholic Kim Boykin, who I interviewed in Chapter Four, also feels as much at home in a Zen temple as in a church. However, Boykin does not consider herself a dual believer. This is partially because she considers the phrase 'dual believer' an ungainly term but, more importantly, she had never thought of herself as a Buddhist, even during the year she lived in a Zen monastery prior to her conversion to Catholicism.

I am Catholic and Buddhism is important to me. Both Buddhism and Christianity have significantly shaped my worldview, my religious practice and my life in general. I feel like my "first language" religiously was Buddhism and while I am now fluent in Christianity, I still sometimes

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 215

<sup>561</sup> *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Fall 2016, Vol. 51 Issue 4, 493.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 496.

think in Buddhism and have to mentally translate into Christianity. Christianity still doesn't come quite so naturally to me as Buddhism does. But Buddhism (in the Western forms I'm familiar with) just seems to me less like an identity or a thing one "belongs" to than Christianity does. Buddhism and Christianity are perhaps equally important to me, but I feel like the category of "belonging" doesn't quite work for my relationship to Buddhism.<sup>563</sup>

My research in this chapter has demonstrated how fragmented and individualised dual belonging is. Gavin D'Costa, Professor of Catholic Theology at Bristol University, has attempted to simplify this complexity by devising a three-fold categorisation system that can serve as an initial, foundational structure into which all the numerous expressions of dual belonging will fit. The three categorisations are:

- 1) 'Interior dual belonging'. This situation is where the individual is accepting of two or more belief systems but does not, for whatever reason, belong to a particular community. On the one extreme this could be because the individual wishes to adopt only certain elements of the faith tradition or it could be because the individual is prevented from being present in a faith community. Whatever the individual's circumstances are that create an interior dual belonging situation, the result is that he or she takes a covert interest in the tradition(s) of interest.
- 2) The second type D'Costa describes is what he calls 'single community exterior dual belonging'. An individual in this category is publicly recognised as belonging to a particular faith but is enriched by the learning from another tradition, although the individual does not belong to its community. Belongers in this category might be selective on what elements of the second tradition they incorporate into their own spirituality. Alternatively, they may even consciously try to follow everything that is taught about the other tradition, but the key is that they only belong to one faith community.
- 3) The last of D'Costa's categories is the 'double community exterior dual belonging'. The individual belongs to two faith communities and follows

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<sup>563</sup> See Chapter Four for a full transcript of Boykin's interview, undertaken on March 25, 2020.

them both, although the extent of which the individual does varies. The key is that the individual publicly belongs to both. In D'Costa's three-fold structure, Paul Knitter is an example of a 'double community exterior dual believer', publicly professing to be both a Christian and a Buddhist, and feeling just as much at home in a church as he does a temple.

What is noteworthy about D'Costa's system of categorisation is that it implies a flexible double belonging that does not necessarily require a total commitment to the second religion. One is free to select what works for him or her in that second religion. For example, a Catholic may be an active member of the local parish church but has a covert interest in Zen Buddhism and practises *zazen* some days but does not belong to a *sangha*. This person is a 'single community exterior dual believer' but so, too, is a person in the same situation but who is fully Zen Buddhist and fully Christian because D'Costa's system is based upon affiliation and not degree of belonging.

The difficulty in following more than one leader is an issue that Rose Drew has also raised because dual belonging makes it difficult to give one's full attention to one without neglecting the other. If a person is a dual believer to the extent that Knitter has described – for example, fully Christian and fully Buddhist – then the believer would feel a constant tension in following the Buddha and following Jesus Christ.<sup>564</sup> Catherine Cornille, professor of comparative theology at Boston College, believes that it is not possible to give yourself to both Buddhism and Christianity because there are fundamental differences between the two religions that cannot be resolved. These differences include the existence of God and participation in worship that follows the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>565</sup> Any attempt at dual belonging would, therefore, result in "luke-warm" membership to both traditions.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Drew (2011), 104.

<sup>565</sup> D'Costa et. al., chapter titled 'Strategies of Negotiation in Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging' by Catherine Cornille, 145-146.

<sup>566</sup> D'Costa, et. al., chapter titled 'An Alternative Conception of Multiple Religious Belonging: a Buddhist-Catholic Perspective' by Abraham Véliz de Cea, 162. De Cea's essay included an excerpt from a book in which Cornille had contributed. For this excerpt, see Thoms, D., et. al. (2013) *Understanding Interreligious Relations* Oxford, England, Oxford University Press, 334.



Despite the clear, insurmountable, obstacles, Cornille says that people still profess multiple belonging. She believes that participants circumvent such obstacles through one of the following four avenues. These are:

- 1) **Moving from multiple religious belonging to multiple religious participation** – discussions about theology can run into problem areas and differences in beliefs so focussing on practice is safer territory. It is also more likely to be a way of uniting with another religion.
- 2) **A transcendent unity of religions** – a belief that all religions descend from the same ‘ultimate reality’.
- 3) **An interpretation of a religion from one’s own beliefs** – looking at another religion and re-evaluating it from the perspective of one’s own religious tradition.
- 4) **A personal synthesis** – selecting elements of two or more traditions and incorporating these into one’s belief system.<sup>567</sup>

The possibility of tailoring religious belonging to the wishes of the follower, particularly in the way described in 4) above, is a reminder that there is little difference between this and New Age spirituality.<sup>568</sup> There may well be other elements of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging that are reminiscent of the New Age.<sup>569</sup> A discussion on whether the New Age has morphed into multiple religious belonging is not, however, for this thesis but it could form the basis for another study.

In the first half of this chapter, Part A, I discussed different aspects of dual belonging and, in doing so, have revealed potential theological issues. I cannot address all these issues here because I do not have the space so I have chosen to examine one of the most commonly recited texts: the Three Treasures, which I carry out in Part B.

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<sup>567</sup> D’Costa et. al., 146.

<sup>568</sup> Cornille, C. (2016), *Strategies of negotiation in Buddhist Christian Dual Belonging*, 156.

<sup>569</sup> The New Age movement reached its peak during the 1970s and 1980s.

## PART B

The question I will explore in connection with the Three Treasures is whether reciting them is contrary to the teaching contained in magisterial documents, such as some of those I enumerated at the beginning of Part III.

### 7.5 Magisterial teaching and recitation of the Three Treasures

In Part A, Johnston explained how Buddhists put their faith in the Three Treasures. Today, this basic statement of commitment is recited not only by Buddhists but also by Christians who engage in ceremonies such as *jukai*. In this section, I plan to expound on Christians' own Three Treasures, as pointed out by Johnston earlier in this chapter.

Before responding to this issue, I wanted to gain a fuller understanding of the Three Treasures, the commitments made during their recitation and their meaning so I carried out some research. I did not find a great deal of published literature on the subject, but I did read a chapter in Reb Anderson's *Being Upright*. Anderson believes that each of the Three Treasures can be interpreted on three levels:

**Buddha** is unsurpassed, correct and complete awakening; it is a person who realizes such awakening; and it is also the transformation of beings. **Dharma** is freedom from any difference between ourselves and buddha; it is also the truth that is realized by a buddha; and it is the transformation of that truth into scriptures and other forms of teaching. **Sangha** is harmony; it is the community of those who practice the truth realized by Buddha; and it is the release of beings from suffering and bondage to the world of birth and death.<sup>570</sup>

While I believe that Anderson is a credible source of information, I wanted to check the information he provided against other opinions so I contacted two *sangha* and simply asked whether taking refuge in the Buddha meant having faith in one's own Buddha nature or whether the verse was referring to the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama. The first respondent was Jundo Cohen, an American *Sōtō* Zen priest who runs Treeleaf Zendo, an online practice centre based in Japan, and he said:

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<sup>570</sup> Anderson, 41.

I believe it (*taking refuge in the Buddha*, my italics) is a matter in the eye of the Buddhist beholder. It is refuge in the Big B "Buddha" which is the truth of all reality, but also the man in India is not inseparable from that, as well as the Enjoyment Body (Saṃbhogakāya) Buddha(s) which are very idealized, super-worldly depictions of the virtues and powers of a Buddha. Some believers will emphasize these various aspects in varied mixes.<sup>571</sup>

The answer was clearly not as straightforward as I had first thought and seemed, to some extent, very much a case of personal choice, made even more a matter of individual decision through there not being a clear, central doctrine in Buddhism. The other *sangha* I contacted was Stonewater Zen Centre in Liverpool, part of the White Plum school. Sensei John Suigen Kenworthy responded and said:

My understanding is that going for refuge essentially means recognising the intrinsic Buddha nature of all things and realising this in the world. This would be the 'Dharmakaya' aspect of Buddha. There is also the 'Nirmanakaya,' the physical manifestation of a Buddha such as Shakyamuni and the 'Saṃbhogakaya' which is the more mythical aspects of Buddha such as are seen in Tibetan iconography. These have a part to play in going for refuge but the emphasis in Zen is on realising one's Buddha nature.<sup>572</sup>

The January 9, 2012 edition of *Tricycle* published a report about a retreat being conducted by Bodhin Kjolhede of the Rochester Zen Center.<sup>573</sup> The second week of the retreat focussed on the Three Treasures. The report of the retreat described what it means to take refuge in Buddha:

When we say, "I take refuge in Buddha," we're really saying, I place my faith in my own Buddha nature – not just the guy who lived in India. I honor, I will find as my source of spiritual sustenance, my own Buddha nature, my own enlightened nature... In a way you could say that upholding this refuge, taking refuge in Buddha, means I'm not taking my refuge in my thoughts. I'm taking my refuge in no-thought, in that which is beyond the stuff of the mind. And this is hugely important in really getting a meditation practice off the ground. Taking refuge in Buddha means taking refuge in our Buddha nature that is beyond the contents of our consciousness. This is a very profound commitment, and one that we all

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<sup>571</sup> See Jundo Cohen's communication with the author, June 2021.

<sup>572</sup> See John Suigen Kenworthy's communication with the author, June 2021.

<sup>573</sup> Kjolhede is the successor of Philip Kapleau. I reviewed Kapleau's books '*Pillars*' and '*East and West*' in Chapter Two, section 2.2.1. After reading these books, I requested an interview with Kjolhede, which I hoped to include in Chapter Five, but he declined. I have written more about this in my introduction to Part II.

know from meditation experience, it's one that keeps getting away from us as we keep getting drawn into our thoughts.<sup>574</sup>

Another article in the May 16, 2017 issue of the on-line magazine *The Lion's Roar* discussed the Three Treasures, explaining that taking refuge in them involved a clear commitment to following the Buddhist path. This commitment was succinctly summed up as:

- Taking refuge in the example of the Buddha (the historical Buddha was an ordinary human being who provides an example to follow and someone to emulate).
- Taking refuge in the *Dharma* as the path (provides a sense of purpose to life).
- Taking refuge in the *sangha* as companionship (provides members with an instant community who are struggling with similar issues).

The pledges outlined above culminate in the formal refuge ceremony.<sup>575</sup>

There are clearly slight variations among *sangha* and Zen Buddhist groups in how the Three Treasures are interpreted and, as Cohen said, individuals will place an emphasis on differing aspects of the Treasures. In putting together all the feedback I have secured about the Three Treasures, I can interpret them as follows.

**Faith in the Buddha:** This is, chiefly, faith in one's individual Buddha nature but it also includes the example set by the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama, and all other manifestations of Buddha. Siddhārtha's reaction to suffering and overcoming life's troubles provides the Buddhist with a model of how to respond to these trials.

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<sup>574</sup> See article titled 'I take refuge in the Buddha', <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/i-take-refuge-buddha/> [accessed June 26, 2021]. Tricycle is an on-line, independent journal of Buddhist views and values.

<sup>575</sup> Rinpoche, C.T. (2017) 'The Decision to Become a Buddhist', published in *The Lion's Roar*, an independent, non-profit, on-line channel established to communicate Buddhist culture. See [www.lionsroar.com/the-decision-to-become-a-buddhist/](http://www.lionsroar.com/the-decision-to-become-a-buddhist/) [accessed July 9, 2021]. The formal refuge ceremony that Rinpoche refers to is '*jukai*', which I discussed in the previous chapter.

**Faith in the *Dharma*:** This involves placing one's faith in the teachings of the Buddha because these are honoured and regarded as the ultimate guide to reality.

**Faith in the *sangha*:** Faith in the empathetic support and fellowship found in one's community of Zen practitioners.

Having ascertained what it means to take refuge in the Three Treasures, I can now offer a Christian response as to whether the recitation of these commitments is in harmony with magisterial documents.

A Catholic – and indeed, every Christian – has a role model in Jesus Christ who they are called to follow, imitate and shape themselves to his character. Through their baptism, followers of Christ become children of God, reflecting something of the goodness of their heavenly father. Christians are, therefore, called to mirror the perfection of God, and seek his will, but they are not alone for Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit to assist them in their journey.<sup>576</sup> Those who follow Christ will increase in holiness and will reflect something of God's love to their fellow brothers and sisters.<sup>577</sup>

The aim of the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* is to establish that it is imperative that the Catholic Church and the greater world should establish a deep relationship and a strong bond.<sup>578</sup> Even so, the encyclical does not attempt to compromise the place of Jesus Christ. Indeed, *Ecclesiam Suam* highlights the prominence of Jesus Christ in Catholics' lives by imploring the faithful to guard against attractions that may take them away from their journey towards God. The encyclical urges all Catholics to strengthen their resolve by making a generous act of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. One's religious life must then be allowed to be transformed and uplifted by this act of faith.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> *LG*, n.40.

<sup>577</sup> *LG*, n.41.

<sup>578</sup> *ES*, n.3.

<sup>579</sup> *ES*, n.23. There are various acts of faith. The following one is reprinted from the website of Catholic Online, an internet-based Catholic library: O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches, because in revealing them you can neither deceive nor be deceived. See [www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=426](http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=426) [accessed July 8, 2021].

The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* further underscores the centrality of Jesus Christ in the life of the Catholic by stating that he is the one mediator between God and humankind and no other form of mediation is on the same level.<sup>580</sup> I am not suggesting that a Catholic who takes refuge in the historical Buddha regards him as a mediator – I have already pointed out that Siddhārtha is a fine model of how to overcome trials in life. However, the teachings and sufferings of Jesus Christ also provide the Catholic with a role model in responding to challenging situations that most people face during life.

The Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate* acknowledges the contribution of other belief systems and rejects nothing that is "true and holy" in them. Moreover, while the teachings of other faiths may differ from its own, the Catholic Church recognises they contain elements of truth. However, *Nostra Aetate* – calling upon the words of John 14:6 – states that the Church must still proclaim Christ as the way, the truth and the life.<sup>581</sup> Jesus Christ did not instruct the people of his day to follow another path or an alternative message. This does not, of course, mean that only those who publicly and consciously declare themselves to be Christian are saved but that those who live according to Christian values can, too, know salvation.

Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life.<sup>582</sup>

The souls of those who have been baptised, however, have been 'stamped' with an indelible mark and they must witness to others the gift of faith they have received.<sup>583</sup> Jesus Christ is God's sole mediator, sent to uphold the Church on Earth.<sup>584</sup> In words that may have resonated with Johnston, it is in Jesus that

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<sup>580</sup> *RM*, n.5.

<sup>581</sup> *NA* n.2. The words of John 14:6 are: "I am the way and the truth and the life."

<sup>582</sup> *LG*, n.16.

<sup>583</sup> *LG*, n.11.

<sup>584</sup> *LG*, n.8.

Catholics place their faith, it is his teachings that Catholics put their trust and it is in their local worshipping community where those teachings are disseminated.

## **Conclusion**

I began Part A of this chapter by discussing the various forms of interreligious dialogue and the impact the Second Vatican Council had on the Church's attitude towards those of non-Christian faiths. I explained how Johnston and Kennedy were early pioneers in interreligious dialogue and believed that Christians could only make real progress in engaging with Buddhists if they actually meditated together. This was a point of view over which Kevin McDonald disagreed as he had been involved in many fruitful discussions with people of other religions.

I then turned to the subject of dual belonging, which some people see as an extension of interreligious dialogue. I considered the question Johnston posed 40 years ago on whether it was possible to belong to two religions at the same time. Johnston said that while he respected both Buddhism and Christianity, each religion had its own identity and, consequently, felt no merging of the two was possible at that time. I discussed several contemporary developments in dual belonging in this growing field.

In Part B, I responded to a question: is reciting, and following, the Three Treasures contrary to the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church?

I used the documents *Nostra Aetate*, *Ecclesiam Suam* and *Redemptoris Missio* to respond to this question. I found that while *Ecclesiam Suam* said that the Church should engage with the world, the place of Jesus Christ should not be compromised in doing so. *Missio* also echoed the central role that Jesus Christ plays in the life of the Christian, adding that his life provides a role model. *Nostra Aetate*, while clearly recognising all that is good in other religions, underscores that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of a Catholic's life.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Contemplative prayer *vis-a-vis* zazen

### Introduction

The analysis I have undertaken in this chapter grew out of a question I wanted to explore after reviewing William Johnston's book *Christian Zen* in Chapter Two and having discussions on the subject with some of my interviewees. That question was: *Is it possible for a Catholic to adopt prayer practices from a non-Christian faith tradition, in this case, Zen Buddhism, yet remain loyal to the magisterial teaching of the Church?*

This was an issue that also appeared to have interested the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith when it published *Orationis Formas* in 1989. In its opening paragraphs, this document explained that some Christians were exploring forms of meditation imported from the non-Christian East, triggered in part by a need to escape from the demands imposed by living in the modern world, enter into the sanctuary of God and engage with him on a deep level. For others, awareness of imported ways of praying was fuelled by engaging in various forms of dialogue. It was in this environment that *Orationis Formas* was written to the bishops of the Catholic Church to clarify the nature of Christian meditation so that prayer remains a personal dialogue between an individual and God, yet retains its community dimension.<sup>585</sup>

*Orationis Formas* defines Christian prayer as a profound relationship between humankind and the Trinity. With the sacrament of baptism and the Eucharist as a foundation, implicit within this relationship lies a spirit of metanoia within the creature, a stance that does not look inward but out towards a transcendental God.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> *OF*, n.1-2. This document also points out that the prayer Jesus taught us to say, described in Lk 11:2, has not only been entrusted to the Church but it also illustrates the communal nature of dialogue between mankind and God. A Christian, regardless of whether he or she is alone or with other people, prays with the Communion of Saints and with Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. See *OF*, n.7.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, n.3.



I also consulted Archbishop Kevin McDonald on what he believes to be the essence of Christian prayer. He said:

The key phrase is *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*, which means that your prayer is an exploration, and an expression, of your faith. It is inextricably bound up in your faith. Christians pray to God our Father, through Our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what Christian prayer is.

Because *Orationis Formas* specifically addresses some of the issues surrounding imported prayer *vis à vis* Christian prayer, this document will be a major source of guidance in this chapter, although other magisterial documents will also be consulted.

In the case of this thesis, the imported prayer practice that I am concerned with is *zazen* in its different forms and variations. I understand that some practitioners of Zen Buddhism may object to *zazen* being classified as a form of prayer, particularly Zen Buddhists themselves.<sup>587</sup> It is true that *zazen* can be a tool for self-discovery, as Zen Buddhists will usually readily acknowledge, but most of my Christian interviewees who practise eastern forms of meditation also desire to deepen their spirituality. Indeed, *zazen* is inextricably and intimately bound up with most of my Christian interviewees' faith. 'Myotai', who I interviewed in Chapter Four, provides an excellent example of the interconnectedness between her Christian faith and her engagement of Zen Buddhism.

Buddhism has made spirituality accessible to me in a way nothing else ever had. And then once I had found Buddhism I found a way to the Christianity that was my cultural inheritance that I had never known had anything living in it. I have met quite a few people for whom Buddhism, and Zen in particular, has been a kind of foster parent and just enabled them to get to a place where they could stand, and from that place see something in Christianity that they hadn't known was there.

There are several steps involved in answering the question I set out at the beginning of this chapter so I have divided my response into two sections.

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<sup>587</sup> One of my interviewees, a Zen Buddhist *Rinzai* priest who withdrew from this study, vehemently objected to *zazen* being classified as a form of prayer. The person involved insisted that *zazen* was a means of self-discovery only.

In Part A, I begin by outlining the core elements of a beginner's basic introduction to *zazen* practice because, although I have made repeated references to this type of meditation throughout my thesis, I have, until now, said little about how it might be undertaken. I then describe different types of contemplative prayer, as told to me by one of my interviewees, Ellen Birx, as some people say that this overlaps with *zazen*.

In Part B, I take two respected leaders in their field, one from the West and one from the East, and compare their thought through examining excerpts of their writings.

## **PART A**

### **8.1 The nature of *zazen*: controlling the body, the breath and the mind**

*Zazen* is a Japanese compound word made up of two *kanji* symbols: 'za' (座) meaning 'sitting' and 'zen' (禪) meaning 'meditation'. In the *Sōtō* tradition, *zazen* is undertaken in rows facing a wall; in a *Rinzai* establishment, participants sit in rows facing each other.<sup>588</sup> Whichever tradition one practises, *zazen* can be a gruelling discipline that is honed and refined over a lifetime under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Dedicated *zazen* practice undertaken in its Japanese<sup>589</sup> form also requires self-control, perseverance and endurance. Training one's body to assume the lotus position can be challenging for westerners as it involves sitting with a straight back, cross-legged with each foot resting on the opposite thigh. Julian Daizan Skinner who, after spending a number of years training in Japan established Zenways in London, said that when he was first exposed to *zazen* he was fit as he had just run a marathon, but his initial experience was still excruciating:

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<sup>588</sup> There are other elements of *zazen* that differ between the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* schools. In the *Rinzai* school, for example, after mastering posture and breathing, a teacher may assign a student a *kōan* to ruminate upon. There are other differences between the two schools, but I am mostly speaking from a *Sōtō* perspective as this is, by far, the larger of the two schools.

<sup>589</sup> Japanese *zazen* is austere and some westerners find it extremely demanding. Some Zen centres in the West, therefore, have made adaptations to *zazen* practice to take this into account.

I was amazed. I had no idea how uncomfortable sitting still could be! My legs, my back, my shoulders ... everywhere was tight. The whole experience was dominated by pain. In meditation, I tried my best to stay present with these tight sensations. Over time, the knots began to shift. My body adapted, and gradually I found my hips could open up, my shoulders could drop a little, my legs could release.<sup>590</sup>

The first step taken in the training of *zazen* often involves counting the breaths. This helps discipline the mind to become still. I am sure that there are many different ways of counting breath, but Skinner explains two methods in his book: narrow-focus meditation and broad-focus meditation. In the narrow-focus meditation, every time a thought arises, the individual is instructed to dismiss it. In broad-focus meditation, instead of immediately dismissing thoughts and distractions, they are allowed to surface and dissipate. When one realises the focus on the breath has been lost, he or she simply returns to the counting.<sup>591</sup>

I have, above, briefly discussed the interaction of the body, the breath and the mind. These are three individual, crucial elements of *zazen* which are integrated, and must be properly balanced and blended before one will be able to sit well.<sup>592</sup>

In the *Sōtō* school, which follows the teaching of Eisei Dōgen (1200-1253), a participant will normally practise '*shikantaza*', literally 'just sitting'. After learning the fundamentals of sitting and breathing properly, a participant will not usually count breaths but will meditate in a state of conscious awareness. In the *Rinzai* school, the focus during *zazen* is the solving of *kōan*. The contemporary Zen Buddhist schools usually practise a hybrid of the *Sōtō* and *Rinzai* sects.

## **8.2 *Zazen* and Christian contemplative prayer**

Ellen Birx, whose interview appears in Chapter Four, articulated an excellent summary of Christian contemplative prayer techniques vis à vis *zazen*. As a reminder of this interview, Birx emphasised that *zazen* involves the emptying of all preconceptions of God because these can be limiting. Activities such as the recitation of the Jesus prayer and engaging in centering prayer, therefore, cannot

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<sup>590</sup> Skinner, J.D. (2017) *Practical Zen Meditation and Beyond* London, England and Philadelphia, United States of America: Singing Dragon, 20-21.

<sup>591</sup> Skinner (2017), 32.

<sup>592</sup> Sogen, O. (2001) *Introduction to Zen Training*, Vermont, United States of America: Tuttle Publishing, 55.

be undertaken during *zazen* because they involve words and/or concepts. Birx also explained that some aids to Christian prayer, such as the playing of music, are also incompatible with *zazen*, as is prayer group style meditation that is guided by a leader. Spiritual exercises, such as those associated with Ignatius of Loyola, which involve projecting oneself into gospel stories, are contrary to *zazen* practice as they involve filling the mind. Moreover, Christian contemplative methods that seek union with the Creator are dualistic, Birx said, because – in her words – humankind is already a “manifestation of God”.

Birx added that the Christian apophatic style of meditation, the letting go of images and use of external stimuli, was where Christian prayer intersected with *zazen*.

I think the approach of St. John of the Cross, the apophatic emptying of all concepts and ideas, is like the emptying approach of *zazen* where we let go of thoughts, concepts, ideas, and come into direct experience of God or ultimate reality to the extent that a human being can experience that. In the dark night of the soul,<sup>593</sup> we learn to let go of who we think we are and who we think God is before we can open up to something new.

Birx was not the only one of my interviewees who said that there was a similarity between *zazen* and Christian contemplative prayer, specifically citing the spirituality of John of the Cross. Marlene Milasus, for example, told me that contemplative religious orders have attracted vocations from people seeking a life of prayer following the revival of monastic life in the middle of the last century.

Many of these monastics, aspiring to deeper forms of prayer, became interested in the meditative techniques of Buddhism and other eastern religions as a means of restoring the Christian tradition of imageless contemplation – represented by the spirituality of mystics like St. John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart<sup>594</sup> – that was lost during the Reformation. A number of these monastics (*sic*)<sup>595</sup> penetrated quite deeply into eastern forms of meditation.

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<sup>593</sup> The dark night of the soul is a spiritual crisis during the soul’s journey towards God. John of the Cross wrote a poem of the same name about the soul’s journey and the spiritual struggles it encounters.

<sup>594</sup> Meister Eckhart O.P. (c1260-1328) was a German Dominican and theologian whose teachings have much influence among contemplative prayer movements.

<sup>595</sup> John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart were not monastics. John was a Carmelite and Eckhart was a Dominican. These are two of the ‘mendicant’ – or ‘begging’ – orders.

When you get to the heart of contemplative prayer, there is a similarity with other faiths. There is a blending. We're all climbing different ladders but as you get to the top, we get closer to each other. For example, if you look at Christian writings on dealing with the false self and then you look at the four noble truths, there are parallels. I remember once reading about a Zen master who, after hearing Paul's words in Philippians 2:6-11<sup>596</sup> commented that the author of that passage knew *satori*. So, the traditions do meet as we climb our various ladders. I would want to say that they meet in Christ.

My interviewee Declan Marmion would agree with Milasus and Birx about the similarities between some aspects of Christian spirituality and *zazen* but is more cautious in his response. He pointed out that there was, in fact, already a rich contemplative heritage within Christianity from which we can draw without having to look to *zazen*. He said:

There may be some parallels in guided meditation in the Christian tradition and Zen. (Karl) Rahner would have been a bit critical, though, about Catholics looking to the eastern tradition because we have a monastic tradition available to us in Christianity. For me, the Christian mystical tradition would be the spirituality of canonised saints, such as Augustine, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Catherine of Sienna, Hildegard de Bingen, and so on, right up to Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa, if you will. These make up a vast resource in the Christian mystical tradition.

As the subject of imported prayer is an integral part of my thesis, I raised this issue with Archbishop McDonald when I interviewed him. I asked if Christians who were attracted to prayer practices from other religions might engage in them as a way of enriching their own faith. After consulting with a colleague who, like him, had also served on the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious

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<sup>596</sup> Phil 2:6-22: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name <http://www.usccb.org/bible/philippians/2> - 58002009-1 that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Dialogue, McDonald confirmed that the Council had never produced a document addressing this specific question.<sup>597</sup>

### 8.3 Shared prayer

While there may not be a magisterial document that specifically addresses an individual Catholic's participation in non-Christian prayer, McDonald said his colleague had referred to a document that the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith had once produced on the subject of people from different religions praying together, and that it was "extremely guarded" on the subject.

The Church acknowledges the possibility of people being present to each other's prayer,<sup>598</sup> (*on special occasions, such as civic events, memorials and other gatherings that may attract a public attendance*) but not participating.<sup>599</sup>

In Chapter Four, McDonald talked about the inter-religious day of prayer at Assisi for leaders of the world's faith traditions in October 1986. This would become one of the most memorable multi-faith events held during the past century and one that is still discussed 40 years later. From a multi-religious point of view, McDonald said, people "came together to pray" and not to "pray together". The Christians prayed collectively while those of other faiths also prayed, but in their own groups and according to their tradition. After their time of prayer, all the leaders re-convened. McDonald said the event had caused some concern at the time but it was conducted entirely in the spirit of *Nostra Aetate*.

### 8.4 Towards a universal spirituality

The document *Jesus Christ Bearer of the Water of Life* discusses the re-emergence of a perennial<sup>600</sup> 'religion' that is common to all peoples. This movement has,

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<sup>597</sup> The document *Orationis Formas* cautions against fusing Christian meditation with that which is non-Christian. The document recommends that attempts to harmonise Christian meditation with eastern forms (in this case, *zazen*) should be reviewed to avoid syncretism. See *OF*, n. 12.

<sup>598</sup> *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*, n.143.

<sup>599</sup> To view the full interview with McDonald, see Chapter Four.

<sup>600</sup> Perennialism is sometimes referred to as *philosophia perennis* (perennial philosophy), *sophia perennis* (perennial wisdom) or *religio perennis* (perennial religion). These expressions mean the same but there are slight subtleties in understanding, depending upon the context in which they are used. See Lings, M. and Minnaar, C. Ed., (2007), *The Underlying Religion: An Introduction to the Perennial Philosophy*, World Wisdom, Inc. [kindle edition], introduction. This book was published 100 years after the birth of Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998), a key thinker in the area of perennialism, and dedicated to his memory.

apparently, always been in existence but it has been replaced, or overshadowed, by Christianity.<sup>601</sup> Perennial wisdom is the belief in a single source of truth, so cultivating a universal spirituality that is independent of any particular religious affiliation.<sup>602</sup>

There might be elements of perennial wisdom in the practice of *zazen* and there may be some overlap in the two but an in-depth comparison is outside the scope of this thesis but it could be the subject of further study. Perennial wisdom is certainly fashionable and valued for its apparent compatibility with all religions, since it addresses issues common to peoples of all faiths. Indeed, several interviewees spoke positively about the oecumenical aspect of *zazen* and its universality. For example, my interviewee Migaku Sato said:

Christian wisdom, enriched through self-critical eyes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, has prepared this widening of the Zen movement... Sanbō Zen probably says this mostly clearly but other schools that have spread themselves in the West somehow profess this human-oriented understanding. Doing *zazen* is free for all people of all religions and without religion. It is a question of your being a human.<sup>603</sup>

The same interest in *zazen* as a tool to bring together people of different religions can also be seen in my interview in Chapter Four with Ray Cicetti, who said:

One day, I opened the New York Times and there was a little article saying that *Rōshi* Bernard Glassman had made a Jesuit priest a Zen teacher. I thought how beautiful it was. It would never happen in the Christian tradition. Can you imagine a rabbi being authorised as a priest in Catholicism? But in the Buddhist tradition, Bernard Glassman,<sup>604</sup> who was head of the White Plum at the time, wanted to widen the scope and said, if we're going to be an American Buddhism, why couldn't a Muslim sheik, a rabbi or a Catholic priest be a Zen teacher also.

I can understand how, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its globalisation, mix of cultures, international travel and sectarian differences, a universal religion might be appealing. However, *Dominus Iesus* opens with Jesus' instruction to go out into the world. Simply proclaiming the Gospel is not enough, however. We are

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<sup>601</sup> *WL*, 2.3.1 'A global response in a time of crisis' [accessed May 10, 2021]. The text in question was taken from Michael Fuss's *New Age and Europe – a Challenge for Theology*, 192-193 and 199.

<sup>602</sup> Lings, M. (2007) et. al, introduction.

<sup>603</sup> See Chapter Four for a full transcript of this interview.

<sup>604</sup> Glassman himself (1939-2018) was Jewish.

commanded to go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>605</sup> Jesus Christ's command is, and has been, lived out in a two-fold message to the world. This message is focussed on the declaration to all people that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that Jesus Christ – the Son – died for the salvation of all and not just for Christians.<sup>606</sup>

The evangelistic element of *Dominus Iesus* is further emphasised in its statement that inter-religious dialogue plays a role in disseminating the message in John 14:6, that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. The document also points out that inter-religious dialogue complements missionary activity aimed at those who do not yet know Jesus Christ. Moreover, inter-religious dialogue is part of the Church's evangelisation mission.<sup>607</sup> Catholics who engage in inter-religious dialogue must, however, be aware that there are elements of doctrine that are resolute and these must be separated from areas that can be expounded upon during discussions.<sup>608</sup> Relativistic approaches to Christianity, where a theological truth is right for one person but not another, are present today and they can hinder inter-religious dialogue and, therefore, evangelisation.<sup>609</sup>

## **PART B**

I finished Part A by highlighting *Dominus Iesus's* call for Christians to do more than simply proclaim the gospel. They must also evangelise and proclaim to all, Christian or not, that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.

In Part B, I 'compare and contrast' the thought of a Catholic contemplative on the subject of prayer with a Japanese Zen Buddhist's approach to meditation to

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<sup>605</sup> See Matthew 28:19–20.

<sup>606</sup> *DI*, n.1. Five years after the publication of *Dominus Iesus*, Joseph Ratzinger, then Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,<sup>606</sup> became Pope Benedict XVI. Benedict issued a *motu proprio*, *Ubicumque et Semper*, in September 2010. He opened this apostolic letter with the Great Commission from Mt 28:19-20: make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, just as he had done in *Dominus Iesus* 10 years earlier. The chief purpose of this letter was to establish the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization as a Dicastery of the Roman Curia. See [www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_apl\\_20100921\\_ubicumque-et-semper.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921_ubicumque-et-semper.html) (accessed July 21, 2022).

<sup>607</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, n. 2, making reference to John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 55.

<sup>608</sup> *Dominus Iesus*, n. 3. An example of an immutable discussion point is that the fullness of God's revealed truth is found in Jesus Christ. Claims are not in harmony with the teaching of the Church when they point to Jesus Christ as lacking in that fullness of truth and are complementary to other religions that also contain elements of truth. See *DI*, n.6.

<sup>609</sup> *DI*, n. 4.



illustrate how the two cultures differ. My initial choice for the Catholic perspective was John Cassian (360-435) as he has written on prayer and lived close to the time of the Desert Fathers.<sup>610</sup> However, I wanted the two voices to be from a similar era and Zen Buddhism did not become well established in Japan until the 13th century by Myōan Eisai (1141-1215) who imported from China the *Rinzai* school and Eihei Dōgen, who introduced the *Sōtō* school. Either of these two figures, with their respective, well-established places in the history of Zen Buddhism in Japan, would have been eminently suitable as the Japanese voice. As the *Sōtō* school is by far the larger of the two traditional Zen streams, both in Japan and in the West, I selected Dōgen to speak from the Zen Buddhist perspective.

As some 800 years separate Dōgen from Cassian, I sought a Catholic contemplative from a similar time-frame. In carrying out some research on the appropriateness of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), I discovered the writings of his friend, William of Saint Thierry (c1085-1148). The latter had written extensively on the subject of Christian prayer. Coincidentally, William and Dōgen had much in common with each other. They were both reformers, for example, with Dōgen leaving the *Tendai* sect to establish the *Sōtō* school and its single-minded focus on meditation. William also left the order into which he initially took vows, the Benedictines, to join the Cistercians.

## **8.5 Sources**

In this section, I detail the sources I have used in gathering biographical information on both my subjects, along with my sources for the ‘compare and contrast’ section. I also include brief details of their own sources in the writings of theirs I have used.

### **Dōgen**

#### **8.5.1 Sources: biographical information**

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<sup>610</sup> The Desert Fathers of the fourth century retreated into the wilderness areas of Egypt and Syria in the pursuit of perfection and a deep interior life. A key feature of this life, first attributed to Anthony of Egypt, was the practice of extreme asceticism. On page 16 of his 2011 book *The Desert Fathers* (San Francisco, United States of America: St. Ignatius Press), Peter Börg describes some of Anthony’s ascetical practices as sleeping less, sleeping on a mat made of rushes or directly on the ground, and taking in only enough bread, salt and water to survive. The idea was that the soul is at its liveliest when physical cravings are powerless.

I derived most of the biographical information on Dōgen from the book *Zen Masters of Japan* by Richard Bryan McDaniel, a former lecturer at the University of New Brunswick and St Thomas University, also in New Brunswick. McDaniel, himself an established *zazen* practitioner, is the author of seven books on this subject. I also relied upon some further sources for the profile of Dōgen and these are the introductions of the books listed in 8.5.2. The introductions were written by the translator, Kazuaki Tanahashi, who is also a *zazen* teacher.

### **8.5.2 Sources: compare and contrast section**

In the compare and contrast section, I have used excerpts of Dōgen's writings from *Shobogenzo (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye in English)*,<sup>611</sup> Dōgen's masterpiece collection of essays. *The Essential Dōgen: Writings of the Great Zen Master*,<sup>612</sup> *Enlightenment Unfolds*<sup>613</sup> and *Beyond Thinking*<sup>614</sup> were also sources of information.

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<sup>611</sup> Dōgen, E. (1994) *Shobogenzo*, translated by Nishijima, G., and Cross C., Windbell Publications (kindle book). This translation is divided into four books.

<sup>612</sup> Dōgen, E. (2013) *The Essential Dōgen: writings of the Great Zen Master*, edited by Tanahashi, K. and Levitt, P., London, England: Shambhala Publications (copyright San Francisco Zen Center). The sources of the quotes are not cited but in the introduction the translator explains that most were taken from the *Shobogenzo*.

<sup>613</sup> Tanahashi, K., editor, (2000) *Enlightenment Unfolds*, London, England: Shambhala Publications.

<sup>614</sup> Dōgen, E. (2004) *Beyond Thinking*, edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi, introduction by Fischer, N., Massachusetts, United States of America: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

### 8.5.3 Dōgen's own sources

As a former *Tendai* monk, the Lotus<sup>615</sup> sutra (*Hokke-kyo*) has been a source in Dōgen's writings and references to this particular Buddhist scripture can be found throughout the *Shobogenzo*. Considered the 'King of Sutras', the Lotus was initially recorded in India in the first century B.C.E. but it developed during the next 300 years and had advanced to such an extent that it became regarded as the Buddha's final teaching, replacing all earlier instruction.<sup>616</sup>

There are also numerous other sutras quoted throughout the *Shobogenzo*. Some – like the Lotus Sutra – originated in India, such as the Sutra of the Benevolent King (Chinese *Ninno-gyō*, Sanskrit *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* of the Benevolent King) and the Diamond Sutra (Chinese *Kongo-kyo*, Sanskrit *Vajracchedikā Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*). However, there are also original Chinese sutras that aren't merely translations, such as Ten Kings Sutra (*Ju-o-kyo*).

Chinese *Chan* masters also influenced Dōgen's writings and he quotes from them liberally throughout the *Shobogenzo*. I say that Dōgen quotes from 'Chinese' Chan masters because Dōgen was introduced to the *Ts-ao-tung* school in China, which he then took to Japan and it became the *Sōtō* school.

As well as the sutras, discussed in depth are the precepts, such as the *Ju-Ju-Ritsu*, a translation of the vinaya pitaka<sup>617</sup> of the Sarvastivadin School.<sup>618</sup>

### William of Saint Thierry

#### 8.5.4 Sources: biographical information

Benedictines Jean-Marie Déchanet (1906-1992) and/or Jacques Hourlier (1910-

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<sup>615</sup> The teachings of the *Tendai* school, part of the Mahāyāna tradition, are drawn from the Lotus sutra. See Hazama, J., *The Characteristics of Japanese Tendai*, the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 1987 14/2-3, accessed through JSTOR. The Lotus Sutra was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Kumarajiva in 406 A.D.

<sup>616</sup> Shaheen, J. (Spring 2020), *How to Read the Lotus Sutra* Tricycle magazine <https://tricycle.org/magazine/how-to-read-the-lotus-sutra/> [accessed 22/10/21].

<sup>617</sup> The *vinaya pitaka* (Pāli and Sanskrit) is the third 'basket' of discipline in the *Tipitaka* of the Buddhist canon, which governs monastic communities. See [www.britannica.com/topic/Vinaya-Pitaka](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Vinaya-Pitaka) [accessed October 20, 2021].

<sup>618</sup> Nishijima, G. and Cross, C. (1994) *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Windbell Publications, kindle edition: Book 1, 71. For a full bibliography, see *Shobogenzo* Book 1, 311- 317. The *Sarvastivadin* School was later absorbed into other schools see [www.britannica.com/topic/Sarvastivada](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Sarvastivada) [accessed October 22, 2021].

1984) wrote introductions to *On Contemplating God*,<sup>619</sup> (hereafter referred to as 'Contemplating') and *The Golden Epistle*<sup>620</sup> (hereafter referred to as *Epistle*). John D. Anderson wrote the introduction to *Enigma of Faith*<sup>621</sup> (hereafter referred to as *Enigma*). The material in these introductions were sources of information for the brief biography I have written in 8.6. The book *Spirituality through the Ages: Ascetics and Mystics of the Western Church*,<sup>622</sup> is a fourth source of biographical information.

### **8.5.5 Sources: compare and contrast section**

I used three books as sources in the compare and contrast section. The first of these three books is *Contemplating*, thought to have been written while William was abbot of the monastery in Saint Thierry, and it was originally attributed to his friend, Bernard of Clairvaux, possibly in part because William was not concerned about distributing his work.<sup>623</sup> *Enigma* was written for a particular group of monks to reinforce their faith during a time when heretical material was being produced by Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and others.<sup>624</sup> *Epistle* was a letter addressing new monks early in their spiritual journey.

### **8.5.6 William of Saint Thierry's own sources**

In line with other authors of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, William's writing is imbued with biblical references and scriptural allusions. However, it is not always clear whether William is quoting directly from sacred literature or if he is simply using pious language to enrich his narrative.<sup>625</sup> Complicating the matter somewhat is that William tended not to explicitly cite his sources, or was vague about them.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>619</sup> William of St Thierry (1970) *On Contemplating God: Prayer, Meditations* translated by Penelope Lawson, Kentucky, United States of America: Cistercian Publications.

<sup>620</sup> William of Saint Thierry (1971) *The Golden Epistle*, Kentucky, United States of America: Cistercian Publications.

<sup>621</sup> William of Saint Thierry (2008) *The Enigma of Faith*, Ohio, United States of America: Cistercian Publications.

<sup>622</sup> Walsh, J., (1964), editor, *Spirituality through the Ages: Ascetics and Mystics of the Western Church* chapter on William of Saint Thierry by Odo Brooke O.S.B., London, England: Burns & Oates.

<sup>623</sup> *Contemplating*, 16.

<sup>624</sup> *Enigma*, 12-14.

<sup>625</sup> *Contemplating*, introduction by Hourlier, J. O.S.B. 25-26. There are some explanations for the obscurity over sources in William's work, which Hourlier discusses in more detail.

<sup>626</sup> *Contemplating*, 27-28.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is frequently mentioned in *Contemplating*, with William revealing the depth of his familiarity with the Latin Father's work through frequent inferred references. These have their source in Augustinian works such as *Confessions*,<sup>627</sup> *the Trinity*, *the City of God*<sup>628</sup> and *Letter 147*.<sup>629</sup> Gregory the Great (330-379) and the Greek influence of John Scotus Eriugena (815-877) are also evident in *Contemplating*.<sup>630</sup>

In *Enigma*, William's biblical sources were mostly from the New Testament, including all of the gospels, although he did draw on some books of the Old Testament, such as the psalms and brief reference to Isaiah. His non-biblical sources included works authored by Hilary de Poitiers (315-368), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), pseudo-Jerome (Pelagius, 360-420), Leo the Great (d. 461), Boethius (c. 477-524) and Isidore of Seville (d. 636). Augustine's *Trinity*<sup>631</sup> is, however, the primary source as he quotes verbatim from nine of the treatise's 15 books.<sup>632</sup>

## 8.6 Brief biography: Eihei Dōgen

Dōgen was born into an aristocratic family in Kyōto, Japan, in 1200 during the *Kamakura* era (1192-1333) but was orphaned as a child and was raised by an uncle. From an early age, the young Dōgen was drawn to the Buddhist contemplative life but his uncle had plans to make his nephew an heir and that he would enter service in the imperial court.

When he was 13, Dōgen ran away and entered the monastery Engakuji on Mount Hiei, the *Tendai*<sup>633</sup> school's spiritual centre, where he was ordained a monk. During his time at the monastery, Dōgen had difficulty in understanding how enlightenment could be achieved through academic study alone, particularly

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<sup>627</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo (2021) *Confessions of Saint Augustine* translated by Pusey, E.B. [kindle edition].

<sup>628</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo (2015) *The City of God* Magisterium Press [kindle edition].

<sup>629</sup> St Augustine of Hippo (2014) *Letters of Saint Augustine* translated by Cunningham, J.G., Aeterna Press [kindle edition].

<sup>630</sup> *Contemplating*, 28-29.

<sup>631</sup> Augustine of Hippo (2012), *On the Trinity*, edited by Boer, P., translated by Hadden, A., with introductory essay by Shedd, A., Veritatis Splendour Publications [kindle edition].

<sup>632</sup> *Enigma*, 20

<sup>633</sup> The *Tendai* Buddhist tradition, along with the *Shingon* Buddhist tradition and the Pure Land (called *Jōdo Shinshū* in Japanese) were popular, influential schools during the *Kamakura* period. All were imported from China. See McDaniel, R.B. (2013) *Zen Masters of Japan: the Second Step East*, Vermont, United States of America: Tuttle Publishing, 33.

when the Buddha himself had meditated, as did Bodhidharma, to become aware of their Buddha-nature. It was an issue that was to trouble him for some years. Dōgen would eventually travel to the *Rinzai* temple Kenninji,<sup>634</sup> in Kyoto to consult the priest Eisai, who had brought the *Rinzai* school to Japan from China. The encounter with Eisai was profound and Dōgen asked to be admitted to the monastery, with its blend of *Shingon*, *Tendai* and Chinese Zen. Within a year, however, Eisai died and his successor, Ryonen Myozen, took over.

Dōgen grew increasingly frustrated with *Rinzai* and its emphasis on solving *kōan*. In 1223, Dōgen accompanied Myozen to China, where they planned to study with Zen masters. Initially, Dōgen's pursuit of the 'truth' took him from monastery to monastery but he finally settled at the Tien-t'ung-ssu temple, which had been taken over by a new Zen master, the strict, authoritarian Ju-ching (1163-1228). There, Dōgen received enlightenment and became a patriarch in the *Ts-ao-tung* tradition.

Dōgen returned to Japan in 1227 and began teaching what was a new discipline in Japan – the realisation of one's Buddha-nature through the practice and discipline of *zazen*. He was not convinced about the *Rinzai* method of using *kōan* to achieve sudden enlightenment. He preferred the emphasis on *zazen* and a gradual journey towards enlightenment.<sup>635</sup> He wrote recommendations for the practice of *zazen* called *Fukanzazengi*, which highlighted the need to follow the meditation tradition established by the Buddha and Bodhidharma. There are variations and different approaches to *zazen* but, for Dōgen, *zazen* was *shikantaza*, or 'just sitting' and did not involve the rumination of *kōan* during practice, as was the custom in the *Rinzai* school. Dōgen's legacy was the founding of Eihei-ji which, with Sojiji, are today the two main temples of the *Sōtō* school in Japan.<sup>636</sup>

## 8.7 Brief biography: William of Saint Thierry

Born in Liège, Belgium, William grew up within the ranks of the mobility. Other

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<sup>634</sup> Kenninji was founded in 1202 and is thought to be the oldest Zen Buddhist temple in Kyoto. See [www.kenninji.jp/english/](http://www.kenninji.jp/english/) [accessed September 10, 2021].

<sup>635</sup> In opposition to the gradual enlightenment found in the *Sōtō* school, the *Rinzai* school emphasises sudden enlightenment.

<sup>636</sup> McDaniel (2013), 46-58.

than that, little else is known about his family and upbringing. Scholars even debate as to the precise year of his birth. What is known, however, was that he was well-educated, although it is not certain whether he studied at Rheims or Laon,<sup>637</sup> and first entered a Benedictine community called the Monastery of Saint-Nicasius in Rheims, France. In 1118, William met Bernard, abbot of the Cistercian monastery in Clairvaux, and the two became close, lifelong friends.<sup>638</sup> Bernard became a source of great inspiration to William both personally and in his numerous writings. J.M. Déchanet believes many of William's treatises would not have been written without Bernard's encouragement.<sup>639</sup>

At about 1120, William was elected abbot at a monastery in Saint Thierry, a position he found difficult, particularly with the reforms that the Benedictine order was undergoing at the time. William attempted to introduce change, both at his own monastery and in the order in general, but was met with great resistance by those who opposed the reforms taking place.<sup>640</sup> His days were taken up with administration but what he desired was greater simplicity in his spiritual life. William found that the duties of an abbot prevented him from contemplation but understood that his responsibilities as an abbot came first.<sup>641</sup> Against the advice of Bernard, William left the Benedictine abbey in 1134 or 1135 and joined the Cistercians at their monastery in Signy, in the diocese of Rheims. From that time, until his death in 1147 or 1148, William remained in Signy.<sup>642</sup> During his lifetime, William wrote several treatises but, as an author, his name had all but disappeared within a few decades of his death although it later resurfaced. Many of his written works have not only been written anonymously, but a number, somewhat mysteriously, had assumed the name of another author, including his friend Bernard.

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<sup>637</sup> *Enigma*, 2-3. Odo Brooke, however, believes William attended the famous school of Laon. It is unknown how long William spent in academia but it was sufficient to enable him to argue with Peter Abelard on theological errors. See Walsh, J., (1964) *Spirituality through the Ages: Ascetics and Mystics of the Western Church*, chapter on William of Saint Thierry by Odo Brooke O.S.B., London, England: Burns & Oates, 122.

<sup>638</sup> *Enigma*, 4.

<sup>639</sup> Déchanet, J.M. (1971) Introduction to *The Golden Epistle*, Kentucky, United States of America: Cistercian Publications, xxxi.

<sup>640</sup> *Enigma*, 5.

<sup>641</sup> *Epistle*, 12.

<sup>642</sup> *Enigma*, 6-7. William only left the monastery in Signy once, when he visited the Carthusian Monastery of Mont Dieu, which triggered his treatise *The Golden Epistle*. See Brook, 123.

## 8.8 William and Dōgen on prayer, meditation and spirituality

Throughout much of his later life, Dōgen placed an emphasis on *zazen* as the main key to receiving enlightenment. William did not talk in terms of enlightenment – or certainly not in the same context as Dōgen – but he did believe in the importance of prayer and Christian meditation as the path to unity with God. William and Dōgen were, however, from two different cultures and in this section I contrast some of those differences through excerpts from their writing on themes related to prayer, meditation and spirituality. In the excerpts below, I include one from Dōgen followed by a related thought or theme from William. I conclude each pair of excerpts with some of my own observations.

Dōgen: You should observe the example of Buddha Shakyamuni, who practiced sitting up straight for six years even though he was gifted with intrinsic wisdom. Still celebrated is Master Bodhidharma, who sat facing the wall for nine years although he had already received the mind seal.<sup>643</sup> Ancient sages were like this; who nowadays does not need to practice as they did? Hence, you should stop searching for phrases and chasing after words. Take the backward step and turn the light inward. Your body-mind of itself will drop off and your original face will appear.<sup>644</sup>

William: When I desire to stir my heart to constant and effective prayer, to practice it and establish the habit, I would have no direction except yours, Lord Jesus, the wisdom of God the Father. I call to mind, therefore, the kinds of prayer you practised among men on Earth, and by which you gave us a pattern for perfect prayer. I find you sometimes praying alone (Matt 14:23), and sometimes in a crowd (John 11:41f; 12:27ff), sometimes in exaltation of spirit (Lk 10:21), at one time in a sweat of blood (Lk:22-42ff), and at another lifted up upon the cross (Lk 23:34, 46).<sup>645</sup>

Dōgen believed that everybody, regardless of their position in life, was in need of meditation and should make it a priority because this, and not study, was the primary means of receiving enlightenment. This view is echoed here in his recommendation to observe the model provided by Siddhārtha and

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<sup>643</sup> By 'mind seal', Dōgen was referring to *Dharma* transmission, something that is not conferred until a teacher's student is advanced in meditation.

<sup>644</sup> Tanahashi, K., ed. (2000) *Enlightenment Unfolds: the Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* London, England: Shambhala Publications, 32.

<sup>645</sup> *Contemplating*, 118.



Bodhidharma. If Siddhārtha, with his inherent wisdom, devoted himself to meditation, as did Bodhidharma, even after receiving *Dharma* transmission, then the ordinary person certainly needs to follow their example. An introspective, self-examining element of *zazen* is revealed in Dōgen’s recommendation not to “chase words” but to ‘shine the light inwards’. In using the phrase ‘dropping off of body-mind’, Dōgen is referring to neither the mind nor the body being needed during *zazen*.

William also looks to a model in the spiritual life – Jesus Christ and the example he sets. In this particular excerpt from William’s writing, he uses the different situations Jesus Christ prays in to act as a focus for his own meditation. In the examples provided, Jesus prays on his own, with others, during times of extreme fear and when he was in great pain.<sup>646</sup> The excerpt from *Contemplating* exemplifies how Christian prayer is about a relationship and dialogue with God. William is praying to God. *Orationis Formas* defines the essence of Christian prayer as a “personal, intimate and profound dialogue between man and God”.<sup>647</sup> Christian prayer is a relationship.

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Dōgen: His (*Master Gensa’s*) conduct and observance of sitting in stillness all day long is a rare example of conduct and observance. There are many who vainly run after sounds and forms, but few people who practice sitting in stillness all day long.<sup>648</sup>

William: Now the love of God in man which is born of grace is fed with the milk of reading, nourished with the food of meditation, strengthened and enlightened by prayer. The best and safest reading matter and subject for meditation for the animal man, newly come to Christ, to train him in the interior life, is the outward actions of our Redeemer.<sup>649</sup>

Dōgen believed that the Buddha way was not achievable without meditation, which became of growing concern over the years. Towards the end of his life, Dōgen’s successor Ejō asked if study was necessary to follow the Buddha way and he responded that solving *kōan* could be beneficial, but it could also cause

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<sup>646</sup> William does not mention it in the excerpt provided but, as a Christian, he would also have sought the saints’ intercession during prayer.

<sup>647</sup> *OF*, n.3.

<sup>648</sup> Nishijima, G. and Cross, C. *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo: Book 1*, 192 (Kindle Edition).

<sup>649</sup> William of Saint Thierry (1971) *The Golden Epistle*, Minnesota, United States of America, 171.

the student to deviate from the way. Dōgen finished the discussion with Ejō by adding that sitting was the ‘ancestral way’.<sup>650</sup> Dōgen was referring to Siddhārtha’s and Bodhidharma’s experience of enlightenment, which took place while they were sitting.<sup>651</sup>

William, too, believes meditation to be important but the Christian approach is centered upon Jesus Christ and involves filling one’s mind with, and learning from, the example he set during his lifetime.

William’s frequent use of the term ‘animal’ refers to the first of his three-stage spiritual journey.<sup>652</sup> William devotes a chapter on each of these three stages in *The Golden Epistle*. The animal man denotes someone early in his spiritual journey and unaccustomed to habitually seeking God in prayer.<sup>653</sup> William advises that those in this stage of spiritual development are to meditate on the person of Jesus Christ and seek to emulate him. Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers are also suitable material for study as are stories of the saints’ martyrdom. In fact, a beginner in the spiritual life should actively seek material that will rouse in him love for God and scorn for himself.<sup>654</sup>

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Dōgen: Loving fame is worse than breaking a precept. Breaking a precept is a transgression at a particular time. Loving fame is like an element of a lifetime. Do not foolishly hold on to fame, or do not ignorantly accept it. Not to accept fame is continuous practice. To abandon it is continuous practice.<sup>655</sup>

William: A will that has grown proud through habit often inflates the spirit with pride while the heart is dried up. From such a state of affairs there proceed vainglory, trust in oneself, neglect of God, boasting, disobedience, scorn, presumption and the other diseases of the spirit which usually arise from conceit and the habit of pride.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> Tanahashi, K., (2000), 47-58.

<sup>651</sup> *Kōan* did not completely disappear from the *Sōtō* school but they are not emphasised as in the *Rinzai* school, where they usually form part of a formal curriculum of study.

<sup>652</sup> The second stage of the spiritual life is the ‘rational’ state and, finally, the ‘spiritual’ state.

<sup>653</sup> *Epistle*, n.169.

<sup>654</sup> *Epistle*, n.172.

<sup>655</sup> Dōgen (2013), 86.

<sup>656</sup> *Epistle*, n.223.

Dōgen points out how seriously he views the promises one makes to obey the precepts but, at the same time, reveals how much graver it is to give way to a character defect such as pride (or fame as Dōgen puts it). Breaking one of the precepts can be done in a random moment of weakness yet resisting 'fame' is a life-long struggle.

William also takes character defects seriously but demonstrates how one area of weakness can lead to deeper issues. The following passage from William demonstrates his vigilance over character defects.

The vices avail themselves of the slightest relaxation or disorder to insinuate themselves into his character and become, as it were, natural.<sup>657</sup>

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Dōgen: Rujing said: "Studying Zen is dropping off body and mind. Without depending on the burning of incense, bowing, chanting Buddha's names, repentance or sutra reading, devote yourself to just sitting."

I asked: "What is dropping off body and mind?"

Rujing said: "Dropping off body and mind is *zazen*. When you just sit, you are free from the five sense desires and the five hindrances."<sup>658</sup>

William: Since the formation of the animal man is wholly or principally concerned with the body and the bearing of the outward man, he must be taught to deaden in accordance with reason those passions in him which belong to the earth and to arbitrate fairly and wisely between the claims of flesh and of spirit, which are constantly at war with one another, showing favour to neither of them in his judgment.<sup>659</sup>

The excerpt above has been taken from the personal notebook Dōgen wrote during his four-year stay in China. At the time, Dōgen was 25 years old and in the midst of a search for answers to probing questions he had on the subject of meditation. He could not understand that if everybody was born with the buddha nature anyway, why did Siddhārtha and Bodhidharma have to meditate. Finding answers to these questions took him to China, where he eventually met Rujing, a

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<sup>657</sup> *Epistle*, 218.

<sup>658</sup> *Enlightenment*, 10. The five hindrances are states of mind that can crowd the mind and can have affect meditation practice. The five hindrances are sensual desire, anger, sloth, restlessness and doubt. See <https://tricycle.org/magazine/practicing-five-hindrances/> [accessed September 29, 2021]. The five sense desires are yearnings and cravings that arise from sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.

<sup>659</sup> *Enlightenment*, 71.

particularly strict teacher who practised in the *Ts-ao-tung* school,<sup>660</sup> which favoured ‘just sitting’ over meditating on *kōan*. Rujing demonstrated his disapproval over activities that take away the focus on meditation, even if those activities are related to practice, such as sutra reading and incense burning.

“Dropping off body and mind” is an enigmatic term that Dōgen himself used<sup>661</sup> and clearly inherited it from Rujing who, in turn, may have learned the term from his teacher. Rujing, who had an enormous influence on Dōgen, is advocating *shikantaza*, explaining that, in this style of *zazen*, one finds emancipation from certain temptations and physical weaknesses that can distract a person from meditating.

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Dōgen: If you understand and follow the rules of practice for sudden or gradual realization taught by the Buddha, you will unmistakably attain enlightenment. In studying sutras you should not expend thoughts in the vain hope that they will be helpful for attaining realization.<sup>662</sup>

William: The beginning of good in the animal way of life is perfect obedience; progress for it is to gain control of the body and bring it into subjection, perfection for it is when the habitual exercise of virtue has become a pleasure. The beginning of the rational state is to understand what is set before it by the teaching of the faith; progress is a life lived in accordance with that teaching; perfection is when the judgement of the reason passes into spiritual affection. The perfection of the rational state is the beginning of the spiritual state; progress in it is to look upon God’s glory with face uncovered; its perfection is to be transformed into the same likeness, borrowing glory from that glory, enabled by the spirit of the Lord.<sup>663</sup>

This excerpt from Dōgen demonstrates his opposition to seeking enlightenment through study alone. Dōgen’s *Rinzai* training is evident in this excerpt with the reference to sudden enlightenment.

William mentions again the ‘animal way’ because this excerpt is taken from the chapter in *The Golden Epistle* that is specifically addressed to novice monks. With

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<sup>660</sup> The Chinese predecessor of the *Sōtō* school.

<sup>661</sup> To read some of Dōgen’s uses of the term ‘body-mind’, see *The Essential Dōgen*, 106-109.

<sup>662</sup> Dōgen, E. *Beyond Thinking*, Shambhala [kindle edition], 18.

<sup>663</sup> *Epistle*, 45.

William, enlightenment takes the form of progressing through to the spiritual stage, the final level in one's ascent to God.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began by defining Christian prayer as a relationship between a person and a triune God. As my interviewee Kevin McDonald said, Christians pray to God, through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I then described how *zazen* is undertaken as it is a highly structured process that first involves preparing the body, counting breaths and stilling the mind. I engaged in a debate between some of my interviewees about an overlap between *zazen* and Christian contemplative prayer.

I raised the subject of the inter-religious day of prayer at Assisi, which McDonald said that people "came together to pray." They didn't come to "pray together". He confirmed that the Christians had prayed collectively but those of other faiths had prayed in their own groups.

I also discussed a universal spirituality, which appears to be attracting some interest although, at present, it is in a seedling state. *Zazen* could fit into a universal spirituality mindset as it is an activity in which people from all religions – and none – can take part and this seems to be of interest to people living in a multicultural society. However, *Dominus Iesus* explicitly states that we are not only to proclaim the Gospel but we must also evangelise.

In Part B, I took several texts from the writing of Eihei Dōgen and compared them with the thought of William of Saint Thierry, both of whom lived during a similar time in history. These writings reveal how different the cultures are between the two. There were some similarities in their personal lives but their cultures were different and this was revealed through the texts. The relationship with God through prayer that I spoke about earlier was evident in some of William's writings and this is a prominent finding in this chapter.

## **- PART IV -**

### **BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

#### **Overview of Part IV**

The final part of my thesis comprises Chapter Nine (my conclusions), the bibliography and appendices. Chapter Nine begins with a summary of my thesis and a list of possible subjects for further research. This chapter also includes my conclusions: 12 key points that I have drawn together from study and interviews. I have arranged my bibliography into the following sections:

- Scripture
- Church documents
- Books authored by the Church Fathers
- Other books, including (e-books and kindle books)
- Magazines
- Internet resources

There are two appendices attached to this thesis. These are:

- Attachment I: Application for ethics approval
- Attachment II: Interreligious dialogue in the diocese of Portsmouth

# CHAPTER NINE

## Endings

### 9.1 Summary of this thesis

At the outset of this thesis, I established two key questions and these were:

(1) To what extent is Zen Buddhist spirituality compatible with Catholic thought and tradition?

(2) To what extent do magisterial documents enable a Catholic to participate in the meditation methods of a non-Christian faith?

My methodology, which I outlined in Chapter Three, included a series of interviews that I conducted with both Christians and Zen Buddhists based mainly in the United States, Japan and Great Britain. I had intended to conduct these interviews in person but the timing of my research coincided with the outbreak of coronavirus, with the first cases appearing in Japan a month before my proposed visit. I discussed the matter with my supervisors who advised me to conduct the interviews using an on-line video conferencing platform. I followed their advice and carried out numerous conversations over the internet with monks, nuns, priests, religious sisters and lay people from both Christianity and Zen Buddhism. These interviews have been documented in Chapter Four and Five. While many of the interviews have assisted in creating a picture of *zazen* and Zen Buddhist/Catholic thought, excerpts of some of these discussions have also been used elsewhere in this thesis, usually to illustrate a point that I had made.

Part III of my thesis included a theological analysis of three subjects. There were a number of topics that I could have addressed in this section but, due to the depth I wanted to explore and the subsequent space any one of these subjects would occupy, this was not possible. In selecting the topics for analysis, I chose three contemporary subjects that had arisen during my reading and my interviews: the nature of *jukai* (Chapter Six), Zen Buddhist-Catholic inter-religious relationships (Chapter Seven) and contemplative prayer *vis-à-vis zazen*

(Chapter Eight). I have examined these subjects, all of which are key components of my research question, against Church documents of different levels. These documents include a constitution, *Lumen Gentium*; a declaration, *Nostra Aetate*; two encyclicals, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Ecclesiam Suam*; and four letters from Vatican dicasteries, *Jesus Christ Bearer of the water of Life*, *Dominus Iesus*, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, and *Orationis Formas*.

I should emphasise that documents published by the magisterium form one important source of teaching, but it is not the only one. The Apostles passed on their teaching to their successors who, in turn, entrusted it to the Church for dissemination with divine assistance through the Holy Spirit. This is Sacred Tradition.<sup>664</sup> Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition are derived from the same divine source.<sup>665</sup> All three sources of truth – Sacred Tradition, Holy Scripture and the magisterium – are equal and one cannot exist without the other two.<sup>666</sup>

There were several topics that I could not adequately cover in this thesis, again, due to space, but they could form the basis for future research. They have all originated from my interviews and/or reading.

- 1) An exploration of the relationship between *zazen* and the spirituality of John of the Cross. Many of my interviewees had discussed this but it was an area that warranted much more space than I was able to give it.
- 2) A comparison of the Christian and Buddhist approaches to suffering.
- 3) An exploration of the name 'It' as an alternative for the name 'God'.
- 4) An investigation into whether the New Age of the 1980s has mutated into multiple religious belonging.
- 5) A Catholic response to the concept of theology without walls.

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<sup>664</sup> Pope Paul VI (1965) *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum*. [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html) [accessed January 7, 2022], Ch. II, n.8.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. II, n.9.

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. II, n.10.



## Conclusions

This final section of my thesis is a bringing together of key points that I would like to emphasise. I have made these observations and formed these conclusions from reading material and the interviews I conducted.

1) Magisterial documents may appear to be nebulous in providing guidance on particular non-Christian prayer practices, and *zazen* is certainly a specific activity. There is, however, much to be understood, in a general sense, about interacting on a spiritual level with other religions. *Nostra Aetate* pays the deepest respect for all that is sacred and sincere in other religions, especially being that they echo some of the truths that the Catholic Church upholds. However, *Nostra Aetate* still underscores that the Church must proclaim Jesus Christ as ‘the way, the truth and the life.’<sup>667</sup>

It is true that *Orationis Formas* makes a brief reference to forms of meditation originating from non-Christian traditions to help the praying person to “come before God with an interior peace”.<sup>668</sup> I do not think this was intended to sanction the substitution of Christian prayer with that which is non-Christian. In fact, Joseph Ratzinger, who signed this document as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, explicitly recommends against creating a hybrid east-west form of meditation. I believe that the reference to non-Christian traditions in *Orationis Formas* was the endorsement of using imported techniques to *prepare a praying*<sup>669</sup> person for an encounter with God in the Catholic tradition.

2) Christianity is about a relationship with a supreme being, which Christians usually refer to as God. It is not possible for mankind to visualise or conceptualise God (the Father), but he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This relationship is a key difference between Christianity and Zen Buddhism, which follows the Buddha’s example by neither denying nor acknowledging the existence of God.

3) Zen Buddhism and Catholicism are both religions but they have different origins and diverse traditions. There is no profound overlap between the two

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<sup>667</sup> See *NA*, n.2, which is quoting from Jn 14:6.

<sup>668</sup> See *OF*, n. 28.

<sup>669</sup> Persons of other religions can, of course, pray but the document was written in the context of a Roman Catholic.

beyond the parallels that one might see in most faith traditions. It is true that, in some circles, there is a perceived connection between *zazen* and the spirituality of mystics such as John of the Cross.

4) The religion-or-philosophy debate over Buddhism may never be resolved. I established in Chapter One that Buddhism is a religion. One could argue that most religions are also philosophies. Buddhism has millions of followers worldwide and is one of the largest religions in the world. One of the reasons, I suspect, for the ongoing debate on this in Christian circles is that if Buddhism can be classified as a philosophy then 'bolting on' a practice like *zazen* is more acceptable for a Catholic as it avoids the sensitive issue of dual belonging, which I addressed in Chapter Seven.

5) Taking the precepts, or *jukai*, as it is called in Zen Buddhism, includes making commitments that some view as parallels to the 10 commandments or the Beatitudes. However, the *jukai* ceremony also usually involves promising to take refuge in the Buddha, the *sangha* and the *Dharma*. This may make some Catholics uneasy. It is true that the Three Refuges are very much subject to personal interpretation but making these promises can send out a confusing message, particularly as *jukai* is often regarded as an initiation into Zen Buddhism. It is recommended that Christians who are considering taking this path first discuss the matter with a member of their clergy or their spiritual director.

6) The subject of interfaith dialogue is vast, complex and multi-faceted. I have only briefly addressed relationships between Zen Buddhists and Catholics and some of the challenges they may encounter. However, there is an infinite number of other combinations and each of these relationships have particular issues that must be addressed. Meaningful progress in understanding these relationships can be made when dialogue is examined between two religious sects rather than two religions as a whole. There are also *types* of dialogue, and these can vary depending upon the desired outcome of the relationship. For example, people of different faiths working together in a soup kitchen can provide a good witness. Furthermore, there are people who participate in interreligious dialogue through actual religious experience, as has been the case with many of my interviewees.

7) There is an interest, albeit small at present, in belonging to more than one religion, particularly the combination of a Christian denomination and a non-Christian tradition, such as Hinduism or Buddhism. Dual (or multiple) belonging, as this is sometimes called, is at present a 'niche' phenomenon. However, with greater exposure to other cultures and religions, this trend will almost certainly grow. Very much related to this is the concept of a universal religion. Again, this is not widespread at present but Catholics are curious about other religions so, like dual belonging, the notion of a universal, one-size-fits-all religion may well grow in the future.

8) There is a strong tradition of meditation and numerous ways of praying in the Catholic Church. Many of these forms of prayer are rich in history, having been honed and refined over the centuries by the saints of the Church. There are ways of praying that are suited to different personalities and to the vast range of spiritualities that find a home in the Catholic Church. There could be a self-discovery aspect to Catholics' attraction to *zazen*, which could explain a renewed interest among lay people in individualised and personalised programmes such as the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.

9) It is not possible to authentically 'Christianise' *zazen* because it has a prescribed method and this precludes introducing Christian prayer, music and images. Books have been written on combining Christian prayer and *zazen*, but as soon as words, thoughts and images are introduced, it ceases to be true *zazen*.

10) Zen Buddhism has undergone a radical change, particularly since it travelled to the West. The greatest change is seen in the growth of contemporary adaptations, such as the White Plum and Sanbō Zen schools, which draw on both the *Rinzai* and *Sōtō* traditions. However, the traditional schools (*Rinzai* and *Sōtō*) have also been modernised and westernised – a process that began during the *Meiji* era. Some of the contemporary outgrowths of the two traditional Zen Buddhist schools (*Sōtō* and *Rinzai*) potentially offer the Christian the opportunity to engage in a practice such as *zazen* without having to accept all Buddhist teachings.

11) The word 'Zen' has become overused in the West and has taken on a broad definition. 'Zen' is sometimes separated from the word 'Buddhism' for simplicity

and to avoid awkward repetitions, but it can be an attempt at removing its connection to a religion. It is also often used as a synonym for *zazen*.

12) My interviews with *zazen* practitioners revealed two common characteristics: the extraordinary ability to function fully in the present moment and the priority they place on establishing a relationship with a teacher. If Catholics could cultivate these laudable attributes, the effect could be immense. Being conscious of the present moment would raise Catholics with greater awareness of God's activity in their life. Appointing a trained teacher (or a spiritual director) would greatly enhance a Catholic's prayer life.

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My research provides no quick, easy answers, particularly when contemporary outgrowths of Zen Buddhism enable a Catholic to select elements that are of interest. There is, however, a possibility that the practising Catholic will face doctrinal issues at some stage when discerning how, and in what way, components of Zen Buddhist practice might serve to strengthen his or her relationship with a triune God. Magisterial documents can provide general guidance, supported by Sacred Tradition and Holy Scripture, and this thesis may also offer Catholics and members of other Christian denominations additional direction in this growing area of spirituality. No other piece of academic work has previously included an analysis of *zazen* and Catholic meditation through the lens of magisterial documents. In completing this research project, I hope that I have given Christians and Zen Buddhists the opportunity to get to know each other a little better and, in so doing, advance their understanding of how *zazen* interacts with the Catholic tradition of meditation.

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### **Websites and other internet resources**

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- Bede Griffiths Trust  
[www.bedegriffiths.com/man-monk-mystic/](http://www.bedegriffiths.com/man-monk-mystic/)
- Bodhi Zendo  
[www.bodhisangha.net/index.php/en](http://www.bodhisangha.net/index.php/en)
- Brill  
<https://referenceworks.brillonline.com>
- Britannica  
[www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)
- Catholic Online, World's Catholic Library  
[www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)
- Catholic Spiritual Direction  
[www.spiritualdirection.com](http://www.spiritualdirection.com)
- Catholic Telegraph  
[www.thecatholictelegraph.org](http://www.thecatholictelegraph.org)
- Eiheiji Soto Zen temple  
<https://daihonzan-eiheiji.com/en>
- Galiwonders.com  
<https://galiwonders.com>
- Joint Council for Japanese Rinzai and Obaku Zen  
[http://zen.rinnou.net/head\\_temples/02manpuku.html](http://zen.rinnou.net/head_temples/02manpuku.html)
- Kechara House  
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- Kenninji temple, Kyoto, Japan  
[www.kenninji.jp/english/](http://www.kenninji.jp/english/)
- Manpukuji Obaku temple  
[http://zen.rinnou.net/head\\_temples/02manpuku.html](http://zen.rinnou.net/head_temples/02manpuku.html)
- Ocean Gate Zen Center, Santa Cruz, California  
[www.oceangatezen.org/](http://www.oceangatezen.org/)
- Office of the Historian

<https://history.state.gov>

- New Advent  
[www.newadvent.com](http://www.newadvent.com)
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[www.newworldencyclopedia.org](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org)
- North Carolina Zen Center  
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- Pacific Zen Institute  
[Pacificzen.org](http://Pacificzen.org)
- Parliament of World's Religions  
<https://parliamentofreligions.org>
- Quora  
[www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)
- Red Cedar Zen Community  
<https://redcedarzen.org/>
- Rochester Zen Center  
[www.rzc.org/](http://www.rzc.org/)
- Sotozen  
[www.sotozen.com](http://www.sotozen.com)
- St Buenos Jesuit Spirituality Centre  
[www.pathwaystogod.org](http://www.pathwaystogod.org)
- San Francisco Zen Center, San Francisco, USA  
[www.sfzc.org](http://www.sfzc.org)
- Toronto Zen Centre, Toronto, Canada  
<https://torontozen.org>
- White Plum Asanga  
<https://whiteplum.org>
- Zen in the Woods, Houston, Texas, USA  
[www.zen-in-the-woods.com/jukai.html](http://www.zen-in-the-woods.com/jukai.html)

# APPENDIX ONE

## Application for ethical approval



St Mary's University

### Ethics Sub-Committee Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor, and forwarded to the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one document (in order of the checklist) and named in the following format: '**Full Name – Faculty – Supervisor**'

Please note that for all undergraduate and taught masters research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with**

**Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

**Please note:**

**In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.**

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff).



### St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application. Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

<i>Document</i>	<b>Enclosed?*</b>	<b>Version No</b>
1. Application Form	Mandatory	
2. Participant Invitation Letter (email)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
3. Participant Information Sheet(s)	Mandatory	
4. Participant Consent Form(s)	Mandatory	
5. Parental Consent Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
6. Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of posters, newspaper adverts, emails	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
7. Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct study on the premises)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
8. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
9. DBS certificate available (original to be presented separately from this application)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
10. Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	

11. Certificates of training (required if storing human tissue)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
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I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one document (any DBS check to be sent separately) named in the following format:

**‘Full Name - Faculty – Supervisor’**

Signature of Proposer(s):	<i>Yvette Harrington</i>	Date:	December 18, 2019
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	<i>Peter Tyler</i>	Date:	18.12.2019



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

### Ethics Application Form

<b>1. Name of proposer(s)</b>	Yvette Harrington
<b>2. St Mary's email address</b>	186093@live.stmarys.ac.uk
<b>3. Name of supervisor</b>	Professor Peter Tyler and Dr. David Fincham
<b>4. Title of project</b>	An analysis of the interaction between <i>zazen</i> and meditation in the Catholic tradition

<b>5. Faculty or Service</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EHSS <input type="checkbox"/> SHAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Institute of Theology
<b>6. Programme</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> UG <input type="checkbox"/> PG (taught) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG (PhD) Name of programme:
<b>7. Type of activity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> UG student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG student <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting <input type="checkbox"/> Associate

<b>8. Confidentiality</b>	
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 2018?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>9. Consent</b>	
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants/participants' representatives?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable



<b>10. Pre-approved Protocol</b>	
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable Date of approval:
<b>11. Approval from another Ethics Committee</b>	
a) Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

<b>12. Identifiable risks</b>	
a) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are participants over 65 years of age? A few are.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
c) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
d) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
e) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
f) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
g) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
h) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
i) Will highly personal, intimate or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

<p><b>j)</b> Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details: If a translator is required during any interviews in Japan, travel expenses will be reimbursed.
<p><b>k)</b> Could the relationship between the researcher/supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>l)</b> Are you working under the remit of the Human Tissue Act 2004?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>m)</b> Do you have an approved risk assessment form relating to this research?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### 13. Proposed start and completion date

Please indicate:

- When the study is due to commence.
- Timetable for data collection.
- The expected date of completion.

Please ensure that your start date is at least four weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.

- Writing the PhD thesis began in January 2019.

- Data collection, in the form of interviews and case studies will commence March 2020 or immediately following ethical approval of this research, whichever is sooner.

- Approximate timetable: Interviews/field visits of UK-based participants – March-April 2020; field visit to Vatican City – April 2020; field visit to Japan – June 2020; field visit (or Skype interviews) to United States – September 2020. Anticipated completion date of interviews October 2020.

### 14. Sponsors/collaborators

Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include your supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.

- Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.
- Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support.

There are no sponsors or collaborators on this project.

### 15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval

Please indicate:

- Whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. an NHS Research Ethics Committee).
- Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.

Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project.

No other ethics approvals are required.

### 16. Purpose of the study

In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study. *[100 word limit]*

Living in a multi-cultural country has brought Catholics into contact with spiritualities and prayer traditions from non-Christian faiths. Over the decades, these spiritualities and prayer traditions have become widely practised throughout the country. One of the non-Christian imported spiritualities that has become popular during the past 50 years is Zen Buddhism. My question is whether Zen meditation is in harmony with the official teaching of the Church, as set out in magisterial documents, apostolic tradition and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

### 17. Study design/methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

- a) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
- b) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
- c) The requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
- d) Details of where the research/testing will take place, including country.
- e) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

The study is conducted entirely through qualitative research, comprising mostly face-to-face interviews. Some of these interviews will be carried out with people who can speak from personal experience of Zen meditation while others will have specific knowledge in a particular area of my thesis. All interviews will require approximately one hour of the participant's time. Face-to-face interviews will be carried out in an office (if, for example, a university professor), a monastery (in the case of a monk) or neutral, public venue for other interviews, particularly those unknown to me. Some interviews may be carried out by Skype or telephone. Interviewees are based in the UK, Japan and the United States.

## 18. Participants

Please mention:

- a) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex.
- b) How they will be recruited and chosen.
- c) The inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- d) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants.
- e) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken.
- f) Please state any connection you may have with any organisation you are recruiting from, for example, employment.

I plan to interview approximately 20 people, who I have grouped together in the attached interview schedule. Some of the interviewees are already known to me as they have written material that is very much related to my thesis. There are others who I wish to interview (Catholics/Christians) for their practical experience in Zen meditation. These will be recruited via an email to leaders of Zen Buddhist sanghas throughout the UK, and possibly some in the United States. The email will state brief details of my study and that I am interested in interviewing Catholics/Christians who practise Zen meditation (*zazen*), and whether there is anyone suitable in their sangha who would be willing to take part.

## 19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet clearly makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

- a) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done.
- b) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?
  - Children under 18
  - Participants with learning disabilities
  - Participants suffering from dementia
  - Other vulnerable groups.

If any of the above apply, state whether the researcher/investigator holds a current DBS certificate (undertaken within the last 3 years). A copy of the DBS must be supplied **separately from** the application.

- c) Provide details on how consent will be obtained. This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

There are no incentives/pressures to take part. All participants will be over the age of 18 (and preferably 21), free of learning disabilities, and not suffering from dementia or belonging to any other vulnerable group.

## 20. Risks and benefits of research/activity

- a) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.
- b) Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.
- c) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.
- d) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).
- e) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).
- f) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research?

Most of the above questions do not apply to my type of research. In question f), there are no obvious benefits to the participant taking part in the research. Participants will, hopefully, gain a deeper insight into the nature of their practice as well as be given the opportunity to contribute to this much-needed project of relevance to contemporary Christian spirituality.

## 21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection

- Outline what steps will be taken to ensure participants' confidentiality.
- Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored (please state that all electronic data will be stored on St Mary's University servers).
- *If there is a possibility of publication, please state that you will keep the data for a period of 10 years.*
- Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others' data.
- *Describe how you will manage data using a data management plan.*
- *You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publicly available once the project has ended.*
- *You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating to data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).</li> <li>• Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?</li> <li>• Explain what information will be identifiable.</li> <li>• Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.</li> <li>• Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.</li> </ul>
<p>The identity of interviewees (other than those who are being interviewed in their official roles, such as a university professor or monastery abbot) will be confidential and they will be offered alternative names in the thesis. A simple data management plan comprising a tabled list of participants' real names, their thesis names (if relevant) and contact details will suffice. This is the only part of the data collected that would need protecting – the rest of the information provided by the interviewee would be used in the thesis. It is possible that the thesis will be published in book form, in which any confidential information (such as real names of participants vs 'thesis names') will be destroyed after 10 years.</p>

<p><b>22. Feedback to participants</b></p>
<p>Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriately written.</li> <li>• Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.</li> </ul>
<p>- All interviewees will be emailed a copy of the text that relates to them, as it appears in the thesis. All will be offered the opportunity to amend what they have said. - I do not intend to provide feedback to any other individuals or organisations.</p>

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Signature of Proposer(s):	<i>Yvette Harrington</i>	Date:	18/12/19
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	<i>Peter Tyler</i>	Date:	18.12.2019



### Approval Sheet

Name of proposer(s)	Yvette Harrington
Name of supervisor	Prof. Peter Tyler/Dr. David Fincham
Programme of study	PhD
Title of project	An analysis of <i>zazen</i> and meditation in the Catholic tradition

Supervisors, please complete section 1. If approved at level 1, please forward a copy of this Approval Sheet to the Faculty Ethics Representative for their records.

<b>SECTION 1:</b> To be completed by supervisor.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to Faculty Ethics Representative for consideration at Level 2 or Level 3.			
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):	<i>Peter Tyler</i>	Date:	18.12.2019

<b>SECTION 2:</b> To be completed by Faculty Ethics Representative.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved at Level 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 consideration is required by Ethics Sub-Committee.			
Signature of Faculty Ethics Representative:		Date:	19/12/2019

## APPENDIX TWO

### Inter-religious dialogue in the diocese of Portsmouth

#### Introduction

*In Chapter Eight, I discussed how the subject of interreligious dialogue had been raised in some magisterial documents This appendix explains how the theology behind interreligious dialogue translates into local initiatives in the diocese of Portsmouth.*

The Roman Catholic diocese of Portsmouth re-launched its interfaith dialogue group in May 2021 at the request of its ordinary, Bishop Philip Egan. The diocese is one of the largest in the UK, encapsulating multicultural metropolises such as Portsmouth, Southampton, Basingstoke and Reading so dialogue between the Catholic Church and all the religions represented is highly desirable.

Until two years ago, responsibility for interreligious dialogue in the diocese was mainly concentrically divided between Canon Vincent Harvey, a Southampton-based parish priest with a long history of interreligious dialogue and Canon John O'Shea, also a parish priest at the time, based 50 miles to the north in Reading. Each had formed a small interreligious dialogue group in their respective geographical areas and the two groups would meet periodically to exchange ideas and progress.

However, two events took place in 2020 that had the effect of dismantling, or breaking up, the existing diocesan interreligious dialogue meetings: Canon O'Shea's retirement and the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic.

"Our bishop is very supportive of interreligious dialogue and tasked me with the job of putting together a team and establishing a centralised group," said Canon Harvey who, quoting from the Portsmouth diocesan yearbook, described the team's ultimate objective as:



To identify and build good relationships with the people and leaders of the other religious communities (non-Christian) within the different areas of our Diocese and to enable mutually enriching discussion, sharing and common projects. These links are with the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists and those of other religions. At the same time, the IRD Team helps educate the people and clergy of our Diocese to a greater awareness and knowledge of the other religions, their origins, beliefs and outlooks, their values, hopes and worship patterns. The IRD Team works in association with the interreligious adviser to the Bishops' Conference. The IRD Coordinator and IRD Team ensures that a calendar of significant days for the other religious communities is included in the Diocesan Ordo and that appropriate notification and intercessory prayers are sent to parishes for those anniversaries.

The relaunched interreligious dialogue group held its first meeting, through Zoom, in May 2021 and the second meeting took place six weeks later in June 2021, again through Zoom. There are currently seven members, a mixture of lay and ordained. It is possible that this number may increase slightly to ensure that all parts of the diocese are covered.

In the Southampton area, at least, the group has an excellent basis on which to further develop interreligious dialogue. There are, for example, 'peace walks', organised by the Southampton Council of Faiths,<sup>670</sup> in which people from the different religious communities undertake together a walk with refreshments offered at different places of worship on their route. Southampton University also organises a similar walk. The Asian community also brings together those living in the area with a bonfire and, on occasion, have invited leaders of the different worshipping groups to set up a stand.

"We (the Southampton Council of Faiths) also have an excellent relationship with the City Council," said Canon Harvey. "They send a rep, a Sikh, to sit on the

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<sup>670</sup> For more information on the Southampton Council of Faiths, see [www.southampton-faiths.org](http://www.southampton-faiths.org) [accessed June 1, 2021]. Canon Harvey and the Catholic Churches in Southampton are represented on the Council.

Council.<sup>671</sup> Our Police Community Support Officer is a Muslim and he also on the Council.”

One of the group’s priorities is to look at interreligious involvement in other major areas of the diocese, such as Reading, Maidenhead, Portsmouth, Winchester, Bournemouth and the Channel Islands. Magisterial documents relating to interreligious dialogue may also be studied by the group, and a mission statement may also be created.

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<sup>671</sup> The Council that Canon Harvey is referring to is the Southampton Council of Faiths.