



Some Buddhist Words on God

by Paul Seto *

Higher and Higher Beings

All mainstream religions believe in beings that are in a higher state of development than ordinary human beings. Most religions call the highest of all these beings: 'God' or some equivalent e.g. 'Allah' or 'Yahweh'. People then give 'God' a number of extremely pure human attributes, or give humans as-yet-imperfect reflections of God-qualities, such as wisdom, love, compassion, patience, etc.

Buddhism would say that there are countless higher beings in all the possible levels of existence. However to call the Highest and First Being of all 'God' could be correct in some ways but it would be to fall short of the ultimate reality, which is that no thing has the power to create itself. This is the 'emptiness' that is spoken of in Buddhist teachings – all things are empty (of the ability to self- create) and so are the result of collections of various causes and conditions, that is, all things are mutually inter-dependant, in every instance.

Buddhism would say that all matter, including energy and consciousness, cannot be created or destroyed – it just keeps changing form, depending on what is done to it. Western science would agree with this statement.

For example water changes from ice to liquid to vapour, depending on its temperature. The 'original' water remains the same, in essence. Similarly, water can be polluted or purified, depending on what is put into it. So it is with the human mind.

Buddhism sees all human consciousnesses in continual movement, either 'upwards' or 'downwards', through virtuous or non-virtuous activities. The driving force is one's own karma (that is: 'actions') which is generated by one's every thought,



word and deed. The present form and state of every individual's ever-changing river of consciousness is determined by their cumulative karma and the surrounding conditions in the present moment.

The most important thing is what is done in the **next** moment. Falling down happens. Getting up is a positive response. Being disappointed happens; examining why is a positive response.

The Dalai Lama says: 'The purpose of all religions is to grow good people.'

It is relatively easy to know what is good. The criteria is 'How many will benefit?' The more who benefit then the 'higher the good'.

Who decides 'Good'?

Ultimately, no one. There are absolute forces in the universe which just naturally produce results, eg gravity and light. Karma is like a natural enlightened gravity of justice. All beings will always receive what they deserve, not in a punishing way or a lottery winning way, but simply as consequential products reflecting what has been done previously. A very just and fair method of running the universe.

The Good News is that in essence, 'God helps those who help themselves'. Those beings who increasingly turn towards virtuous activities find that they are in the company of countless others who have been there before, and who are all happy to help, when and where they can.

May all beings be swiftly released from all their sufferings.



* **Paul Seto** was previously Buddhist member on three London SACREs including Lambeth SACRE; Director: The Buddhist Society, London; National Secretary, the Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK).

Some Related Topics:

- Liberation, through Self-Power or Other-Power?
- Rebirth and Reincarnation
- No beginning to Time and Space and Consciousness
- The Big Bang and no First Big Bang
- How is God related to Humans?
- Six Realms of Existence (Gods, Demi-Gods, Human, Animal, Hungry Spirits, Hell Beings)

Bibliography and Further Reading:

‘The Buddha Nature: Death and Eternal Soul in Buddhism’

by HH Dalai Lama, Blue Star Communications, Woodside, California, USA, 1997.

‘The Good Heart’,

HH Dalai Lama, Rider/Random House, London, 1997. Christian – Buddhist commentaries on the Gospels.

‘The Many Ways to Nirvana’

by HH Dalai Lama, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 2004.