

Human beings naturally possess different interests and inclinations. Therefore it should come as no surprise that we have many different religious traditions with different ways of thinking and behaving. People eat rice because it grows best where they live, not because it is either any better or worse than bread.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama



Christ et Buddha, painted 1880 by Paul Ransons, French artist.

Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship. *Advices and Queries, Britain Yearly Meeting 1994*



Jing-Si Books and Café – run by Tzu Chi throughout Asia-see p18

The cafes contain essence of books, aroma of tea, spiritual enlightenment



This Essay is dedicated to the work of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Asia West Pacific Section, who strive to keep alive the Quaker spirit in Asia -and to the known and unknown Quakers in Asia; who stand daily with a courageous spirit and will be the leaders at the frontier of social change.



Main gates to Fo Guang

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Introduction

It was another hot steamy night in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. People were beginning to stream into the streets and night markets to enjoy a night of eating and catching up with friends and family. Everywhere were the sounds, sights and smells of this bustling vibrant city as the working day was drawing to a close and the night market trading was beginning.

Confucius taught long ago that “few pleasures can match that of receiving a friend from afar” and it seemed that every person I could see was taking this to heart as the night markets and food stalls opened, presenting an astonishing variety of food in a carnival like atmosphere, providing an arresting insight into everyday life in this wonderful city.

Nearby to the night markets are the huge air-conditioned temples to modern consumerism and style – the shopping malls. These were also becoming packed with office workers and friends heading to the western style franchise food and coffee houses, all dressed in smart western attire, with the standard dress accessory of I-pod and earphones, briefcase and laptop bag. Seeking to escape from the bustle and heat I went back to a beautiful Chinese style tea house I had seen earlier in the day – to have a quiet break and indulge in those two now essential parts of Quaker life – good books and the aroma of coffee.

I entered into the serene, calming atmosphere of the Jing-Si Book Café and was met by a young, well groomed, happy and quietly spoken attendant who ushered me to a table and made me welcome. “What is

this place? “ I asked. “This is Jing-Si” replied the attendant. “We are part of Tzu Chi engaged Buddhism, and these tea house shops are part of our gift to the City, to allow people time to enjoy good books, fine natural tea and coffee and spiritual enlightenment in a calm and uplifting atmosphere.”

And so began a journey from that quiet conversation – a journey that would take me to four countries, beautiful temples and monasteries, and into countless hours of dialogue with Buddhists and Christians all seeking to engage with the modern world.

I am grateful to the Committee of the Asia West Pacific Section, Friends World Committee for Consultation for awarding me the 2009 Essay grant that enabled me to pursue this topic by research and travel and write this Essay.

In the Rule of Benedict – Insights of the Ages – it is recorded:

“There is a meaning in every journey that is unknown to the traveller.” In the joyous experience of writing this Essay I have found that to be true.

John Cartwright



Chapter 1 HOW BUDDHISM SPEAKS TO THE QUAKER CONDITION IN ASIA

a) Inter-spiritual and Inter-awareness

We are entering an era of new consciousness in the human family. Globalisation, the internet, faster international travel, a working population now mobile with overseas working experiences; ecological awareness and a generally recognised acceptance of the fragile nature of our planet have all given rise to an acknowledgement of the essential interdependence we have on each other.

Along with this has come a deep, growing appreciation of the sense of community between religions through their individual members – and the awareness of the beauty, mysticism and treasures of the world’s great faith practices.

This has been brought about by traditions learning and more importantly experiencing by actual encounter, through dialogue and sharing, between people in tolerance and respect of differing faiths. These interfaith encounters are giving rise to openness, enthusiasm, mutual trust, receptivity, joy and community – not of one mind but of one heart.

It is replacing the old model of separation, mistrust, competition, hostility and conflict. Nowhere is this more seen than in the current dialogue and sharing between Christians and Buddhists.

Buddhism and Christianity are creating a new vision for the world by establishing a mutual openness, trust and respect – demonstrating beyond anyone’s imagination that when religions and cultures meet in openness and willingness to learn, they change each other. They become living entities that grow.

Quakers and Buddhists are traditions under siege – existing largely in exile – far from their original homelands of thought and practice.

Yet both traditions demonstrate powerful, practical implications for profound social change if they become

“engaged” with society – which is characterised by caring and service, social and environmental protest, nonviolence as a creative way of overcoming conflict and demanding a socially just and sustainable society.

In this Essay I seek to explore that meaningful social change is possible when there is a deep spiritual change in individuals – manifesting in “an awakening” of traditional spirituality into engaged social action – and I will look at two examples of engaged Buddhism movements in Asia – Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi – and how they can speak to the Quaker condition in that region.

b) A Spiritual Hunger

It has taken a long time to realise that there is a spiritual hunger in the world today and that this hunger is a universal one. It has likewise taken a long time to realise that this hunger is genuine. There is a need to lead, guide and inspire in the values of spiritual reality – and this requires a commitment to a spiritual journey, to silence as the universal language of spirit, and to the discipline of the spiritual path.

The seeker needs to be a pilgrim first before they can become a guide, and the rapid growth of contemplative and mediation movements that have established themselves on every continent is demonstration of the inner spiritual drive of people today.

c) The Stillness Movement

We have been able to discover unity in stillness.

The universal call to “be still and know that I am God” puts us on the path to interfaith dialogue and overcoming divisions. There is an openness and simplicity in silent prayer – that gives an expression to seriousness of purpose and truth to experience. Stillness may seem to look inactive – but to the practitioner it shows that the urgency of life today is to first find our own way back to personal spiritual experience and lead others on to that path for themselves.

In Asia, all countries - including China – are experiencing a religious boom – the numbers reflecting a spiritual yearning often attributed to rapid social change, a popular disillusionment with past ideologies, and the painful transition to a free market or capitalism.

With their traditions of stillness, mediation and silence – these spiritually hungry people are returning to seek the same things as seekers universally – the realisation of who they are as human beings, community, meaning, leadership and contact with and expression of God in their lives. Buddhists, like Quakers, are realising that they do not need teachers – but guides - guides with the pilgrim experience – being led by the power (Light) within.

The still, silent mystical experience begins with an invitation – it is a call from beyond oneself. It can be a secret and quiet call – a still small voice – but it is a voice that has always existed in the heart, lying dormant, waiting for the deliberate, appropriate moment in a person’s life. The silent *Stillness Movement* is an expression of God’s presence beyond the boundaries of culture and language. Its fruits are an improvement in character and a love of or ‘engaging’ with one’s neighbour.

This is the invitation. This is the call to Quakers and Buddhists.

d) New Buddhism – how the west has transformed an ancient tradition

A new Buddhism is emerging in Asia. It is being transformed from the West – but while it is different in what has been seen before, it is at its heart unchanged from the Buddha’s great enlightening moment under the bodhi tree.

There is a growing movement in both Asia and the west to create an “engaged” Buddhism – new movements

that are using a broad range of approaches but unified in a belief that Buddhist teachings and practices can be directly applied to involvement in the social, political, economic and ecological affairs of the world. The origins of the term are credited to the Vietnamese monk and activist Thich Nhat Hanh who is in the forefront of dialogue between Christians and Buddhists. In this new form of Buddhism, the basic distinctions between monk and layperson are almost done away with – it takes a path that the way that was preserved and developed by generations of Asian monks is now offered up to anyone who is interested.

Likewise the new Buddhism is transforming gender. More women are becoming full participants in western Buddhism. This involvement is transforming the tradition itself. A new generation of women teachers bring fresh perspectives and shed the cultural baggage from the east.

The founding of the hugely successful Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation by a single monastic nun with 5 followers, into an organisation of over 10-million members world-wide, is a living example of the gender transformation happening in Buddhism.

Engaged Buddhism has become a living alternative movement within Buddhism, to put into practice the ideals of Buddhism and to allow more people to have access to an alternative conception of freedom and faith. In general terms – it links spiritual training and practical action. We can look also at the examples of many Christians who see their faith and their commitment to social justice as inter-connected.

The Quakers, and their insistence on the application of religious beliefs to improve society, have made many contributions to the areas of social engagement and religion and could be a constant source of inspiration and encouragement to the work of engaged Buddhists. Quakers in Asia can continue to play an important role – especially in areas of honesty, simplicity and non-violence.

Although Buddhist Asia talks about non-violence they have yet to confront structural violence in all its forms in that area in a very meaningful way, especially in the age of globalisation which promotes violence and consumerism via the mass media to a young and increasingly western influenced generation of Asians. Younger Asian Buddhists see their faith as a questioning process: Questioning everything – including oneself – looking deeply – then acting from that insight.

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Chapter 2 The Engaging aspects of Quakers and Buddhism

If we are to see a revival of the socially engaged aspects of spirituality we should start with those things that are common to Quakers and Buddhists.

a) A lack of dogma

Quakers have their ‘testimonies’ and the Buddhists have the Noble Eightfold path:

- Right understanding – understanding the true nature of life through wholesome activities.
- Right thought – purification of the mind.
- Right speech – speak gently and refrain from lying and harsh words.
- Right action – pure action without hurting, disturbing or damaging others.
- Right livelihood – a decent job that does not cause harm or injustice to others.
- Right effort – use effort to avoid evil thoughts and cultivate good thoughts.
- Right Mindfulness – be mindful of action, speech and thoughts.
- Right concentration – focus the mind to gain peace and develop wisdom.

b) Work Ethic: Both religions put emphasis on manual labour and the importance of a strong work ethic.

c) The Written Word: Although both place advancement in personal spirituality through experience over reading religious texts, importance is placed on personal letters, diaries, journals, and reflections of fellow Quakers or Buddhists.

d) Equality: Whether you view each person as having ‘that of God’ in them or as having ‘Buddha nature’ they both place importance on equality.

e) Simplicity: Both Quakers and Buddhists place a strong emphasis on leading a simple, frugal life. This includes living within your financial means.

f) Personal revelation: Unprogrammed Quaker meetings do not have a leader who reveals the Truth to you, and although Buddhism has teachers they do not have a spiritual leader. That is, no one has a more direct connection to revelation to the Truth than you or anyone else.

g) Peace and non-violence: Both religions place non-violence as a core value or testimony.

h) Openness: Because there are no creeds or dogma, both religions are very open to people of different faiths and accepting of differing opinions.

i) Stories: Morals, lessons and spiritual reflections are frequently done through stories or anecdotes, as opposed to a ‘sermon’.

j) The Truth: Both focus on telling the truth. Quakers do not take oaths because that would suggest that you do not normally tell the truth under certain circumstances.

k) Integrity: Living a life that is full of integrity is important to both religions and emphasised

l) Helping those in need: Both Buddhists and Quakers tend to the poor, mentally-ill, dying and imprisoned with love and passion.

m) The present moment: Both talk about ‘being in the present moment’ and the importance of living in the here and now. Buddhism talks of life as a stream that flows and Quakers hold that every moment of life is sacramental.

Meditation and dialogue with Buddhists can be deep, enriching and rewarding to the Christian’s faith.

A renewal of a deep, intensive, committed faith is required at a mystical level. Such a renewal is long overdue, and is proven in the number of people who, tired of the old forms of worship and prayer, are looking for something that will satisfy the hunger of the modern heart.

The world has always looked for men and women of vision and enlightenment, and the current dialogue between Christians and Buddhists owes much to the initiative and enterprise of the Quakers.

By mutual co-operation Buddhism and Christianity can produce these visionary people, and their lives will be better enriched and made whole for our time.

As the *stillness movement* grows and contemplative worship between Quakers and Buddhists continues it will lead into a mystical friendship and human authenticity and bring deep purification of ideals – so that they will become transparent to each other – and leading to an indwelling love and appreciation of each other.

We should continue to pray and meditate in silence together, and also separately, according to our traditions – this is the way that unity in diversity grows and from it will flow humility, charity, esteem and liberation for those with who we dialogue.

n) The future scope of dialogue

There are at least five ways in which we as Quakers can advance dialogue with Buddhists both in the west and Asia:

- Ordinary conversation and exchange between believers
- Academic and scholarly meetings
- Practical dialogue working on joint projects
- Contemplative dialogue – people sharing personal religious experience
- Dialogue with no words – silence and deep communion.

To this we can add the following list of ‘be’ attitudes to successful dialogue:

Be attentive
Be intelligent
Be reasonable
Be responsible
Be in an attitude of love
Be in unity and harmony.

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Chapter 3 Examples of engaged Buddhism and how they speak to the Quaker condition in Asia

The following articles on Fo Guang Shan, Tzu Chi are examples of engaged Buddhism now spreading across Asia and into the west. Both have their mystical heart in Taiwan and both share the common point of being commenced by a single concerned practitioner of their faith, seeing a concern, having a vision and building a new structure in the hearts and minds of their followers.

In this regard I am drawn to Quaker writer Thomas Kelly, who wrote in 1941: “Life from the centre is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. And when our day is done we will lie down quietly in peace, for all is well.”

a) Fo Guang Shan

Fo Guang Shan (literally “Buddha’s Light Mountain) is an international Chinese Mahayana Buddhist monastic order based in Taiwan, and one of the largest Buddhist organisations in Asia. Founded by Venerable Master Hsing Yun, in 1967, and starting with a small ill-kept temple in Ilan, Northern Taiwan, the order promotes humanistic Buddhism, a modern Chinese Buddhist thought developed through the 20th Century.

Fo Guang Shan has been extraordinarily successful, with its headquarters now in Kaoshing, in the southern part of Taiwan in a huge, beautiful, efficiently run and exquisitely maintained monastery and visitors centre.

In the past several decades, temples and organisations have been established on five continents in 173 countries, and now there are more than 3,500 monasteries. Fo Guang Shan emphasises education and service, maintaining universities, Buddhist colleges, libraries, publishing houses, translation centres, Buddhist art galleries, teahouses and mobile medical clinics worldwide, as well as running children’s homes, retirement villages, and a television network.

Hsing Yun built the Fo Guang movement by focusing on the modernisation and expansion of Buddhism with the objective of taking Buddhism from the mountain top back into the city and from the monasteries back into temples that would be frequented by busy people going about earning a daily living. He believed that Temples should contain libraries, art galleries, museums, dining halls, information centres and conference rooms – and that they are offerings to the community in which they are located.

Humanistic Buddhism and Fo Guang Shan has expanded by quietly employing a “blue ocean” strategy with Master Hsing Yun personally setting the example in the building of this movement.

b) The Blue Ocean Strategy of Value Innovation

The “blue ocean” strategy is used as a metaphor in this phrase – as a sense of limitless opportunity. It states that no organisation can maintain its dominance forever – however this can be overcome by going beyond the shallow sea of competition to create an uncontested market place and exploiting unknown business opportunities of a vast unexplored ocean.

In this sense the “blue ocean strategy” seeks to stimulate the organisation to seek out a totally new imaginative space and direction for development – not sticking to one set market – nor fighting from a besieged stronghold – seeking courageously to establish alternative areas of operation, seeking out other markets and life-giving resources.

It is here in the newly created environments that the organisation can TRULY demonstrate their unique qualities. In formulating a “blue ocean strategy” Quakers could employ the “four action framework” adopted by Fo Guang Shan:

- (1) Which factors that are considered customary by others can be “eliminated”?
- (2) Which factors that are unnecessary can be “reduced”?
- (3) Which factors can be “raised” above the standard of others in the field
- (4) Which factors can be “created” that are not offered by others in the field

Factors (1) and (2) will reduce cost and expand demand

Factors (3) and (4) will emphasize “differences” and “new value”.

It is precisely this form of promotion and methodology that has made the Fo Guan Shan model so successful and so widely admired in the Buddhist world today.

Under the guidance of Ven Master Hsing Yun it has created a new demand for its followers and society, seeking to maintain its leading position; simultaneously keeping both the faith of its followers and the trust of society; and maintained its position and advancement by standardizing its training of personnel and operational systems.

In recent years, groups of younger members of the Fo Guang Shan monastic order have been pursuing advanced studies in Mainland China. How both sides of the Straits will develop in the future is not only something that concerns the Chinese people, but it will also have an impact on world peace.

Hsing Yun believes that before unification can take place the following must be achieved – cooperation in the economic arena – exchange in the cultural arena – respect in the religious arena – democracy in the political arena. He further adds that “China is not the possession of a small number of people, but rather represents the coming together of more than a billion fellow citizens.”

At the founding of the Fo Guang Shan’s Tsung Lin University Master Yun stated what he believed was modern Buddhism’s goal for a profoundly higher calling:

- Thinking freely and living simply
- Live an ordinary life in an exalted realm
- Disciplined behaviour with a capacity for universal benevolence
- Know the certainty of a short life with an eternal future.

This is the “courageous spirit” Quakers will need to take on in their work in the Asian region.

c) Tzu Chi and the bamboo moneybox

The Tzu Chi Foundation is one of the three largest Buddhist organisations in Taiwan. Tzu Chi was founded by Master Cheng Yen, a nun, on April 14, 1966 in Hualien, Taiwan after being inspired by her master and mentor, Yin Shun – a major proponent of humanistic Buddhism.

While many Buddhist groups focus on enlightenment and meditation, Tzu Chi focuses on community service and outreach in the areas of medical, educational and disaster relief. The organisation maintains a small number of monastics and conducts its mission through an international network of volunteers.

The society started as a group of thirty housewives who saved a small amount of money each day, and has grown since 1966 – in a space of just over 44 years – to a membership of over 10-million members worldwide – and is today considered to be one of the most effective aid agencies in the Asian region.

Tzu Chi now owns and operates hospitals, community medical centres, schools and Universities, Jing-Si Books and Cafes, Continuing Education Centres, and a 24 hour Television, Radio and Internet Broadcasting Centre called *Da Ai* TV in Taiwan.

In a nationwide TV viewers' rating conducted by Nielsen Media Research, *Da Ai* TV ranked fifth in channel viewership, and second in primetime viewership among all terrestrial and cable TV in Taiwan. Without the sponsorship of the government, the operation of *Da Ai* is partially supported by Tzu Chi's recycling volunteers, as one fourth of the TV's fund comes from the money made from selling recyclables collected by over 50,000 recycling volunteers around Taiwan. In *Da Ai* TV, there are no commercial ads, but only public service ads between program breaks. To understand Tzu Chi is to know something of its founder Cheng Yen.

d) Master Chen Yen – the Mother Theresa of Buddhism see photos p21:

Master Chen Yen is often referred to as the Mother Theresa of Buddhism by her supporters – and while Tzu Chi has Buddhist origins and beliefs, the organisation is known for its selfless contributions to society. The official motto, or concept behind Tzu Chi means “four endeavours, eight footprints”; the eight footprints being charity causes, medical contributions, education development, humanities, international disaster assistance, bone-marrow donation, community volunteerism and recycling.

Cheng Yen was born in 1937 in Qingshui Town, Taichung County, Taiwan and was adopted by her uncle at an early age, however returned to her family in her teenage years and worked in her fathers business until about 20 years of age. In June 1960, her father died suddenly, and as a result began to study and learn more about Buddhism, seeking answers to her many questions about life and subsequent death. Several times she left home and tried to become a nun, but was not successful.

In February 1963 she was finally accepted as an initiate and took refuge under Venerable Master Yin Shun – who was to have a profound effect on her outlook of “humanistic Buddhism”. It was during this time that she realized that for women, taking care of their own families was not sufficient – that women need to take up responsibility for society – to expand “family love” to society and humankind.

In October 1963, she established a small Temple, Puming, in Hualien, Taiwan, with all living expenses being paid for at the Temple coming from making candles and bean flour, and from the sale of publications by live-in disciples. Even today all living expenses come from this income, and no charity funds collected by Tzu Chi are used for the monastics. In 1966 Cheng Yen vowed to form a charity organisation and she founded the Buddhist Tzu Chi Merit Association.

e) The bamboo moneybox

The charity work of Tzu Chi was started by 6 disciples. Each one of them made one pair of baby shoes a day. Cheng Yen made 30 piggy banks from bamboo trees in the back yard of the Abode Temple and gave one to each of the 30 followers – asking them to save 50 cents Taiwan (approx 5 cents Australian) per day.

The news of this unusual but unique practice soon spread in the street markets of Taiwan and people began to openly respond to the idea.

Thus the concept of the bamboo moneybox form of giving was born and it seems incredible that from this beginning a worldwide charity organisation with over 10 million members was formed, and still uses this as its principle form a fund raising.

In the early days the Foundation operated in less than 120 square feet in Puming Temple, but with financial help from Cheng Yen's mother, a new larger space was built called Abode of Still Thoughts. This clean, quiet, simple, plain and dignified Abode has become the spiritual home for Tzu Chi members all over the world.

A replica of this Jing Si Abode has also been built in the beautiful garden surrounds at the visitor's area of the massive Tzu Chi Television and Broadcasting Centre in Taipei, so that Members from around the world can marvel at how such an organisation could develop from a simple one-roomed Temple.

f) Jing-Si Cafes - Essence of Books, Aroma of Tea, Spiritual Enlightenment.

One of the most remarkable ways in which Tzu Chi engages with the community it serves is through a network of Tea House and Coffee shops under the name of Jing-Si Books and Café. These are situated in high profile shopping malls and precincts and allow the public to engage Tzu Chi in a beautiful, efficient, clean and professionally run tea and coffee house atmosphere. Jing-Si Cafes provide fine coffee and tea (all natural beverages), unlimited seating hours (ideal for students dropping in to do their homework or relaxing with friends), free wireless internet access (WiFi), displays of specially selected spiritual and motivational books, free reading of all inspirational books and magazines, activities such as tea ceremony, yoga and gym, flower arranging, group study on selected books, spiritual movies and monthly motivational talks. These Cafes, staffed entirely by volunteers, provide a haven in a busy city – a place for spiritual rejuvenation with the aim of enriching the quality of life, human culture and lifelong learning.

They are open as a “shopfront” engagement with Buddhism, and in particular Tzu Chi, and are frequented by all ages and educational levels. Within each Jing-Si Café is a Continuing Education Centre – designed to assist average people with lifelong education and learning. The list of some of the courses available at these centres shows a concern for a holistic approach to life and learning:

Culture

Flower arrangement
Musical sign language

Living Skills

Vegetarian cooking
Baking
Tea ceremony
Chinese chess

Physical

Yoga
Tai Chi
Martial Arts

Languages

Mandarin
Japanese

Children

Yoga
Handicrafts
Painting
Games
Paper Clay

Art

Painting, Pottery
Handicraft
Photography

All the courses offered are open to anyone regardless of age or educational level, and upon completion a certificate is presented.

Since 2002, Jing Si Café and Bookstores have also opened their doors in Malaysia, Indonesia and the United States - where there are now 21 Cafes in various cities. As in Taiwan, visitors to these international cafes are assured that the natural beverages and serene atmosphere will calm and enrich their spirits.

Books and periodicals published by Tzu Chi are now also available at 120 public libraries throughout the U.S.

In a recent lecture on “Twenty Challenges to Enlightenment”, Tzu Chi Founder Cheng Yen said: “High mountains are hard to conquer; the mountain cliff may become steeper and more rugged. The ascent to the top is demanding. With perseverance, you will finally reach the summit.”

Tzu Chi has succeeded in transforming teachings into an actual path. It has now entered its 44th year, from the vision of one nun, into an active, engaging mission of compassion and service.

It is an example of an organisation that never thinks something can wait until tomorrow – it seizes every second, and at that second begins to do something good for the world.

g) Quakers and Tzu Chi

Quakers should see Tzu Chi as the social face of Buddhism – that is Buddhism that has a powerful, practical implication for profound social change. The Tzu Chi model of engaged Buddhism is characterized by caring and service, social and environmental protest and analysis, non-violence as a creative way of overcoming conflict and engaging in a socially just and ecologically sustainable society. Underlying the growth of Tzu Chi is the belief that meaningful social change is only possible if there is first a widespread and deep spiritual change in individuals, manifesting in a “culture of awakening”.

Quakers can also be in harmony with the specific issues important to engaged Buddhism – the structural forms of violence (for example the Chinese communist party belief in a monopoly on power, come what may), consumerism, the pitfalls of a growth economy and the trans-national corporations that reinforce it, and the destruction of the world’s ecology.

Quakers may embrace the Tzu Chi ideal of freedom being threefold – the first freedom is to be free from the insecurities and dangers of poverty, famine, natural disasters, and war. The second freedom is social freedom – freedom from human oppression and exploitation – into a state of tolerance and benevolence. The third freedom is the freedom of the inner life, freedom from inner suffering and mental anguish into the presence of wisdom, love and peace. Quakers can support and inspire engaged Buddhists, especially in areas of honesty, simplicity and non-violence.

We can continue to play an important role in speaking truth to power – we must understand and help each other by sharing our religious experiences, finding new ways to operate in a modern world while keeping in touch with the moral and spiritual power traditions from which the entire world can benefit.

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About the Author: JOHN CARTWRIGHT lives and works in Geraldton, Western Australia. He has a background in journalism, broadcasting, accounting and management, exporting, customer service and business development. He seeks to implement the Quaker business ideals of running a friendly and efficient company, trading with integrity and a high level of customer service. His interests have allowed him extensive travel in the Asian region with its wide variety of culture, religion and tradition.

Brought up in a mainstream protestant tradition, he was invited to a Quaker information Meeting for interested seekers conducted by the Perth, Western Australia Meeting for Worship to establish a Quaker worshipping group in the Geraldton area. He has been an attender at this group since its inception over four years ago.

He has a particular interest in Interfaith Dialogue and the belief that sharing best practices in the field of understanding, education, poverty, violence reduction, communication in the digital world and government

policies – can provide the elements for sustainable development through values formation and empowerment.

He maintains the Quaker value that increased levels of contact between diverse groups and cultures should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat, and continues to further his studies, understanding of faith practices and interfaith dialogue in these areas. *Further contact:* johncartwright@westnet.com.au

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“The Mystic Heart” – Wayne Teasdale – New World Library
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Front art work – “Christ et Buddha” Paul Ransons – painted 1880 – French Artist.

The Author, John Cartwright, Geraldton, Western Australia.

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Master Cheng Yen - Founder of Tzu Chi

Part of the beautiful gardens at Fo Guang Monastery Taiwan



An early photo of Cheng Yen working amongst the poor in Taiwan



The Abode of Still Thoughts Temple – the spiritual home of Tzu Chi. The original building is in Hualien, Taiwan and a replica of this simple one roomed Jing-Si Abode has been built in the gardens of the huge Tzu Chi Television and Broadcasting complex in Taipei, Taiwan.

From the Executive Secretary: It is with great pleasure that we present our first AWPS Essay to readers around the world - made possible by an anonymous donor at the time of our last Section Gathering in Bhopal, India. The conditions were to explore aspects of Quakerism within an Asian context. The great monotheistic religions of the world had their birth in Asia and the Middle East. They have undergone many changes as communities moved from simple societies into cities where culture,

commerce and institutions all impacted on religious belief. The largest groups, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism continue to evolve, to speak to the condition of believers.

This essay demonstrates the elasticity of Buddhism since its exposure to the west. In its turn, the Quakerism of early Friends has demonstrated an amazing flexibility of published belief, now needing the efforts of the present world body, the Friends World Committee for Consultation and its Sections, to enable deep communication to take place. We hope that this essay will be the first of many- and donations are welcome specifically for this purpose. **As soon as sufficient monies have been received, ie \$2,500**, we will commence a search for another essay on another aspect of Quakers in the Asian context. Make enquiries on how to send in Australian Dollars to our Treasurer Topsy Evans, on tevens@c130.aone.net.au Peace be with you,

Valerie Joy

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