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Cover photo: Jasper, Alberta

Above photo: Jasper, Alberta

Have you ever wondered what is the difference between Buddhism and Christianity or if its okay for a Christian to do yoga? We dive deep into these subjects in this issue.

God bless you.

Ramona Stevens

Buddhism is a major world religion. What does it teach and how is it different from Christian faith? What about yoga? Is yoga just a form of exercise or is it something more than that? I will attempt to answer these questions and also discuss one world government in this issue of the Pentecost.

God bless you.

Shawn Stevens

I SPREAD OUT MY HANDS TO YOU

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

(Psalm 143:5-6).

This is the speech of a man who is thirsty for God. In this great verse of Scripture David, the King of Israel, expresses his heart for God with these longing words. He begins by remembering the past. He has taken the time to reflect on God's faithfulness to himself, personally, and to Israel as a nation. He remembers the great moments of deliverance.

Sometimes, it is right to take a look back and see God's faithfulness in retrospect. Life is full of valleys and sometimes your present situation or valley doesn't present hope to your immediate view. To see it, you must look with the eyes of faith. Sometimes, a look to the past is just what we need to spark that faith and belief again, for the present.

David remembered the days of old and meditated on God's works. At this point he is shifting away from the preoccupation with self, which we read in the preceding verses, and he is focusing on God. He stretched forth his hands to God and his heart stretched upward also.

David's heart was alight with burning desire for God, with inward longings for the Divine. His soul was like a parched, thirsty land whose desert floor was cracked and broken. His soul was athirst for God and only a heavenly shower would satisfy his need. He was in pursuit of the blessedness of a revelation of God. He would cry out until he had his desire. He

was determined for God.

The spiritual person sometimes grows tired of communion with the finite and longs for communion with the infinite. If one is thirsty for God in his heart, his speech will echo the longing that he feels so acutely. David continues with these words:

Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

(Vs. 7,8).

David cries for a speedy answer from God. He feels that if God delays, he won't make it. Each moment is important. It is as if his life is ebbing away and he desperately throws himself on God. God is his supreme affection. He raises his desperate cry to the LORD. His request is that he would hear the LORD'S lovingkindness in the morning. He doesn't want God's lovingkindness to be held back from him until noon or evening but, rather, he wants to experience it now. He is like the fledgling birds in their nest that are stretching and calling for their mother to come and deliver food to them. He lifts up his soul to the LORD. If our soul does not automatically rise above the despair and darkness of earth, we must lift it up to the Lord. David didn't let his soul sink down into despair. He raised it up to God.

Verse six is followed by a *Selah* which is thought to mean (among other definitions) that it is a time to pause. Friend, it would be wrong to rush over these words and not look inward. Do you feel the thirst that

David had for God? Inside of you, is there an ache for the Lord? Do you remember past days of God being wonderfully and noticeably active in your faith experience? Are you thirsty for a renewal of your faith experience? Brothers and sisters, let's cry out and agonize Godward. If we do, we will find that He is graciously near. Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, there is an ear that we know will always hear us and it is Yours. In the midst of trials and loneliness and despair we lift up our souls to You. Our hands are stretched out to You. Let us be renewed in You. Let us know You in a new and fresh way. Let us receive from You revelation into Your character and faithfulness, and we will be like those who have found a large treasure. May our spiritual perception be vivid. Lord, this is a dry and parched land but You are the one who sends rain from heaven, and places the rock in the wilderness from which water springs. All of our fountains are in You. You are a fountain of love, goodness and salvation. We need to drink of You. You are our portion and exceeding great reward. You are the Vine and we are the branches and we continually need to be supplied with a flow of life from You. We need strength for this spiritual walk of faith and You are the sustenance that we require. We spread out our hands to You. May we hear Your lovingkindness in the morning.

Shawn Stevens

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BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Buddhism has a long and mysterious history. Buddha was born about 560 BC in northeastern India. His family name was Guatama and his given name was Siddhartha. He was the son of a ruler and grew up in his father's home and court. His mother died when he was only one week old and he was cared for by his aunt. He eventually married and had a son but, for the most part, was confined to the palace during these growing-up years. He informed his father that he wanted to see the world and he was allowed to journey outside of the well-defined boundaries that he had been restricted to. Out in the general population, Buddha was exposed to the repeated sight of human suffering. He was greatly impacted by what he saw. He was unsatisfied with Hindu religion and also found no peace in asceticism. Buddha was on a spiritual search and, one

day, as he was meditating under a fig tree he allegedly had a mystical experience where he claimed to have reached a spiritual state that Buddhists call nirvana. From this time on, he was regarded by his followers as the "Buddha" or the "enlightened one." He formulated many teachings and began spreading them in India. Many who were disillusioned with Hinduism listened to him and his following grew and continued to grow until it became what it is today. It is estimated that there are 325 to 400 million Buddhists in the world, making it the fourth largest religion.

There are many elements to Buddhism. Buddhism claims the *Tripitaka* as its sacred text as well as the *Tibetan Book of The Dead* and numerous other sutras. Buddhists do not believe that humans have a permanent or unchanging soul but, rather, are comprised of a physical body, ideas, feelings, consciousness, and dispositions. Buddhists seek deliverance from the endless cycle of death and reincarnation by attaining to a state of nirvana. Nirvana is believed to be attained by following an eight-fold path that consists of:

Having the "right view" - embracing Buddhist teachings

Having "right resolve" - developing right intentions

Giving "right speech" - in a compassionate way speaking the truth

Doing "right action" - abstaining from corrupt behaviour

Having "right livelihood" - abstaining from occupations which harm others

Giving "right effort" - thinking positively

Having "right mindfulness" - thinking clearly

Having "right concentration" - learning the practice of meditation

Buddhism, as a philosophy or a religion (some do not regard it as a religion), grapples with the reality of human suffering. Upon leaving his father's palace, Buddha was deeply struck by the grief and suffering of others. He came to believe that all suffering was a result of desire and that if one could eliminate desire, he would eliminate suffering. Buddhists' practice has this as its goal. The Buddhist who attains to nirvana, allegedly has reached a state where he has no desire. By having no desire, he thereby has no suffering.

Christianity has a view of human suffering that is radically different from that of Buddhism. Christian faith also faces human suffering head-on. It acknowledges its reality. However, Christianity presents a multidimensional view of suffering. It teaches that God created a perfect world in which suffering did not exist. However, mankind, by a choice of his will, rebelled against God's command and, consequently, has been thrust into a fallen state. The moment that this occurred was the moment that human suffering began. Human suffering, as it is experienced today, can be the result of numerous causes. In some cases, it is caused by human sin and disobedience. In other cases, it is caused by the influence of the devil and the kingdom of darkness. In other cases, it exists for no discernible reason. In any case, the ending of human suffering is not the first priority of God. In fact, human suffering, in many cases, aids His purpose and is to our benefit, although it may not feel like it in the moment. Instead of presenting a plan to become detached from our desires in an effort to escape suffering, God did something radically different. He came into human

history in the form of a man, Jesus Christ, and suffered Himself to the most excruciating degree possible. This is unique in the world of religion, the idea of a suffering God. Mankind imagines God to be free of suffering and wants Him to come into the world and remove all of our sufferings so that we can be free of suffering like Him. Instead, God came into the world and suffered more than any man or woman, before or after Him, and through this incredible sacrifice offers forgiveness and reconciliation to mankind. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ deals with the issue of human sin and alienation from God, which is a larger issue than human suffering. By reconciling a man or woman to Himself, God changes that person's life and even enables them to view suffering in a different way than they did before. The Christian also suffers at the hands of an angry world for doing God's will. However, these sufferings will be rewarded by God one day so that sufferings actually will be a blessing in the final analysis. In eternity, the Christian will be completely delivered from suffering.

Buddhism and Christianity differ greatly in how they view sufferings. By numbing desire, Buddhists lose a part of themselves. In fact, in some ways people who numb desire, become inhuman to some degree because they are detached from their human feelings and senses. Christianity faces human suffering head-on, revealing its initial cause and its multidimensional aspects. It presents the suffering God, Who feels what we have felt and is willing to suffer to save us. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, salvation and reconciliation are available to mankind. Christians also suffer but even our suffering can result in much good. One day, the Christian will be free of all

suffering.

Shawn Stevens

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO YOGA

In today's world, the man or woman who is experimenting with various forms of health and exercise will inevitably, at some point, encounter the practice of yoga. It is counted to be a great means of improving flexibility and exercising muscles.

However, is there more to yoga than what we are commonly told? Webster's dictionary from 1913 defines yoga as:

Yoga

([Yo"ga) *n.* [Skr. *yoga union.*] *A species of asceticism among the Hindoos, which consists in a complete abstraction from all worldly objects, by which the votary expects to obtain union with the universal spirit, and to acquire superhuman faculties.*

The exercise of yoga is really the mystic discipline of yoga, grounded in Eastern religion.

Yoga comes directly out of Hindu religion. The word "yoga" actually means "union" and the practice of yoga is intended to unite one's transitory self with what Hindus call "the infinite Brahman," their concept of god. The infinite Brahman is not considered to be a real being but, instead, an impersonal spiritual substance which is one with nature and the cosmos. This is pantheism, the belief that everything is god, and such a belief does not make a distinction between man and god.

One aspect of yoga is the special body postures, breathing exercises, and concentration that it involves. This is

believed to be preparatory for practices of yoga to conduct spiritual exercises, with fewer obstacles, in order to achieve enlightenment. One principle of yoga is that man is an extension of god and, by practising yoga, devout Hindus seek to become one with god and to escape the endless cycles of birth and rebirth. This is the intent of yoga. Hindus believe that there are different levels or stages of being that a person must move through before becoming finally yoked with god. This is thought to involve the mystic and ascetic practices of prescribed posture, controlled breathing and complete concentration upon one thing. This is supposed to usher the practitioner into a trance-like state where he experiences a merger with ultimate reality.

One problem with yoga is that it can open up the involved person to evil spiritual forces. The one practising yoga has shut down his personal reasoning in favour of mystic detachment and meditation. He or she simply does not know what they are submitting themselves to. True spirituality is not attained through mystical meditation or exercise but, rather, through the experiences of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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What is the Christian View of Yoga?

<http://www.gotquestions.org>

TEXTS: Genesis 25:21-23, 27, 28; 27:5-8, 13, 43-46; 1 Samuel 1:12-13, 20-28; 2:26

ONE-WORLD GOVERNMENT

Are you concerned about the coming new world order? Many would ask, "What is the new world order?" Many have taught that the new world order is the establishment of a one-world government which controls all laws, both national and international, as well as taxation on a global scale. There is much in our world today that points toward the establishment of such a new world order as well as biblical prophecies which seem to suggest a future global government.

Many have mocked and derided the idea that we could be headed toward a one-world government. Some liberals have labeled the efforts of Christian leaders who promote this idea as being sensationalist, fear-mongers and proponents of an unrealistic conspiracy. They have taught that Christian leaders have read too much into the term "new world order," a term used by a number of statesmen such as Woodrow Wilson and Winston Churchill to speak of a modern period of time following World War II in which the global political world would benefit from greater organization and international cooperation.

Is the idea of global government unrealistic and merely a conspiracy? The concept has been talked about as far back as ancient Greek civilization and the Roman Empire. Philosophers such as Hugo Grotius (17th century) and Immanuel Kant (18th century) Karl Krause (19th century) all philosophized about the benefits of international law or global government. More recently, United States presidents, such as Harry Truman and others also have spoken favourably about international law. Numerous regimes and/or ideologies have thought to pull the world together under one governing system. Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, Nazi Germany and communism have all tried to reach this end, unsuccessfully. The League of Nations, founded in 1919/1920, attempted to defend human rights as well as promote disarmament, diplomacy and collective security in the world of international politics. It was replaced by the United Nations in 1945. The United Nations is the most promising instrument for the assembling of one-world government that this world has ever seen.

The assembling of a one-world government is the determined effort of many leaders today. In 1943, Wendell Wilkie's book, *One World*, was published and sold over two million copies. Two years later, Emery Reves' book, *The Anatomy of Peace* argued for the setting up of a federal world government. Books such as these began feeding the grass roots movement towards one-world government. In the United States, individuals such as Grenville Clark, Norman Cousins, Alan Cranston and Robert Hutchins, were all instrumental in organizing and finally forming the organization, the United World Federalists

in 1947. This organization later changed its name to World Federalist Association and then to Citizens for Global Solutions. By 1949, they claimed a membership of 47,000. Similar movements arose in other countries leading to the formation of a global coalition in 1947, now called the World Federalist Movement. This organization has seen a steady increase in membership and by 1950 claimed 156,000 members spread in 22 countries. The international headquarters for the World Federalist Movement is based in New York City and is across from the United Nations. According to Wikipedia it has 30,000 to 50,000 supporters.

ECOSOC is the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and is responsible for the coordination of social, economic and related work of 14 UN specialized agencies.

The World Federalist Movement works together with other member organizations such as Citizens for Global Solutions, Union of European Federalists, World Federalist Movement – Canada, World Federalist Movement of Japan, Ugandan World Federalists, One World Trust, Committee for a Democratic UN, Democratic World Federalists and others.

Federalists have worked hard at proposing and promoting amendments to the United Nations charter. Such amendments would institute reforms toward a world court with compulsory jurisdiction and judicial review authority and a more representative Security Council. They also support a UN standing peacekeeping force and an international criminal court. The efforts of the World Federalist Movement show that the push towards global government is very real and is backed by thousands of people labouring towards this end.

What does the Bible have to say about a one-world government? I am not much of a student of eschatology. Many Bible teachers have put forward a theology of end time developments relating to global government. The Apostle John in his Book of Revelation, Chapter 13, tells of seeing a beast who was rising up out of the sea. This beast has seven heads and ten horns and is given power and great authority. He is followed after by all the world. Many Bible teachers believe that this is a reference to the antichrist and his global governing system. The Prophet Daniel saw a vision with similar elements to it and is recorded in Chapter 7 of his book. John's beast is given authority:

...over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. (Revelation 13:7)

It is not inconceivable that this could be a prophecy towards a future one-world government. The Apostle Paul also speaks of someone he calls "that man of sin" (see 2 Thessalonians 2.3). This one exalts himself above God. In the same chapter, Paul tells of "that Wicked" (see verse 8) whom the Lord will consume and destroy. All of these references could very possibly be referring to a world dictator in the end

times.

One would hope that Canada would never voluntarily surrender its sovereignty and forfeit the rights of its individual citizens to a global government. Canadian sovereignty and citizenship is a precious gift that over 30 million people enjoy. Because of the efforts of global federalists it may also be a fragile gift.

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