

Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith

Exported from Holy-Writings.com on 2026-09-17 — 1 clipping

Source: Bahá'í Library Online (bahai-library.com), curated by Jonah Winters.

Used by permission of the curator. Original citation: Daniel Conner, Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith, bahai-library.com.

[illegible]

Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith

BY DANIEL CONNER

ALMOST 2500 years ago a gentle man preached nonviolence and a novel conception

n. walked with his disciples and taught in _____ of the soul and founded the Jain religion.

a small state named Magadha in what is now Bihar. Stirred by the teachings of Zoroaster, the

Nepal. The story of the enlightenment of the Persian empire attained its greatest extent

young prince Siddhartha Gautama is well- and challenged the Greek
world. Greek phi-

known throughout the Western world, but philosophy was flowering with the thought of

few outside Asia have a passable knowledge, Pythagoras and Plato. The Hebrew prophets

much less an understanding, of the religion were laying the foundations of
a nation based

founded by the Buddha. on strict monotheism. In this world the

The sixth and fifth centuries B.C. wit- Buddha lived.

nessed intellectual and spiritual activity un- Although miraculous tales
and legends

precedented in the history of the world. abound, little is known about
the historical

During this time the ethical systems that Buddha, and many of the texts

influence Chinese thought today were systematic and of more recent origin.

tematized by the strangely diverse personali- Some current scholarship
maintains that

ties of Confucius and the half-mythical Lao-
more than a Buddhism was initially little

tze. In India Mahavira (Great Spirit)	reaction against Brahmanism
(out of which	

Hinduism evolved). It appears that early country-
 Buddhists were more egalitarian in their side.
 is the remark- A more important reason
 beliefs than most of their countrymen: able assimilative power of
 Hinduism. His-
 No brahman is such by birth. torically, Hinduism has been
 the most ab-
 No outcaste is such by birth. sorptive of the world's
 religions; with time it
 An outcaste is such by his deeds. has successfully assimilated
 extremely heter-
 A brahman is .such by his deeds. odox elements. Even the
 ethnocentric Mus-
 (Sutta Nipatct, 136) 1 lim conquerors found themselves
 in danger
 They welcomed men and wome<J. of all of being assimilated
 during the time of the
 classes as disciples, a practice which aroused Mughal empire (1526-c.
 1800). When the
 the ire of orthodox brahmins. Like his con- Muslims invaded, Buddhism
 and Hinduism
 temporary MahavTra, the Buddha stressed had almost merged, and the
 Buddha was
 the doctrine of ahirrzsa (nonviolence : doing relegated to a place in
 the Hindu pantheon as
 harm to no living thing), while animal the ninth incarnation of
 Vi~i:iiu.
 sacrifice still lingered on from the Vedic age Still more important
 is the fact that Bud-
 of Brahmanism. dhism suffered the fate of
 almost every other
 Due in part to a popular reaction against religion and split into
 numerous sects. Early
 the social rigidity of Brahmanism, Buddhism in its career Buddhism had
 split in two:
 rapidly gained a wide following, spread ing T heravadct (the way of
 the elders) or Hr-
 throughout India and the Central Asian nayana (the lesser
 vehicle), and Mahayana
 steppes. The great emperor A5oka (c. 268- (the greater vehicle) .
 Theravada retained to
 233 B.C.) was dramatically converted to a greater extent the
 original teachings of the
 Buddhism after witnessing the carnage in an Buddha, while Mahayana
 claimed to have
 aggressive war of his own instigation. The access to esoteric
 teachings of the Buddha

Faith frequently enjoyed royal patronage and but his closest continued to grow until the fifth century cultural function Mahaya- A.D., when it still flourished among the much as medieval educated and noble classes. Eight hundred early Christianity. years later, however, following the Muslim regards the individual conquest of northern India, Buddhism had as a selfish ideal virtually disappeared from the land of its concept of the birth. Now Buddhists number only a tiny achieves en- fraction of the population of India. nirvana so that he The reasons for the virtual disappearance on the path to of Buddhism from India are several. One is of Mahayana has the ferocity of the Muslim conquest. By and local animistic large, the invading Muslims of the twelfth incorporated foreign deities and thirteenth centuries left the indigenous Theravada has sur- population to itself, but they were unre- changed in Ceylon and strained in their destruction of priests, temples, and monasteries. The Buddhists were Tibet, Central and East- most susceptible because they were organized also in China nized. The monks tended to congregate in Ch'an (or Zen), a centralized monasteries, while the Hindu Taoism. chaplains were scattered throughout the of Buddhism are more numerous than those of any other

1. William DeBary et al, eds., Sources of Indian Tradition (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, single scholar 1958), I, 140.

that were denied to any disciples. In their na compares to Theravada Catholicism compares to The Mahayana school search for enlightenment and replaces it with the bodhisattva-the savior who lightenment but rejects might help the less fortunate salvation. The development been greatly influenced by cults, and it has into its pantheon, while Theravada lived relatively less Southeast Asia. Until flourished chiefly in eastern Asia, and Vietnam, and and Japan in the form of synthesis of Mahayana and The sacred scriptures religion-so extensive that no could hope to encompass them

in a lifetime.

BUDDHISM AND THE BAHAF FAITH

27

Among the most important Theravada texts much of our

Christian values upon which

are the Dhammapada and The Questions of have notably

culture is based, yet which

King Menander. The latter is in the form of goals. Eastern religions, a Platonic dialogue between a Buddhist dis-individual salva-

failed to achieve their

ciple and a Greek satrap left behind in self-improvement and lack the

tion through

Bactria by Alexander the Great. The most that is found in the

emphasis on social values

important Mahayana text is the Saddharma-The failure of the

Judea-Christian tradition.

Pittidartka or The Lotus of the True Law . system to bring about

Judea-Christian ethical

Mahayana is the form more familiar to justice and peace is

its ideal of lasting social

Westerners, since it has had the more successful publicists, and it offers a great variety of

regarded as being inherent

Oriental fails to achieve wondrous tales. This form has recently en-

itself, whereas if the

it is his fault joyed adoption by certain segments of Amer-

the goal of enlightenment,

ican society, especially in its Tibetan or people are embracing

alone.

Japanese (Zen) forms. Anyone who has because these represent

Doubtless many young

read a little about Buddhism will recognize the spectrum

to them the opposite end of

the names of its foremost exponents and explainers to the West: D. T. Suzuki, the late

from the ethical system in

real or only apparent?

raised. Is this polarity

Zen patriarch, and Alan Watts, the American and Eastern reli-

If real, then are Western

philosopher and student of comparative religions does a new

gions reconcilable) In what

gion.

religion, the Baha'i Faith,

reconcile them ?

A study of the genealogy of religions

EASTERN RELIGIONS, particularly Buddhism, Eastern and Western

shows that the so-called

have long held a spell of fascination for the part developed Western world. From Voltaire through Christianity grew out Schopenhauer and Hermann Hesse, European literature is full of speculation about Babi religion, and the nature of Eastern thought. American Brahmanism. This in poets such as Emerson and Thoreau have above-mentioned dabbled in Oriental mysticism, and the Western world has produced a number of point out their first-class Oriental scholars. But it is only historical roots of recently that popular interest, especially the Western religion among young people, has been aroused. The Buddhism lie among trend has yet to gain the proportions of a not mean that the mass movement, but it is evident that Oriental philosophy is being adopted uncritically Faith claims unity by certain segments of our society. transcending the Why? Partly because Oriental philosophy and West. In order has a great deal to teach us. But some let us first determine psychologists see other reasons in the lure of between the Eastern the East, nor only among so-called hippies or real or apparent. beatniks, but also among serious scholars and seem that Western theologians. The phenomenal popularity during the late Sixties of transcendental meditation and mysticism-and of individuals such This is especially as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Ravi Shankar

religions have for the most independently. Just as of Judaism, the Baha'i Shi'ite Islam through the Buddhism grew out of no way implies that the faiths are not independent religions; the intent is only to historical connections. The the Baha'i Faith lie among religions, just as those of the Eastern, but this does Baha'i Faith in itself is outlook. Indeed, the Baha'i versatility, spanning or even traditional division of East to investigate this claim, whether the differences and Western religions are At first glance it might and Eastern religions have other than the obvious common to all religions. true in the realm of

metaphysics. The West-

-is symptomatic of a rejection of the Judea-
closely related, with

28 WORLD ORDER: WINTER 1971 -72

great mutual influence. The religions born
nirvarta (the "blowing-out" of the
in India and China, on the other hand, are
Fundamental is the doctrine of the
not only for the most part historically sepa-
truths: 1) life is inevitably sor-
rate from the Western religions but also
is due to craving, 3)
from each other. The distance between Con-
stopped only by cessation of
fucianism 2 and Buddhism is greater than
this can be accomplished only
that between Zoroastrianism and Christiani-
conduct and meditation.
ty. Moreover, the Western religions are scat-
Soul has abiding personality;
tered through the time dimension, whereas
transient. The station of the Soul is
the great Eastern religions were born mostly
to its karma (accumulation
between 600 and 500 B.C.
deeds) and is eternal! y reborn
Oswald Spengler wrote, "Buddhism, which
befits its past lives. The cycle
only a mere dabbler in religious research
stopped only by attaining
would compare with Christianity, is hard ly
extinction. This is done first by
reproducible in the words of the Western
views about the nature of
Languages." :: The statement contains some
careful moral discipline,
truth but is greatly exaggerated. There are
prolonged meditation.
significant similarities between Buddhism
the total anihilation of the
and Christianity. Buddhism, however, has
not thought of in negative
been judged by some scholars to be more a
nirvarzct is a transcendent state
system of psychology than a religion. Much
comprehension in which the illusion

ern religions are rather

results in

self).

four noble

rowful, 2) sorrow

sorrow can be

desire, and 4)

by disciplined

Not even the

it too is

altered according

of good or bad

in a station that

of rebirth can be

11irvaftct or

adop ting right

existence, then by

and finally by

Nirvartrt is

Self, but it is

terms. Rather

beyond

of this argument is based on the fact that is apparent. This state is not there is no trace in the Buddha's teachings of different from the supreme a "God"-at least not a personal, transcendent god in the Christian sense. This argument can be reduced to a matter of semantics: the Buddha taught the existence of communicated-or, as Baha'u'llah said, dharma (divine law) which governs all into which the pen will not creation. His teachings all point to an eternal reality, which, although it lacks the anthropomorphic aspects of Western theism, is a reality, postulate that funyata creative force that is easily identified with emptiness) is all that exists.

God. The Void, again, is not negative in the sense of an absence of something, but rather it is BUDDHISM TEACHES that everything in the reality and being-it is one universe is in a constant state of flux. Craving and clinging to permanence is the inevitable cause of sorrow. Salvation is found by called tathata (translatable the gradual loss of self-concern, until it "suchness"). The Void is essentially identical with the emptiness that so troubles 2 . Confucianism is the most "Western" of the Eastern religions. Indeed, some scholars think philosophers. The it is not a religion at all, but rather just a system of ethics. Although it lacks the meta-Void with joy, the physical aspect of religion (at least in its initial stages), it fulfills the social function of a religion. Since it theoretically allows exception difference between Eastern

of individuality
fundamentally
bliss described by
or Christian
ble, however; it
never
there are regions
move.
The later
to describe
(the Void or
the only abiding
with truth,
The qualities of
in existence are
only as
Western existentialist
difference, of course,
Buddhists look on the
existentialists with
One apparent

tions to its laws, and since it was born in
is their relative em-
China, I include it among the Eastern religions.

3. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*
and metaphysics. Almost
(New York: Modern Library, 1962), p. 184.
Western religions place
BUDDHISM AND THE BAHKf FAITH

the primary emphasis on ethics, i.e., the
Eastern religions tend
individual's relation to society, while meta-
within the human
physics, the individual's relationship to God
or the Cosmos, is of secondary importance.
definition, does the
The essence of Judaism, for example, is
Western or an
found in the Ten Commandments; the es-
it a meeting ground for
sence of Christianity in the Golden Rule and
historical roots lie
the Sermon on the Mount. Metaphysics has
religions, but this, in
little place in the original teachings of either
the question. Speaking
Faith. Eastern religions, with the exception of
truth, 'Abdu'l-Baha
Confucianism, tend to place a higher value
on metaphysics. It may be argued that the
divine religions is separable
Buddha Himself rejected metaphysical specu-
One concerns the world
lation; nevertheless, Buddhism-and espe-
ethical training of
cially Mahayan a-abounds in it.

directed to the ad-
A second difference lies in the degree of
humanity in
social control demanded by the religion.
and inculcates the
Western religions are notably more authori-
makes possible the
tarian than their Eastern counterparts, a fact
verities of life. This is
which has usually given rise to a greater
teaching, the essential

and Western religions

phasis on ethics

without exception,

29

"wholly other," while

to look for the Deity

Soul.

According to this

Baha'i Faith qualify as a

Eastern religion, or is

the two traditions? Its

among the Western

itself, does not answer

of unchanging religious

writes:

. . . each of the

into two divisions.

of morality and the

human nature. It is

advancement of the world of

general,- it reveals

knowledge of God and man

discovery of the

ideal and spiritual

degree of tolerance among the latter. Al-	qttality of divine
religion and not subject	
though the Buddhist monk is subject to the	to change or
transformation. . . . T he	
discipline of his superior, the follower who	second classification
or division comprises	
has attained nirvar;a is subject to no authority	social laws and
regttlations applicable to	
other than internal authority. He is free of	human conduct. This is
not the essential	
concern for transgression; not even the teach-	spiritual qitality of
religion. It is m bject to	
ings of the Buddha bind him any longer. In	change and
transformation according to	
medieval Roman Catholicism, on the other	the exigencies and
requirements of time	
hand, every Christian, saint or sinner,- was	and place. 4
subject ro the authority of the Pope. In	It is instructive to
compare 'Abdu'l-Baha's	
medieval Islam the fttfis, no matter how	assertion with the
following selection from a	
great their state of enlightenment, were still	Tibetan Buddhist text:
bound by the law of the Shari'a~ . At their	If the empty nature
of the mind be	
greatest Sr. Francis and al-GhazaH were still	realized, no longer
is it necessary to listen	
lesser men than Christ or Mulfammad. But	to or to meditate
upon religious teachings.	
there is nothing to stop a Buddhist saint from	If the unsulliable
nature of the intellect be	
equaling or even surpassing the Buddha	realized, no longer
is it necessary to seek	
Himself.	absolution of one's
sins. Nor is absolution	
let us tentatively define a Western reli-	necessary for one who
abideth in the State	
gion as one which emphasizes ethics above	of Mental Quiescence.
5	
metaphysics and allows no exceptions to its	Buddhism and Hinduism
share a belief in	
laws. A Western religion, moreover, usually	reincarnation as part of
their doctrine. This	
conceives of God as remote, unapproachable,	doctrine of
metempsychosis is one of the	
4. Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World	major stumbling blocks to
their reconcili-	
Faith (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust,	ation with Western religions.

Regarding the
1966), p. 274.
'Abdu'l-Baha

doctrine of reincarnation,

5. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., Tibetan Yoga and
Secret Doctrines (New York: Galaxy Books, writes:
1967), p. 88. Therefore reincarnation,
which is the re-

30 WORLD ORDER: WINTER 1971-72

peated appearance of the same spirit with transmigrating! " 8
its former essence and condition in this (The Questions of King
Menander)

same world of appearance, is impossible The apparent differences
between Eastern and Western religions can be
and unrealisable. 6 summed up by

Is reincarnation a basic doctrine of the two comparing the purported last
instructions of

greatest Eastern religions-one on which the Buddha with one of the
Hidden Words

there can be no compromise? The Buddhist of Baha'u'llah :
scholar, Alan Watts, thinks not :

Many Buddhists understand the Round of birth-and-death quite literally as a process The
Buddha:

of reincarnation, wherein the karma which So, Ananda, you must
be your own lamps,

shapes the individual does so again and be your own refuges. Take
refuge in nothing

again in life after life until, through outside yourselves. Hold
firm to the truth as

insight and awakening, it is laid to rest. a lamp and a refuge, and
do not look for

refuge to any thing besides yourselves. A

But in Zen, and in other schools of the monk becomes his own lamp and refuge by

Mahayana, it is often taken in a more continually looking on
his body, feelings,

figurative way, as that the process of perceptions, moods, and ideas in such a man-

rebirth is from moment to moment, so ner that he conquers the
cravings and depress-

that one is being reborn so long as one sions of ordinary men and
is always strenu-

ous, self-possessed, and collected in mind.

identifies himself with a continuing ego

Whether among many monks does this, either

which reincarnates itself afresh at each now or when I am dead, if
 he is anxious to
 moment of time. Thus the validity and learn , will reach the
 summit.D
 interest of the doctrine does not require (D1gha
 Nikaya)
 acceptance of a special theory of survival. 7
 Bahi'u'llah:
 O SON OF SPIRIT! There is no peace for
 This view is supported by the Theravada rhee save by renouncing
 thyself and turning
 scornres: un ro Me, for it
 behoveth thee to glory in My
 "Reverend Nagasena," said the King, name, not in thine own; ro
 put thy trust in
 Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be
 "is it true that nothing transmigrates, and
 loved alone and above all that is.10
 yet there is rebirth?"
 "Yes, your Majesty."
 "How can this be? . . . Give me an
 illustration." Can these be reconciled?
 Yes. The Buddha
 "Suppose, your Majesty, a man lights direm his disciples to look
 within for guid-
 one lamp from another-does the one ance, while Baha'u'llah
 counsels us to re-
 lamp transmigrate to the other? " nounce ourselves and cling to
 the Absolute.
 "No, your Reverence." In reality their advice is the
 same. Baha-
 "So there is rebirth without anything 'u'll ah writes:
 Thou art My stronghold; enter therein
 that thou mayest abide in safety. My love
 6. 'Abdu'l-Baha; Some Answered Questions is in thee, know it,
 that thou mayest
 (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust,
 1964),p. 326. find Me near unto thee
 . . . Thou art My
 7. Alan W. Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: lamp and My light is
 in thee. Get thou
 Vinage, 1957), p. 49. from it thy radiance
 and seek none oth-
 8. DeBary, p. 106.
 9. Ibid., p. 110. er than Me. 11
 10. Baha'i World Faith, pp. 156- 57. Thus we are to approach
 the Absolute by

11. Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words (Wilmette, Ill. : Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1954) , p. means of a paradox, renouncing the ego

6. ("the cravings and depressions of ordinary

BUDDHISM AND THE BAHkF FAITH 31

32 WORLD ORDER: WINTER 1971-72

men") while obtaining our light from the only quantitatively different from other men;

lamp of Truth within us. Nirv@:ta, the ex- hence all men are potentially divine. To the

tion of self which may occur in life, is Buddhist, the Buddha is not the infallible

also the goal of the follower of Baha'u'llah: incarnation of God's Truth, but rather only

• • • that tho1t mayest die in Me and I may the most illustrious of a long line of en-

eternally live in thee." 12 lightened men. In Islam, Judaism, and

Here we may dispose of one of the crucial Catholic Christianity, the individual con-

differences-the internal versus the external science must submit to the law of the proph-

Truth. The dichotomy is false; they are one. et or the will of the Church; in the Eastern

What about the difference in emphasis on religions the ultimate authority is internal.

ethics and metaphysics? Again, it is only a The only way to resolve this difference is

semantical difficulty. Only in theory do the to consider the society in which a religion is

Eastern religions assign ethics a lesser degree born. The societies which gave birth to

of importance. In reality, the saint or the Buddhism and Hinduism were extremely

enlightened man cannot help behaving with heterogeneous, even more so than they are

compassion toward his fellow creatures. His today . If a religion had arisen which de-

motivation is internal, but it is binding. manded submission to a single religious

Hence, the Buddhist scriptures stress the authority, it would almost certainly have

moral qualities that a monk must possess- failed . Hinduism, to be sure, demanded sub-

moral qualities which are usually more de- mission to the brahmin

caste, but mobility
 manding than those required by the Western and heterodoxy were allowed
 to a far greater
 religions. Although enlightenment is of pri- extent in ancient India than
 most people
 mary importance, and ethics secondary, they suppose. The ancient Jews,
 or the Arabs of
 go hand in hand and are actually inseparable. the seventh century A.D. for
 that matter,
 The dichotomy between ethics and metaphys- were a far more homogeneous
 society; there-
 ics, then, is also false-they are one. We fore it was possible (and
 indeed advanta-
 must not conclude from this that those with geous) for them to submit to
 a single
 no interest in metaphysics cannot be ethical religious authority-Moses or
 Mul:iammad.
 -atheists, for instance. All ethical systems Societies were
 relatively isolated from
 are internally, therefore metaphysically, mo- each other in the ancient
 world; hence some
 tivated , whether or not one chooses to call could allow themselves the
 luxury of having
 the motivation God. no external religious
 authority. Today our
 One crucial difference remains-the ques- world is so tightly knit, however,
 that the
 tion of social control. This is a more difficult smallest social shock
 reverberates throughout
 question to resolve, and here the difference the globe. The need for
 unity is urgent, and
 between the Eastern outlook and the West- unity of Faith is not
 possible without spiritual
 ern appears to be more real than apparent. authority. The luxury of an
 autonomous
 As we have seen, in Western religions every conscience can no longer be
 afforded.
 believer, without exception, is subject to the
 law of the prophet, but this is not true of AN ORIENTAL, then, can
 accept the Baha'i
 Eastern religions. The reason lies in the Faith without rejecting the
 essential philoso-
 Western view of the prophet as qualitatively phy behind his own religious
 tradition.
 different from the rest of mankind-a Being Baha'u'llah places more
 emphasis on social
 especially favored by God and hence unap- teachings than did the

Buddha, but there is
 proachable, or, in Christianity, one with God no evidence of any
 contradiction between the
 Himself. But to the Oriental the prophet is essential teachings of the
 Buddha and those
 of Baha'u'llah. Western religions have not
 12. Ibid., p. 5. been notably successful in
 the East, since they

””””

BUDDHISM AND THE BAHAI FAITH 33

usually demand a rejection of tradition from His body is eighty
 cubits high, and twenty
 the convert. The Baha'i Faith, however, offers cubits broad. He will
 have a retinue of
 to the Oriental more freedom than the West- 84,000 persons, whom he
 will instruct in
 ern religions. Except for the few laws bind- the mantras ... For
 60,000 years Maitreya,
 ing upon all Baha'is, the Oriental is free, the best of men, will
 preach the true
 even encouraged, to revere his own culture Dharma, which is
 compassionate towards
 and follow his own customs. The validity of all living beings. And
 when he has disci-
 his former religion is not denied. In this plined in his true
 Dharma hundreds and
 sense the Baha'i Faith is neither a Western hundreds of millions of
 living beings, then
 nor an Eastern religion but rather a point of that leader will at last
 enter Nirvana. And
 convergence. after the great sage has
 entered Nirvana,
 Moreover, the Buddhist is able to turn to his true Dharma still
 endures for another
 the Baha'i Faith as the fulfillment of his ten thousand years. 1 3
 beliefs. Buddhism, like many other religions, I have, however, found
 one Buddhist tradi-
 has an apocalyptic tradition and expects the tion that suggests that the
 age in which we
 return of its Founder, although there is evi- live will be the beginning
 of a regeneration
 dence that this concept arose much later than of the human spirit. The
 Japanese Buddhist
 the Buddha's lifetime and is not attributable monk Nichiren (1222-1282)
 preached
 to him. The Mahayana scriptures abound in apocalyptic ideas based on

historical cycles

references to the Maitreya, the Buddha of the
Buddhism. According to

Future, the Expected One. Some Mahayana
death of the Buddha

sects regard this return as only of the spirit of
death was followed,

the Buddha, not the actual physical presence
the millennium of

of Sakyamuni, the Historical Buddha, since
time of the rise of

he attained nirvana and is therefore lost to
millennium of the

us. This makes it easier for many Buddhists
Historically this corre-

to accept the appearance of the Maitreya in
Mahayana, which

circumstances other than those which are
approaching

traditional.

Buddha's images,

Buddhists are familiar with the claims of
Nichiren the

Buddha to be the return of the spirit of
"destruction of the law,"

Christ and Muhammad. But few Buddhists in
the rise of

the Western world understand in what sense
Buddhism concerned

Buddha may also be seen as the Maitreya.
cycle, too, lasts a

The Buddhist canon yields no specific predic-
new era is at

tions that might be interpreted as referring to
by Nichiren as a

Buddha, as do Biblical references or Mus-
Nichiren saw this

lim traditions. Some of the references to the
shrine will become

Maitreya are obviously allegorical, even fan-
and a mandala (a

tastic. Witness the following scripture in
regenerate the human

which the Maitreya is expected some thirty
apocalypse survives in the

thousand years after the death of the histori-
religion which is

drawn from Chinese

Chinese chronology, the

occurred in 947 B.C. His

according to Nichiren, by

the "true law." About the

Christianity, the second

"image" law began.

sponds with the rise of

places great emphasis on

Buddhahood through the

the bodhisattvas. According to

last phase, the

began about 1000 A.D. with

Tantrism, the form of

with magic and spells. This

thousand years, and so a

hand-an era characterized

return to the "true law."

era as a time when a holy

the center of the world,

religious symbol) will

spirit. Nichiren's

teachings of Soka Gokkai, a

cal Buddha: currently growing rapidly

in Japan. 1 4

Baha'u'llah, then, may be accepted as the

13. Edward Conze, Buddhist Scriptures (New Maitreya awaited by the
Buddhists, in that

York: Penguin, 1959), pp. 240 -41. He is the "Bringer of a New

Law," "One who

14. Harry Thomsen, The New Religions of Japan

Brings Peace," and "One who Enlightens and

(Rutland, Vt.: Chas . E. Tuttle Co., 1963),

p. 92. Unites the World."

— Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith (Used by permission of the curator)