

A Didactic Dialogue with Jesus

David B. Center

Participants:

Judge: Old, white-haired, benevolent in appearance.

Jesus: Young, long flowing hair, and bearded, dressed in the yellow robes of a Buddhist monk.

Soldier: Young, crew cut hair, in need of a shave. Dressed in battle uniform, which is dirty and bloody.

Angel: Winged, a black man.

The scene begins with a panorama of a battlefield. In the background can be heard automatic weapons fire and explosions. A soldier runs into the scene, is hit, and falls. It is dusk. An angel appears and takes his hand. The dead soldier rises, and the angel leads him away. The scene goes dark. Light, returns and the angel leads the soldier into a room. The room is small, and has a Judge's bench, behind which a judge is sitting. It appears to be a court room.

Standing before the bench is Jesus. The angel approaches the bench, leading the soldier. The angel comes to a stop before the bench. He releases the soldier's hand and then steps aside.

Angel: Face the Judge, lord of all that is. Fear not, for he is your Father.

Soldier: What? Where am I? Who the hell are you people?

Angel: Quiet! You are before your Father. The Judgment has begun.

Soldier: I am required to tell you nothing.

Angel: Name, rank, serial number, and birth date?

Soldier: Yes.

Angel: The latter will be sufficient.

Soldier: 12 August.

Judge: (*Opening a large book which lays before him.*) Ah yes! Here you are.
(*He marks the book and closes it.*) We may begin now.

Soldier: Begin what? For Christ's sake! What's going on here?

Jesus: You are before the Judgment. Your life just ended, must be judged. No soul returns unjustified. The God spirit is pure.

Soldier: (*Puzzled*) I don't understand. I'm not dead, am I?

Angel: Put your hand to your chest.

Soldier: (*He places his hand to his chest. He draws his hand away and looks at it. It is covered with blood. He is horrified.*) But it doesn't hurt. How?

Angel: Your body is dead. The Creator waits.

The soldier falls to his knees before the bench and begins praying. His lips are moving, but he cannot be heard.

Jesus: Rise and have no fear. Your Father is love.

The soldier rises and turns, facing Jesus.

Judge: Know you these words of Jesus? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind. The first and greatest commandment. The second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbors as yourself. On these two commandments rest all of the laws.

Soldier: I have heard them many times.

Judge: And you believe them?

Soldier: With all my might!

Angel: Heart?

Judge: Begin the Judgment!

Jesus: You profess to follow my word, but you deal in death. This is love? How claim you to be my disciple?

Soldier: I am a soldier of Christ.

Jesus: You KILL in my name?

Soldier: I fight against evil. Those who would deny you. Vile doctrines --
Atheists!

Jesus: Have you not heard my word? Judge not, that you be not judged.

Soldier: I have judged no one. The church made the judgment. The church encouraged me. A chaplain goes into battle with us. He prays for our cause.

Jesus: He prays for aid in your mission? Death and destruction! He prays not to me!

Soldier: He must pray to you. He is a Christian. He is of the church.

Jesus: The scriptures warned you: Beware of false prophets. They come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Soldier: (*Confused*) I, I don't read the scriptures. I do go to church. I am a Christian. My nation is a Christian nation.

Jesus: Of your nation I have spoken: This people draweth near unto me with their mouths, honor me with their lips. Their heart is far from me. In vain they worship me. Teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men.

Soldier: I am a good Christian. I follow the church, do its bidding. The church speaks for you. It does good works in your name. For you, it opposes evil.

Jesus: It has been written: Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in your name. In your name cast out devils. In your name done many wonderful works. Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity.

Soldier: Forgive me, Jesus. I knew not what I did in your name.

Jesus: You have long been forgiven. I condemn none. I only sorrow at your words, at your deeds.

Judge: Continue your justification, my son. You will be instructed in the Word.

Soldier: I defended my nation. It was in danger of destruction. I could not stand by; force must be met by force.

Jesus: You speak like those of old, before my coming. I instructed them too: You have heard it said, you should love your neighbor and hate your enemies. But, I say unto you, love your enemies as yourself, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that use you and persecute you. Blessed are the meek: For they shall inherit the earth.

Soldier: But, Jesus, we did not start it! We were struck first. We fought only to repay the blow dealt us.

Jesus: Will you never understand my word? You have heard it said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But, I say unto you, that you resist not evil. Whosoever strike your right cheek, turn to him the other also. Blessed are they; persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Soldier: I have tried to follow the word. These are difficult times. An ordinary man, such as myself, understands them not. One must follow the leaders it is for the best!

Jesus: Wise men are few it is true. Troubled days, though, are not new. Others have found the way. For times such as yours, counsel has been given: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. This is the beginning of sorrow. Then they shall kill you. You will be hated in all nations, for my name's sake. Many shall be offended and betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. Iniquity shall abound. Love shall grow cold. But, he that shall endure, unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Soldier: I followed the law! Even you have so counseled. The law must be fulfilled.

Jesus: You have kept the law of man, not God's Law! In the keeping of one often lies the breaking of the other. I have spoken of this conflict: No man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

Soldier: I had to follow the law, Jesus. Refusal would have brought reprisals. I am not strong, I could not resist. But, I did not deny you!

Jesus: He that is not with me is against me. He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Soldier: I acted to prevent discord in my family, for I love my father and mother. Had I not taken up arms, I would have brought them dishonor, angered them. They would have disowned me.

Jesus: You have forsaken me for so small a cost? Is your faith in my word so slight? I am come to set a man at variance with his father, the daughter against her mother. A man's foes shall be of his own house. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

Soldier: I must live in my society. I must feed and clothe myself, my family. If I should do as you say, I would never find profitable work. How would you have me provide?

Jesus: I say unto you: Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or how shall we be clothed? Seek you first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. All these things will be added unto you.

Soldier: You would have me be an outcast, having nothing to call my own?

Jesus: Lay not up for yourself treasures on earth, but in heaven. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Soldier: I could not refuse them. I would have been thought a traitor! I could have been executed. Would you have had me commit suicide?

Jesus: It would have been better to die, than become an instrument of death: He that findeth his life shall lose it. He that loveth his life, for my sake, shall find it.

Soldier: Those who would kill me would do so in your name. My actions and I would appear to be against you.

Jesus: The fantasies of man deceive neither my Father nor I. Even so I have said: Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever kills you, think he does God a service. They have not known the Father, or me. If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after have no more they can do.

Soldier: I have understood the Word, Jesus. How am I to redeem myself?

Judge: Your soul must return to earth from whence it came. The law must be fulfilled.

Soldier: But, what's to come of me?

Angel: Your soul?

Jesus: Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be reborn, he cannot see The Kingdom of God.

Soldier: I will fulfill the law. Have mercy on me!

Jesus: If you continue in my word, you are my disciple indeed. You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

Soldier: The Lord does not condemn me?

Jesus: Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.

Soldier: What would you have me do?

Jesus: Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works. Glorify your Father, who is in heaven. Be you therefore perfect, even as He is.

Angel: Come. It is time to return.

The angel takes the soldier's hand. He leads him out of the court. The scene goes dark. Light returns, the scene now resembles a room. A young woman sits comforting a newborn child. In the distance can be heard the clatter of automatic weapons fire and the occasional thump of mortars.

End Note: This dialogue was written for a Christian friend to provide an illustration of the core teachings of Christianity, as I understood them from reading the words of Jesus in the New Testament. As I pointed out to my friend, I don't have any particular problem with the philosophy implicit in the teachings, as I understand them. Thus, I consider a Christian to be someone who behaves in a manner consistent with the philosophy illustrated in the above dialogue with Jesus. Generally speaking, I find any similarity between the "teachings" of Jesus and Christianity (with the possible exception of the Quakers) to be purely coincidental.