

The Christian Notion of the Fall of the Human Being in Relation to Buddhism

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The Bible holds a distinctive view of what has gone wrong with the human being. The story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the third chapter of Genesis is used to express the basic malady as it is experienced by both Christians and non-Christians. The Genesis story of the fall of human beings is a narrative which reveals the reason for death and the mystery of the human situation. There is a similar narration known as the *Agganna Sutta* in the *Digha Nikaya* of the Major Buddhist text the *Tripitaka*. It is several times longer than the Genesis story.

The Genesis story as well as *Agganna Sutta* are myths. The term myth is not used in the sense of a fable, a figment of the imagination, but in the sense of a "literary form which describes other worldly matters in this worldly concepts". When thus considered, we see striking similarities in both stories, especially in regard to three fundamental matters (1) the fact of the fall, (2) the cause of the fall, and (3) the consequences of the fall.

We do intend to trace how both Christianity and the teaching of the Buddha had dealt with the fall of human being under the above mentioned main three factors. It is an interesting fact to illustrate both stories which seek to account for the evil state in which the human being is, and point to a state of prior blessedness. Both stories also say that the human being has also fallen from that state of blessedness. In the Buddhist story beings lose their luster and descend from the *Abassara* world to dwell on earth where their bodies are solid and subject to mortality. In the other narrative of Genesis, the image of the human being is distorted and the human being is driven out of the garden. As systematic theologian Paul Tillich says, this is not an event that occurs in space and time, but, bears a trans-historical quality of all events in space and time. Apart from that we have identified that Christian teaching and Buddhism have taken desire or "*Tanha*" as the cardinal cause of the fall of human being. We analyze in detail how this common cause called "*Tanha*" (desire) causes the degeneration of a human being's purity and blessedness into decay. This research is totally based on textual references from the Christian Scripture and *Tripitaka*. We have also included the studies of Lynn Alton de Silva to figure out the fundamental parallels in both Genesis story and the *Tripitaka*.

Keywords: Fall, Genesis, Tripitaka, Blessedness, Myth.