

Buddhism

All material taken from Josh McDowell & Don Stewart's Handbook of Today's Religions, Fritz Ridenour's So What's the Difference?, & the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention's *Interfaith Evangelism Belief Bulletin*



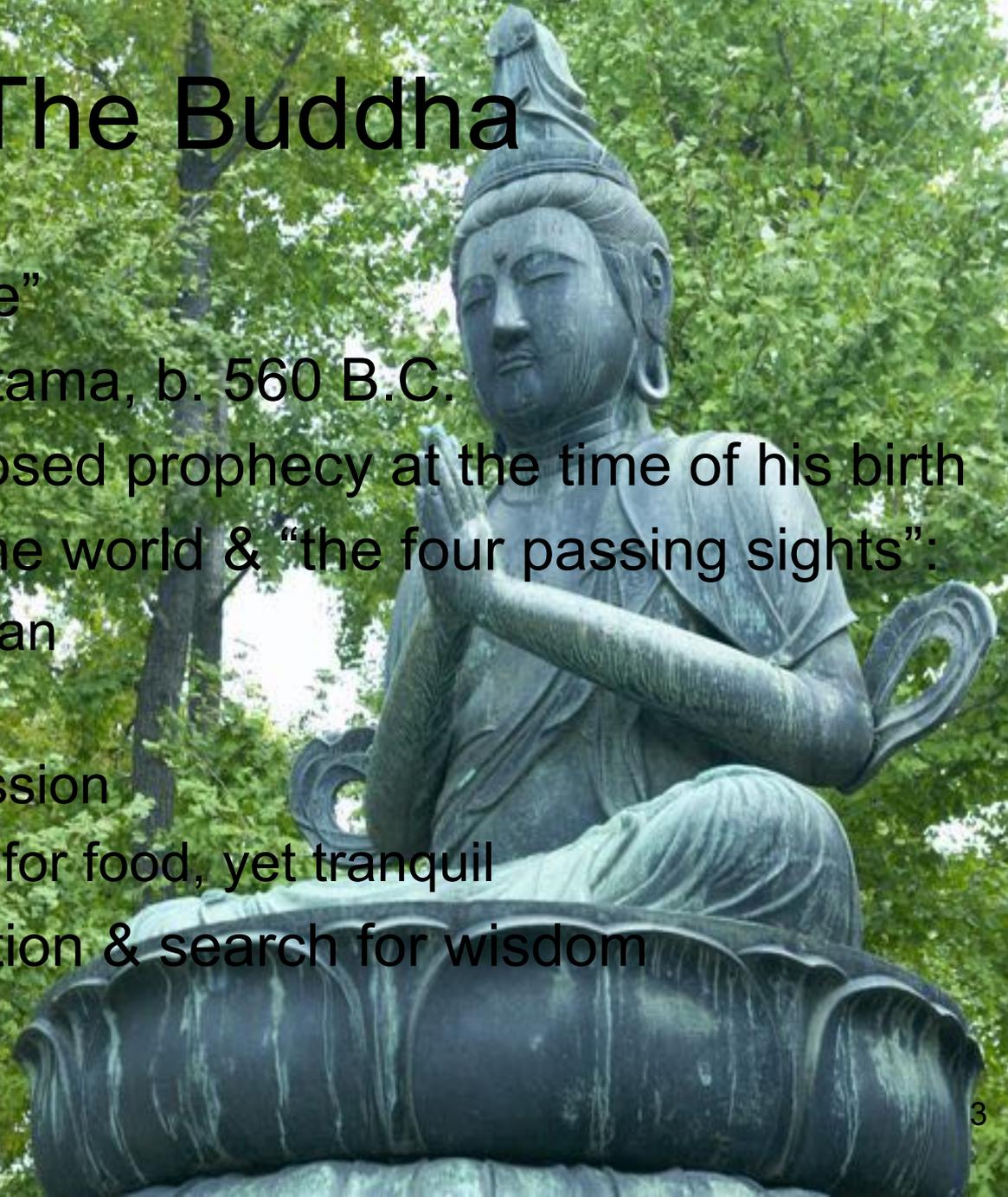
Miscellany



- Adherents: 323,894,000 worldwide; 920,000 in the United States
- Founder: Siddhartha Gautama, a prince from northern India near modern Nepal, who lived about 563-483 B.C.
- Context of northeastern India:
 - people disillusioned with parts of Hinduism & the complex caste system, causing them to turn to a variety of beliefs, including animal worship & a denial of the Hindu vedas

The Buddha

- “Enlightened one”
- Siddhartha Gautama, b. 560 B.C.
- Royal life; supposed prophecy at the time of his birth
- Excursion into the world & “the four passing sights”:
 - Decrepit old man
 - Sick man
 - Funeral procession
 - Monk begging for food, yet tranquil
- Great Renunciation & search for wisdom



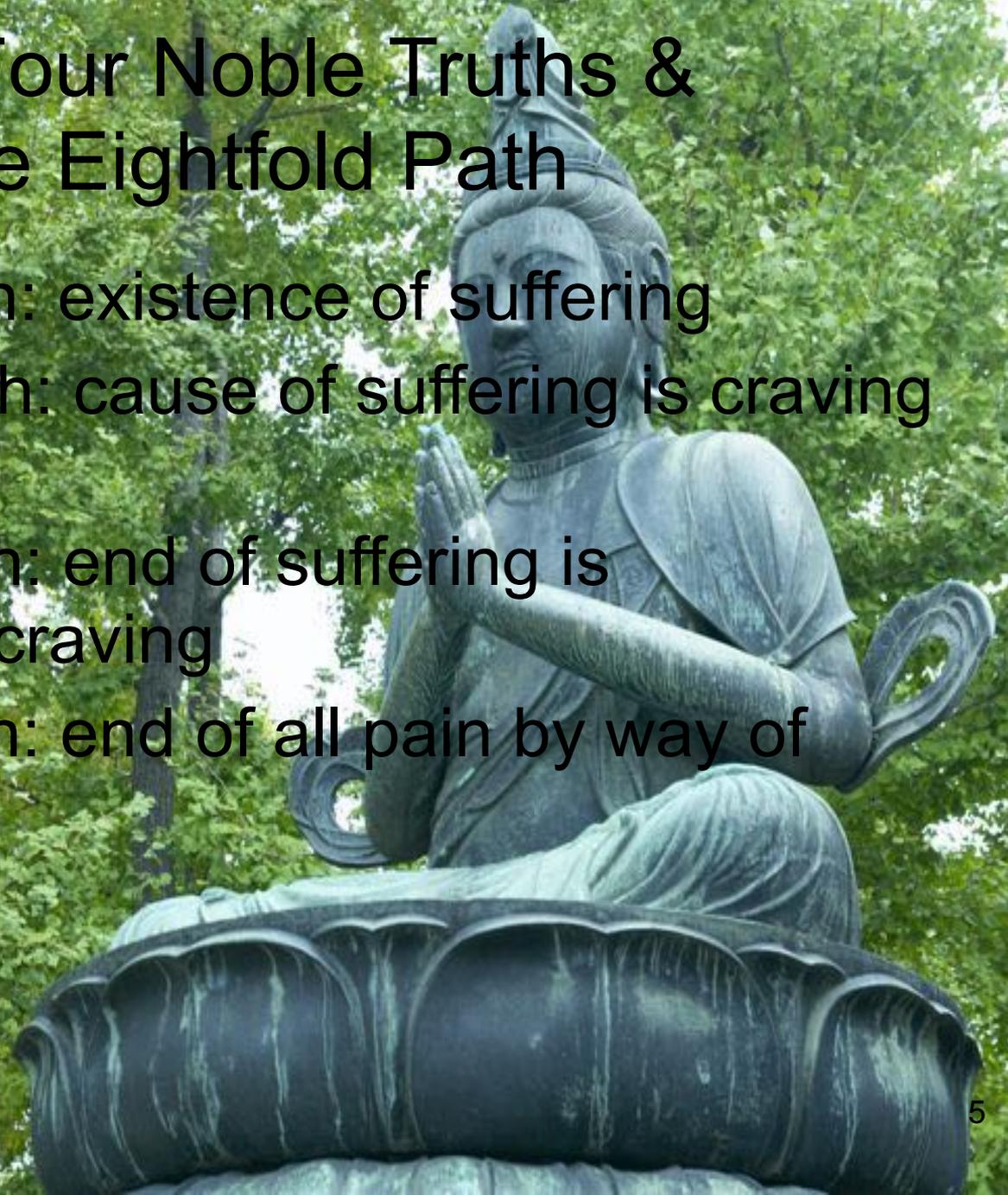
Buddha's Enlightenment



- Siddhartha's enlightenment under the bo tree:
 - supposedly stayed seven days until nirvana
 - desired to impart truths to the world as the Buddha
 - met with five monks who were his companions
 - sermon at Benares = 1st sermon
 - then spread his teachings to the people of India, who were disillusioned with Hinduism
 - teachings were a strong force by his death at age 80
- Reading from the Tripitaka re: Buddha's impending death; after death, he was elevated to a godlike status (against his own teachings)

The Four Noble Truths & the Eightfold Path

- 1st Noble Truth: existence of suffering
- 2nd Noble Truth: cause of suffering is craving pleasure
- 3rd Noble Truth: end of suffering is extinguishing craving
- 4th Noble Truth: end of all pain by way of Eightfold Path



The Four Noble Truths & the Eightfold Path

- 1st step: Right Views: acceptance of Four Noble Truths & the Eightfold Path
- 2nd step: Right Resolve: renounce pleasures of the senses & harbor no ill will toward anyone or harm any living creature
- 3rd step: Right Speech: no slander, abuse, or lies; no idle talk
- 4th step: Right Behavior: Do not destroy any living creature; take only what is given to you; no unlawful sexual act



The Four Noble Truths & the Eightfold Path

- 5th step: Right Occupation: earn livelihood in way that will harm no one
- 6th step: Right Effort: resolve and strive heroically to prevent any evil qualities from arising in you and to abandon any which you might possess; strive to acquire good qualities and encourage those you do possess to grow, increase, and be perfected
- 7th step: Right Contemplation: be observant, strenuous, alert, free of desire & sorrow
- 8th step: Right Meditation: after all of the above, enter the four degrees of meditation via concentration

Theravada & Mahayana Buddhism



- Theravada (Hinayana) = early Buddhism; Theravada schools
- Mahayana = later; popular most notably in China & Japan; arose around the time of Christ
 - Enlargement of bodhisattva ideal
 - Bodhisattvas: one who postpones nirvana to help others achieve this goal; in Theravada Buddhism, it is one who is on his way to becoming a Buddha. Title of Gautama before becoming a Buddha.

Theravada & Mahayana Buddhism



Theravada

- Man as an individual
- Man alone in the universe (nirvana by self-effort)
- Key virtue: wisdom
- Religion: full-time job, primarily for monks
- Ideal: Arhat
- Buddha: a saint

Mahayana

- Man involved w/others
- Man not alone (salvation by grace)
- Key virtue: *karuna*, compassion
- Religion: relevant to life in the world (for layman, too)
- Ideal: Buddha
- Buddha: a savior

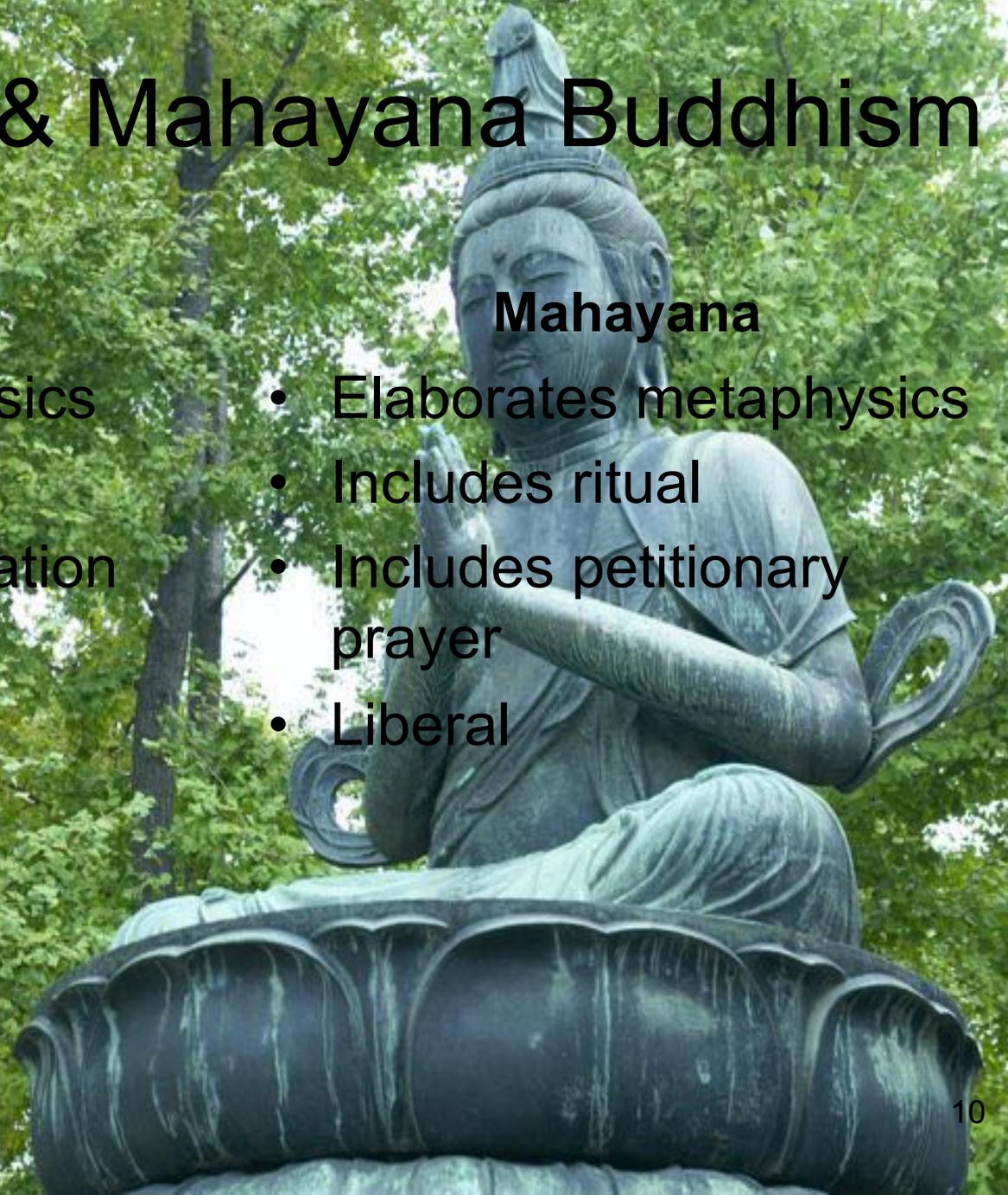
Theravada & Mahayana Buddhism

Theravada

- Avoids metaphysics
- Avoids ritual
- Prayer as meditation
- Conservative

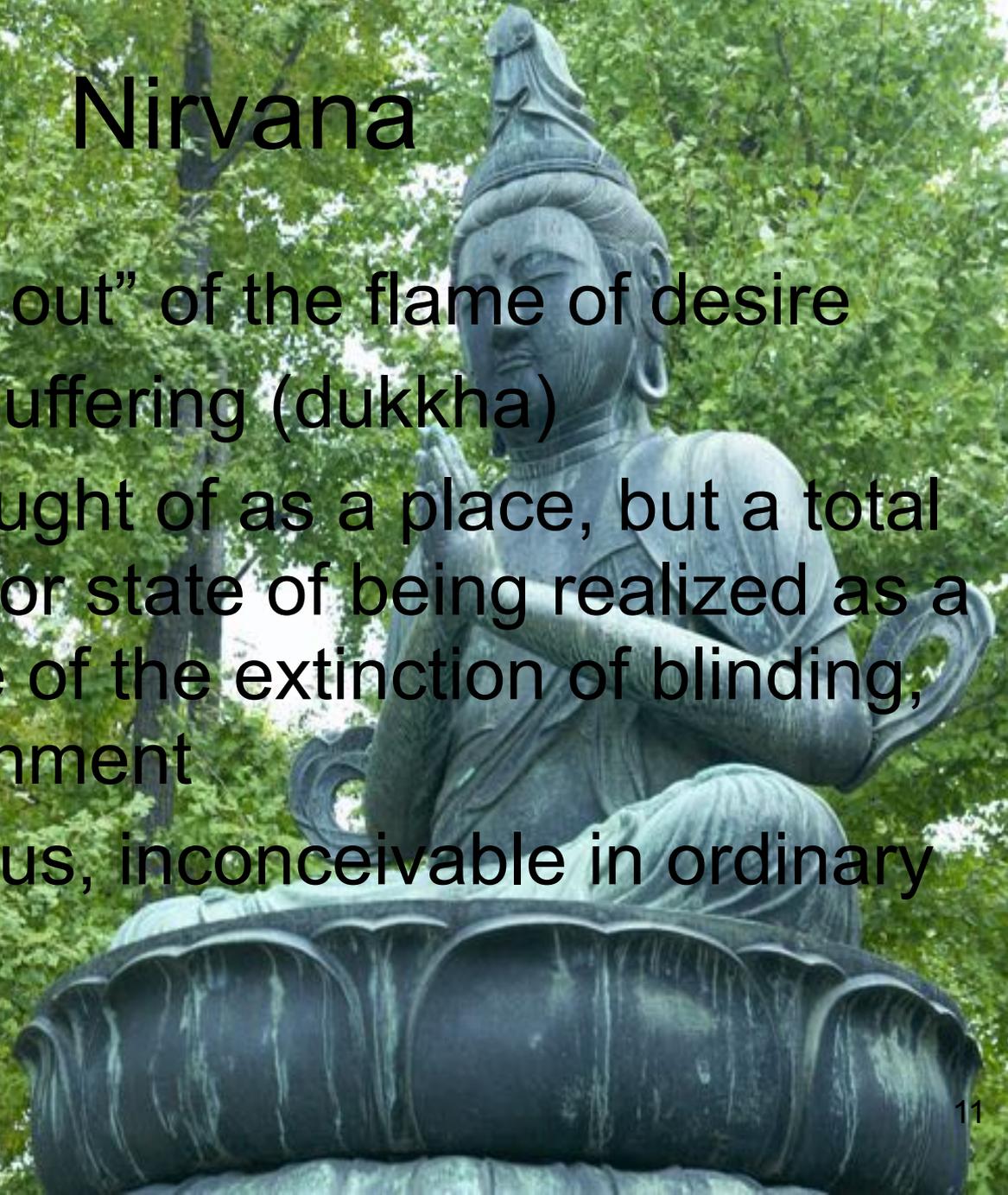
Mahayana

- Elaborates metaphysics
- Includes ritual
- Includes petitionary prayer
- Liberal



Nirvana

- The “blowing out” of the flame of desire
- Negation of suffering (dukkha)
- Not to be thought of as a place, but a total reorientation or state of being realized as a consequence of the extinction of blinding, binding attachment
- Nirvana is, thus, inconceivable in ordinary terms



Sacred Scriptures



Theravada

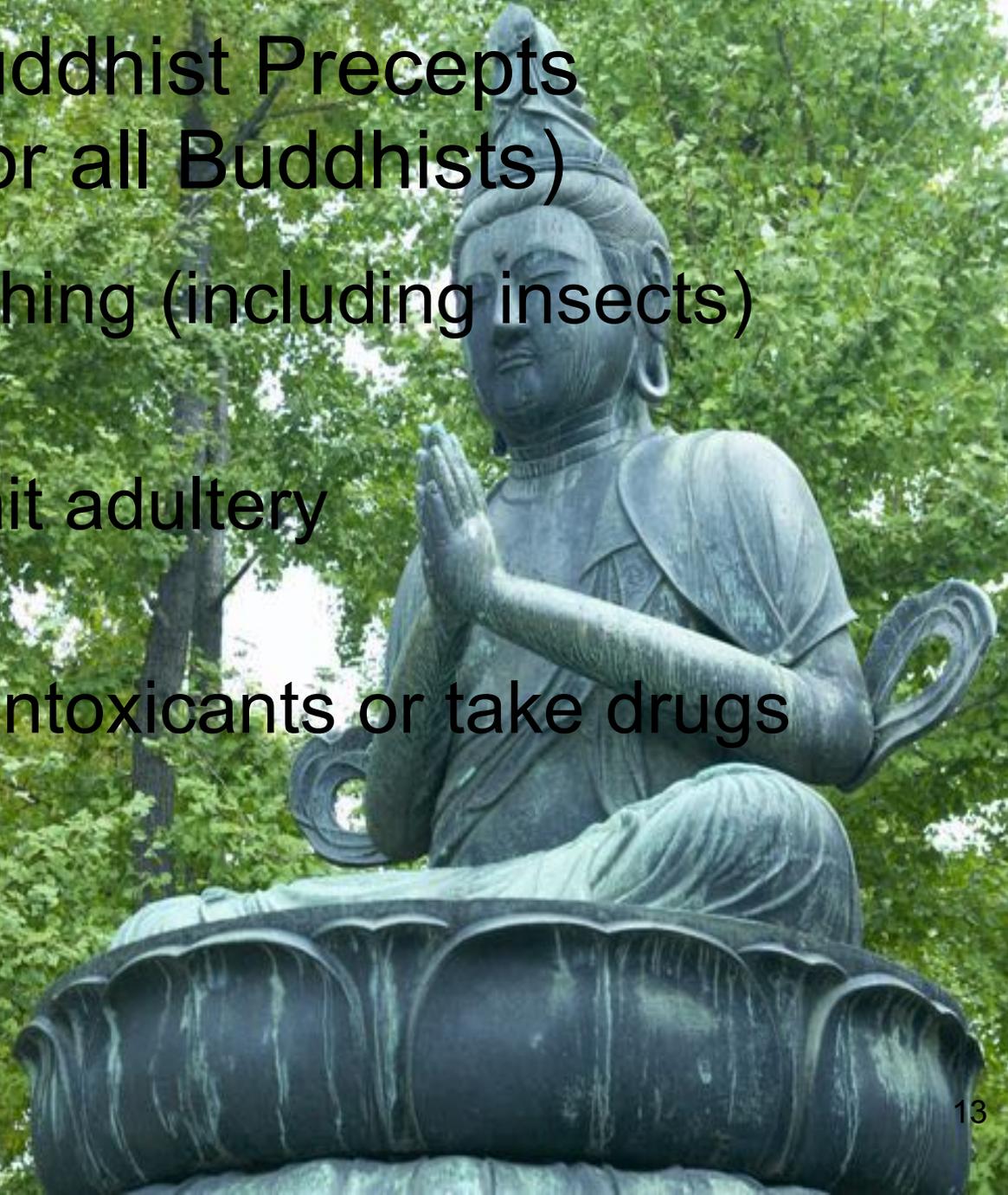
- Tripitaka (“Three Baskets”): 3 groups of scripture
- Vinaya Pitaka (discipline basket): rules for higher class Buddhists
- Sutta Pitaka (teaching basket): discourses of Buddha
- Abidhamma Pitaka (metaphysical basket): Buddhist theology
- All combined: 11x larger than the Bible

Mahayana

- Chinese canon = 5,000+ vols. of scripture; other texts in Nepalese, Tibetan, & Sanskrit (oldest); some overlap with Tripitaka
- Sects choose their own canon; some same, some different
- Often contradictory teachings in the texts, which is why they choose their favorites that do not contradict

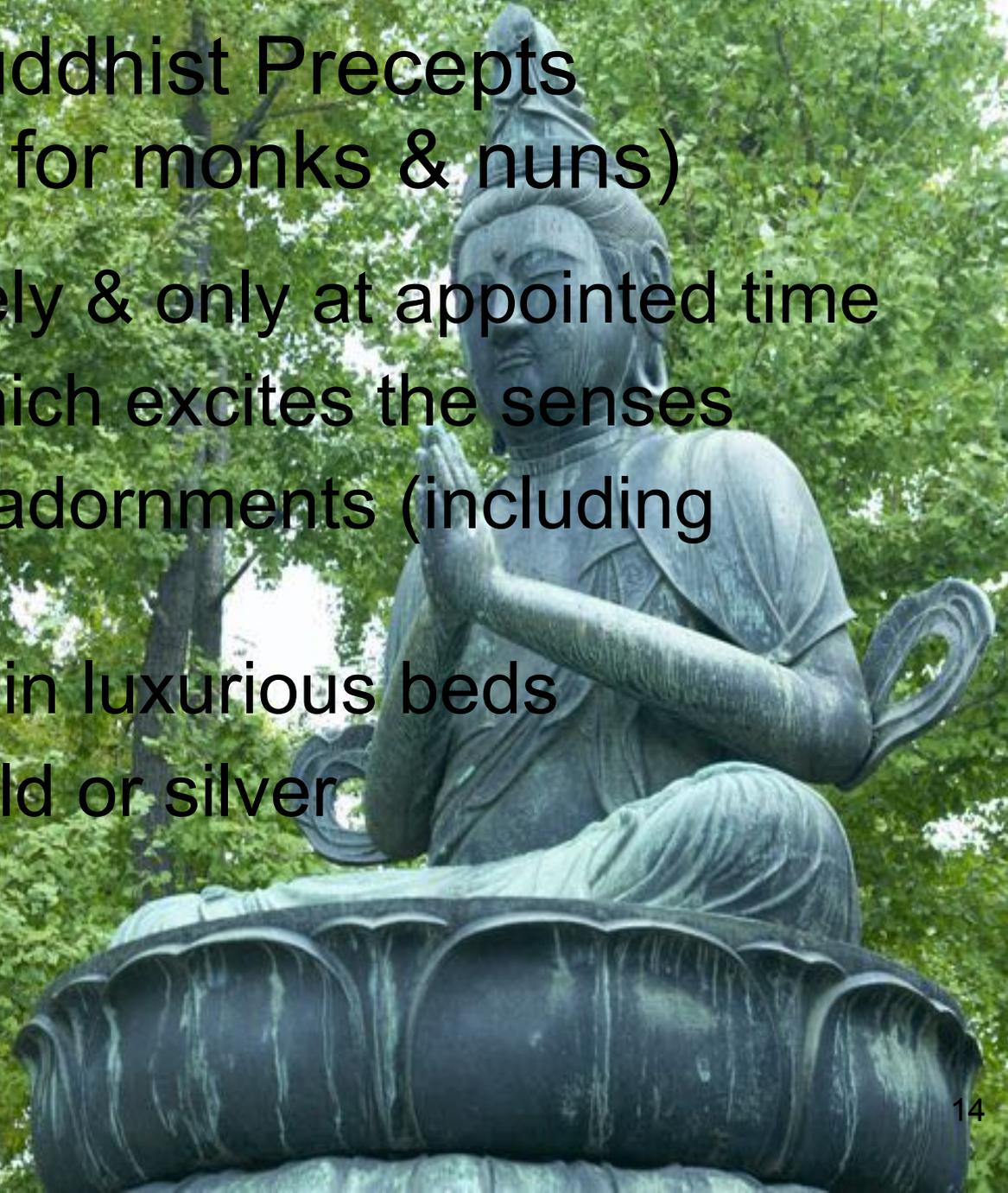
Buddhist Precepts (for all Buddhists)

- Kill no living thing (including insects)
- Do not steal
- Do not commit adultery
- Tell no lies
- Do not drink intoxicants or take drugs



Buddhist Precepts (only for monks & nuns)

- Eat moderately & only at appointed time
- Avoid that which excites the senses
- Do not wear adornments (including perfume)
- Do not sleep in luxurious beds
- Accept no gold or silver



Laity

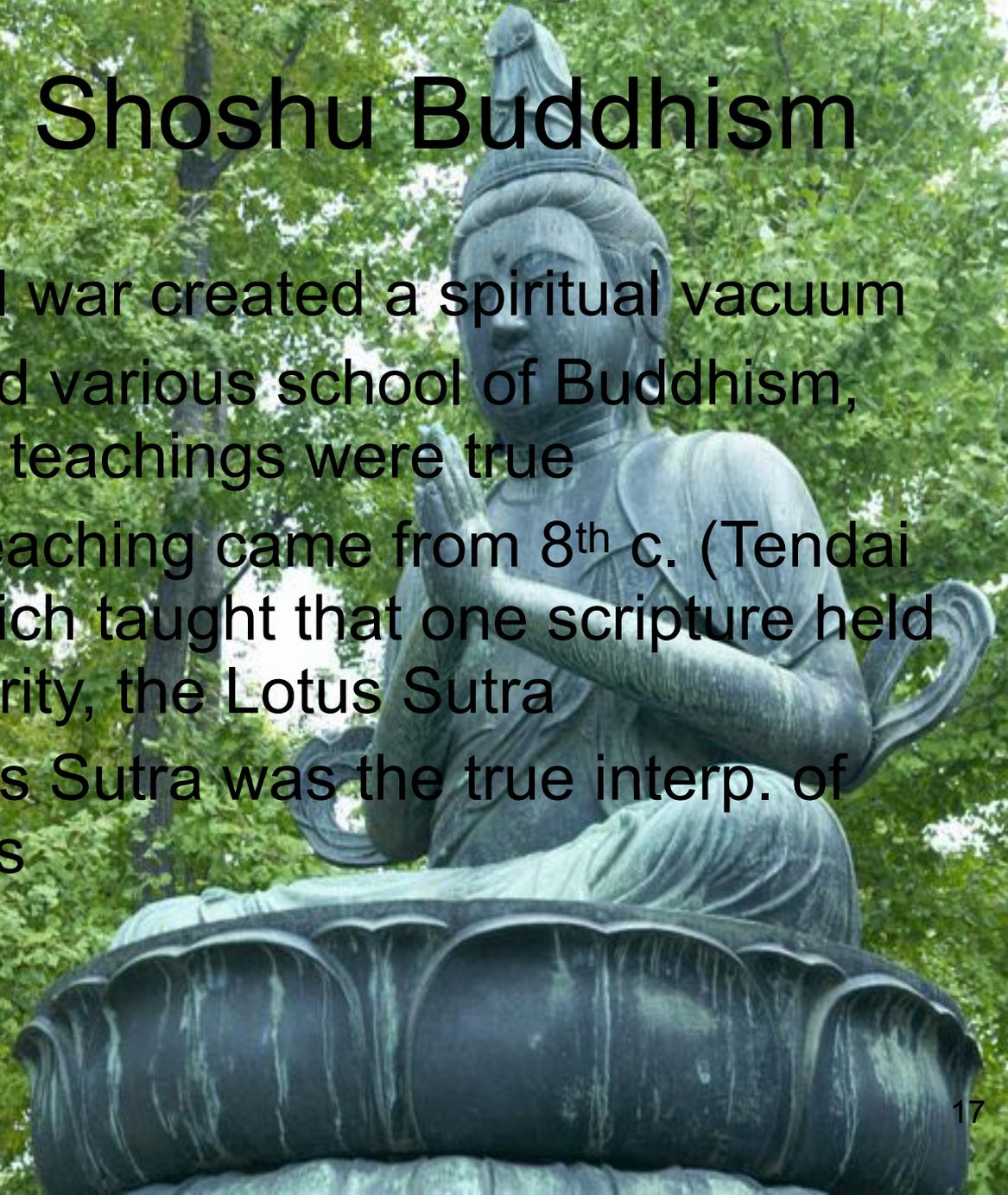
- One task: increase one's store of merit by...
 - 1) Observing 3-5 precepts
 - 2) Exhibiting faith and devotion to a god or gods
 - 3) Generosity, especially to monks...even more so to more spiritual monks (best “field for planting merit”)
 - 4) Worshipping the relics of the Buddha, without praying to the Buddha, who is supposedly in nirvana

Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism

- Revival of sorts in the past 50 years
- Japanese mystical sect
- Japanese reformer: Nichiren Daishonon (1222-1282 A.D.)
- Japanese govt. attempted to unify all of Japan under Shinto Buddhism; only Nichiren Shoshu refused to obey
- 1940: 21 members; 1945: 1; 1960: 1.3 million, plus a branch in the US; 1973: 250,000 in US; 1951-1971: 3,000 Japanese families to 7 million (over 16 million people)

Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism

- Arose after civil war created a spiritual vacuum
- Nichiren studied various school of Buddhism, deciding which teachings were true
- Decided true teaching came from 8th c. (Tendai Buddhsim), which taught that one scripture held supreme authority, the Lotus Sutra
- Belief that Lotus Sutra was the true interp. of Buddha's words



Nichiren Shoshu: The Lotus Sutra

- Composed between 2nd c. B.C. & 2nd c. A.D.
- Stresses working out the salvation of all suffering humanity
- Buddha is the eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, creator-destroyer, re-creator of all worlds—concepts borrowed from Hinduism & carried over to Mahayana Buddhism
- Central thesis is universal salvation: everyone & everything have within the potentiality of Buddhahood
- Work actually contradicts Siddhartha's teachings

Nichiren Shoshu: Worship

- Gohonzon:
 - black wooden box containing the names of important people in the Lotus Sutra and used as a private altar
 - Direct connection between events in one's life and the treatment of the gohonzon (supposed universal forces that controls the devotee's life)
- Gongyo (worship ritual):
 - kneeling before the gohonzon
 - Recitation of Lotus Sutra passages
 - Rubbing rosary-type beads while chanting the daimoku
- Dai-gohonzon: shrine located at base of Mount Fuji; gohonzons are mystical reps of Dai-gohonzon

Nichiren Shoshu: Missions



- Shakubuku: proselytizing method, with the goal of converting the world to the one true faith
- “Soka Kakkai regards itself as not only the one true Buddhist religion, but the one true religion on earth. Its principal aims are the propagation of its gospel throughout the world, by forced conversion if necessary, and the denunciation and destruction of all other faiths as ‘false’ religions...Soka Gakkai is unmistakably a church militant in Japan geared for a determined march abroad. Its significance to America and all nations cannot be ignored. Its target is world domination” (Richard Okamoto, “Japan”, *Look*, September 10, 1963, p.16).

Zen Buddhism

- Branch of Mahayana widely known in the West
- Exact origin unknown
- Legend of Bodhidharma
- Basic tenets of Buddhism not dependent upon scriptures
- Teachings transmitted from mind to mind, not needing to be explained in words
- Employ any writings, Buddhistic or not, which are deemed necessary to further their religion

Zen Buddhism



- Developed about 1,000 yrs. after Buddha
- Emphasis on Buddha's enlightenment via meditation
- Zen teachers: "Look within; you are the Buddha."
- Importance of disciplined self-effort for enlightenment (Kensho or Satori)
- Western literature: Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance; Zen and Creative Management; etc.
Movies: *The Matrix*; *Star Wars* (Yoda); popular w/celebs
- Story of man desiring to be a Zen master: "You are like this cup. You are full. How can I pour Zen into you? Empty yourself and come back."

Zen Buddhism: Zazen

- Method of sitting in Zen meditation; done daily at specific times w/occasional periods of intense meditation lasting one week
- Goal is final enlightenment
- Done under the guiding hand of a master (roshi)
- Active meditation interspersed w/chanting of sutras
- Full lotus or half-lotus cross-legged; position of hands
- Some walking meditation (kinhin)

Zen Buddhism: The Koan

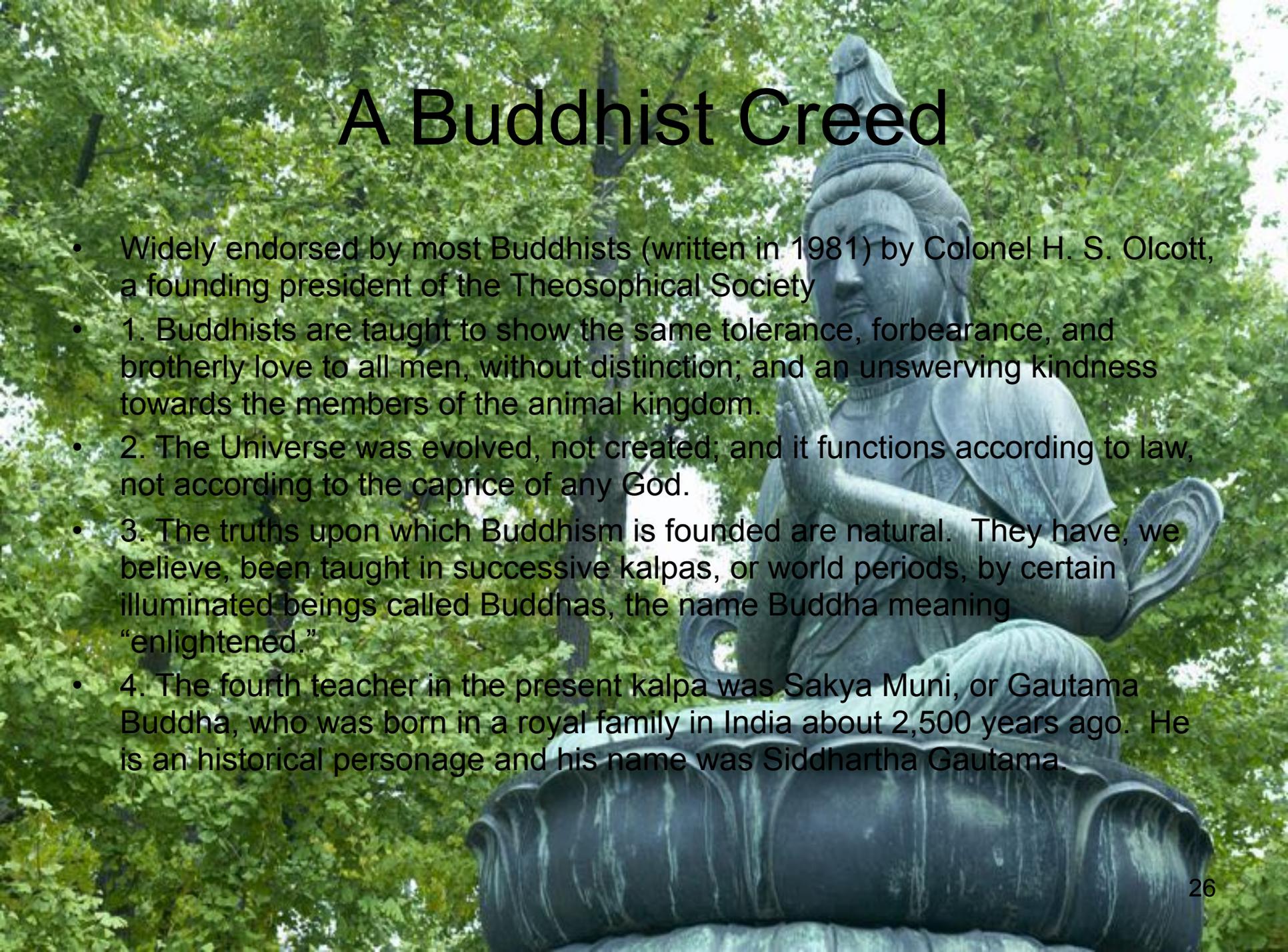
- Verbal puzzle; solution supposedly leads pupil to greater awareness
- Around 1,700 koans, each of which may have hundreds of “answers” depending upon exact circumstances of student’s training
- Knowing answer not as important as experiencing or realizing the answer
- Example: “We are all familiar with the sound of two hands clapping. What is the sound of one hand clapping?” If you protest that one hand can’t clap, you go back to the foot of the class. Such a remark simply shows you haven’t even begun to get the point.

Zen Buddhism: Satori



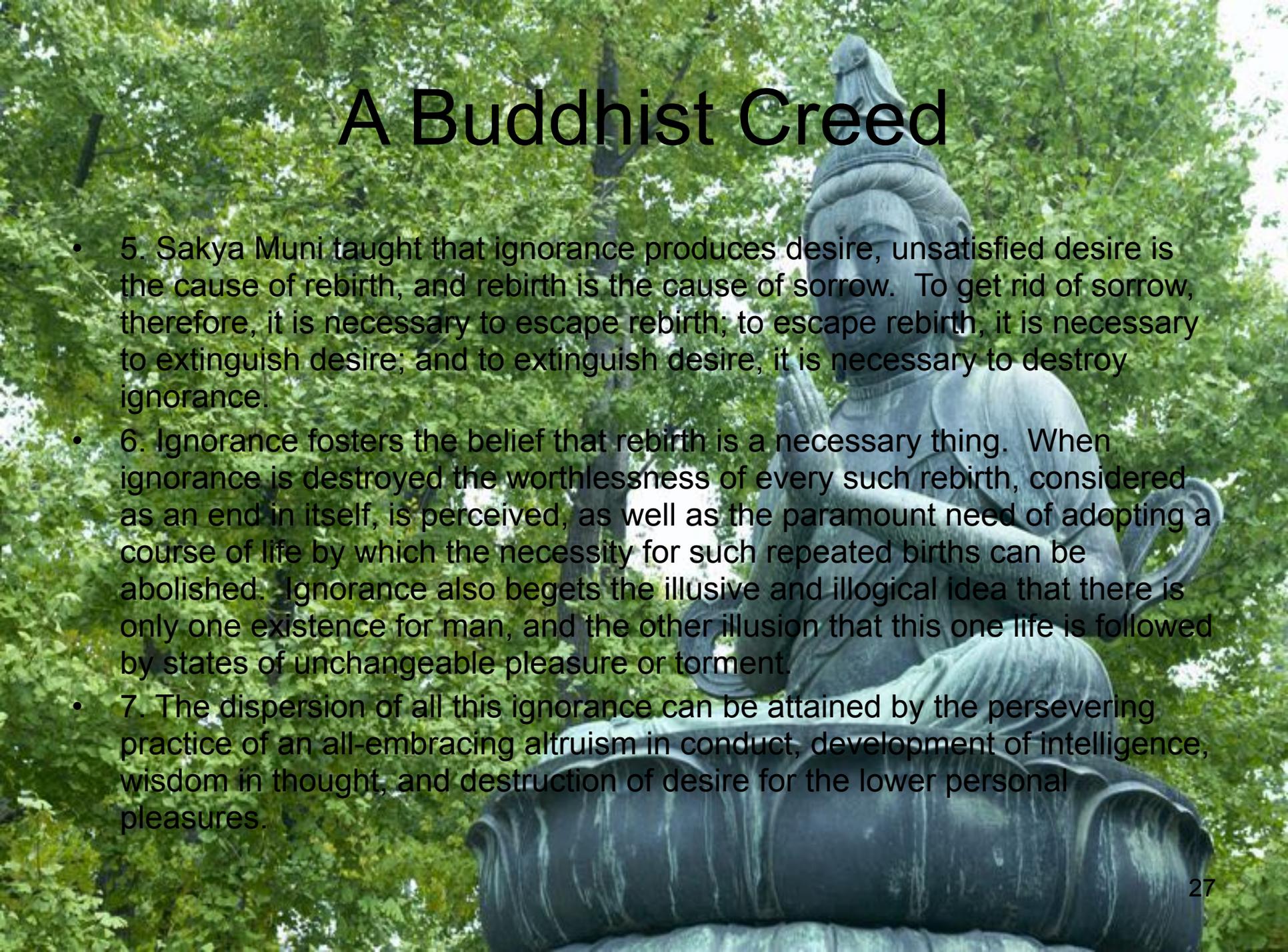
- Sudden illumination or enlightenment
- Experience beyond analyzation & communication, bringing the practitioner into a state of maturity
- Comes abruptly & momentarily; can be repeated
- Cannot be willed into existence
- Zen's attraction: one not responsible in evaluating anything in the world, even own thoughts; one loses capacity to think logically & critically (even mocks this practice; cf. 1 Thess. 5:21, 22: test *all* things)

A Buddhist Creed



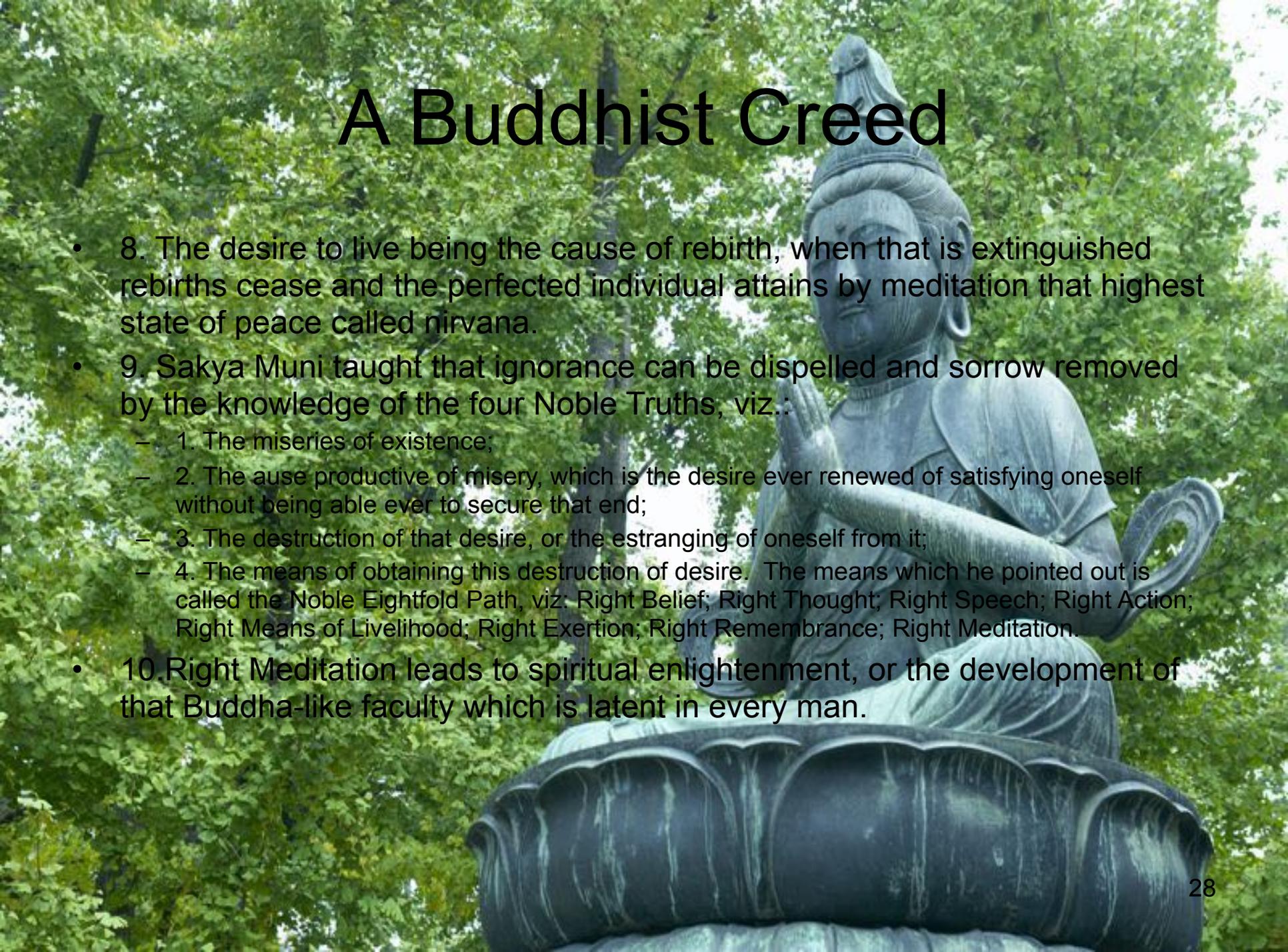
- Widely endorsed by most Buddhists (written in 1981) by Colonel H. S. Olcott, a founding president of the Theosophical Society
- 1. Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction; and an unswerving kindness towards the members of the animal kingdom.
- 2. The Universe was evolved, not created; and it functions according to law, not according to the caprice of any God.
- 3. The truths upon which Buddhism is founded are natural. They have, we believe, been taught in successive kalpas, or world periods, by certain illuminated beings called Buddhas, the name Buddha meaning “enlightened.”
- 4. The fourth teacher in the present kalpa was Sakya Muni, or Gautama Buddha, who was born in a royal family in India about 2,500 years ago. He is an historical personage and his name was Siddhartha Gautama.

A Buddhist Creed



- 5. Sakya Muni taught that ignorance produces desire, unsatisfied desire is the cause of rebirth, and rebirth is the cause of sorrow. To get rid of sorrow, therefore, it is necessary to escape rebirth; to escape rebirth, it is necessary to extinguish desire; and to extinguish desire, it is necessary to destroy ignorance.
- 6. Ignorance fosters the belief that rebirth is a necessary thing. When ignorance is destroyed the worthlessness of every such rebirth, considered as an end in itself, is perceived, as well as the paramount need of adopting a course of life by which the necessity for such repeated births can be abolished. Ignorance also begets the illusive and illogical idea that there is only one existence for man, and the other illusion that this one life is followed by states of unchangeable pleasure or torment.
- 7. The dispersion of all this ignorance can be attained by the persevering practice of an all-embracing altruism in conduct, development of intelligence, wisdom in thought, and destruction of desire for the lower personal pleasures.

A Buddhist Creed



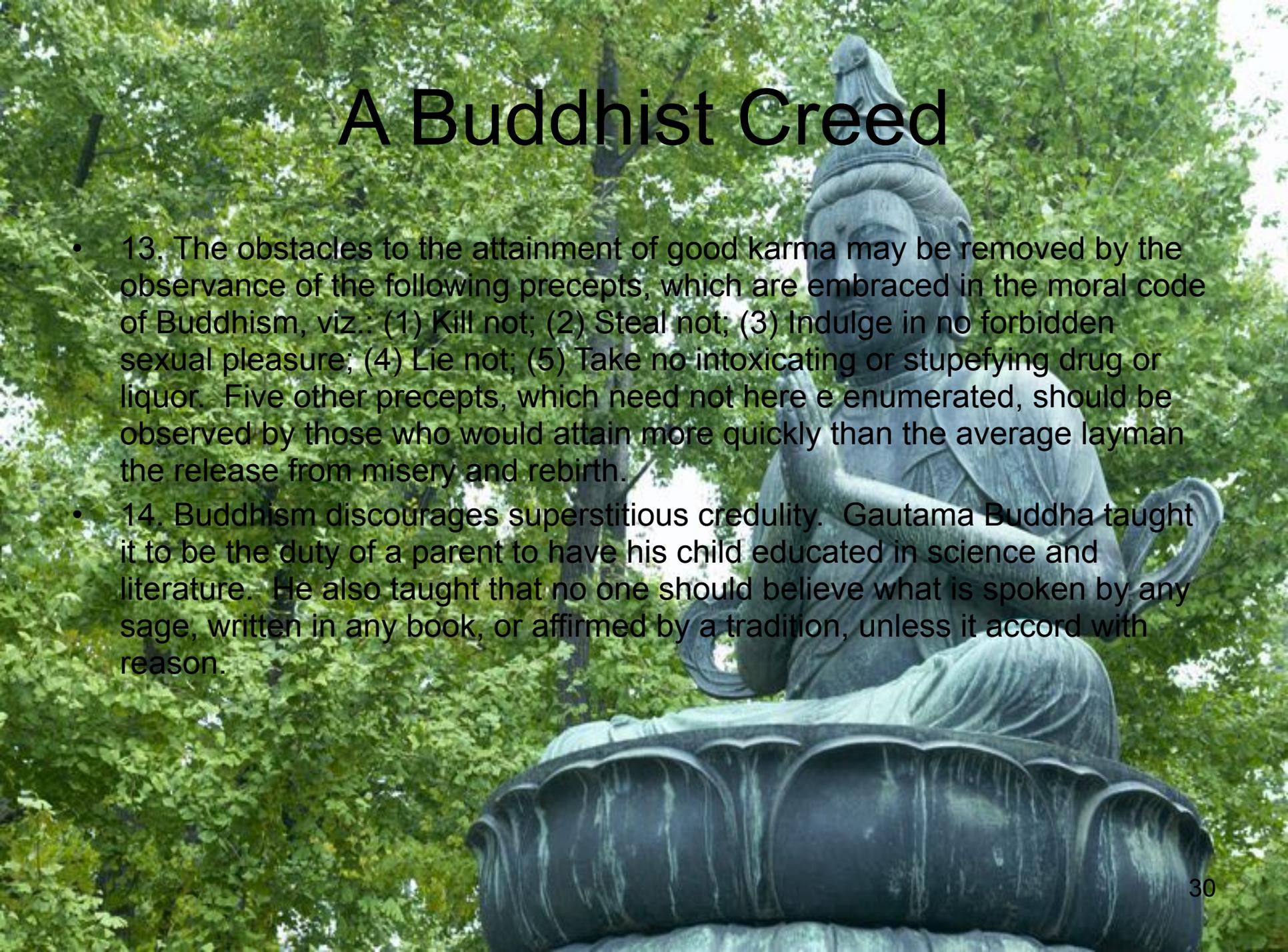
- 8. The desire to live being the cause of rebirth, when that is extinguished rebirths cease and the perfected individual attains by meditation that highest state of peace called nirvana.
- 9. Sakya Muni taught that ignorance can be dispelled and sorrow removed by the knowledge of the four Noble Truths, viz.:
 - 1. The miseries of existence;
 - 2. The cause productive of misery, which is the desire ever renewed of satisfying oneself without being able ever to secure that end;
 - 3. The destruction of that desire, or the estranging of oneself from it;
 - 4. The means of obtaining this destruction of desire. The means which he pointed out is called the Noble Eightfold Path, viz: Right Belief; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Means of Livelihood; Right Exertion; Right Remembrance; Right Meditation.
- 10. Right Meditation leads to spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man.

A Buddhist Creed

- 11. The essence of Buddhism as summed up by the Tathagata (Buddha) himself is:
 - To cease from all sin,
 - To get virtue,
 - To purify the heart
- 12. The universe is subject to a natural causation known as “karma.” The merits and demerits of a being in past existences determine his condition in the present one. Each man, therefore, has prepared the causes of the effects which he now experiences.

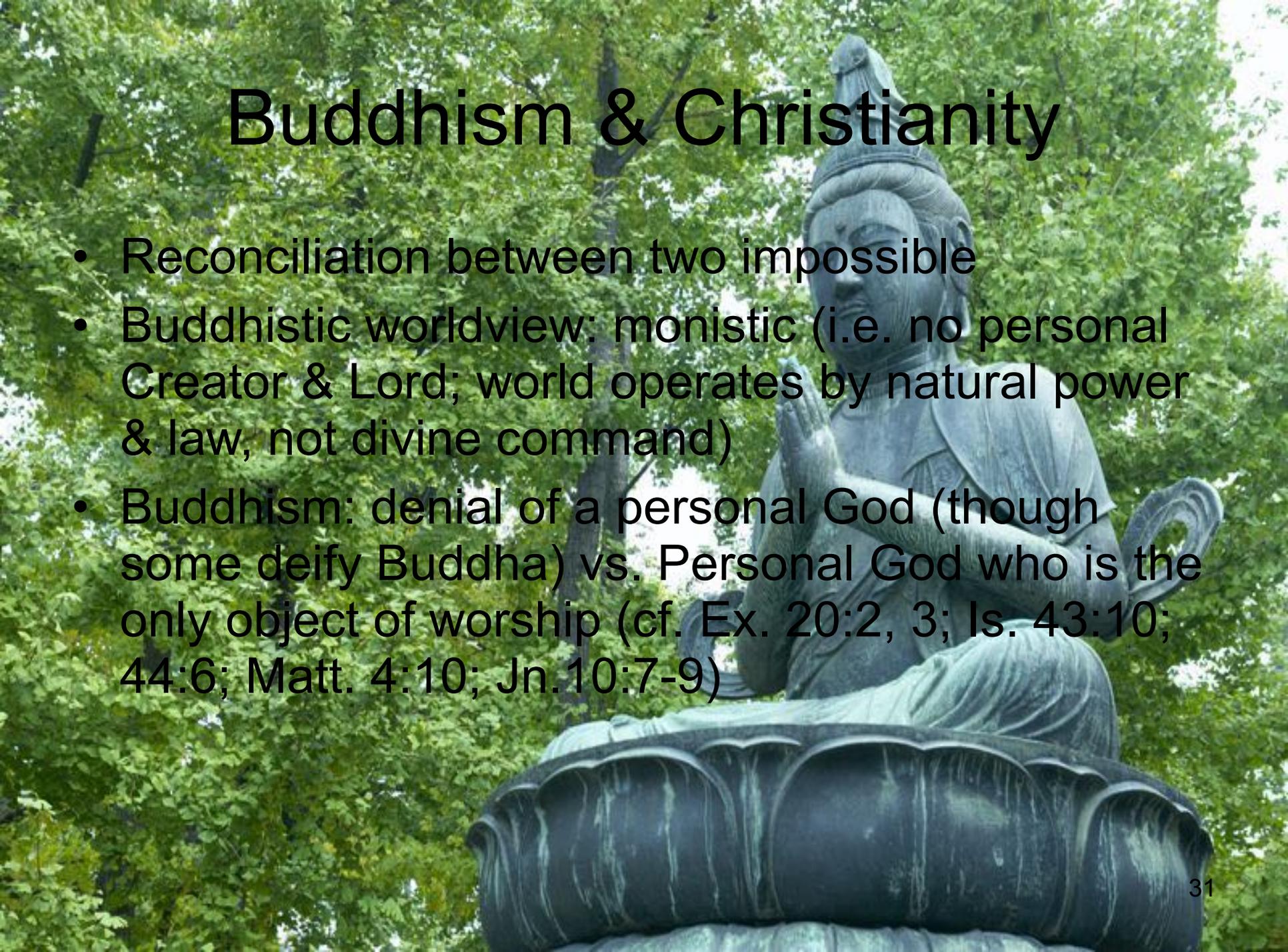


A Buddhist Creed



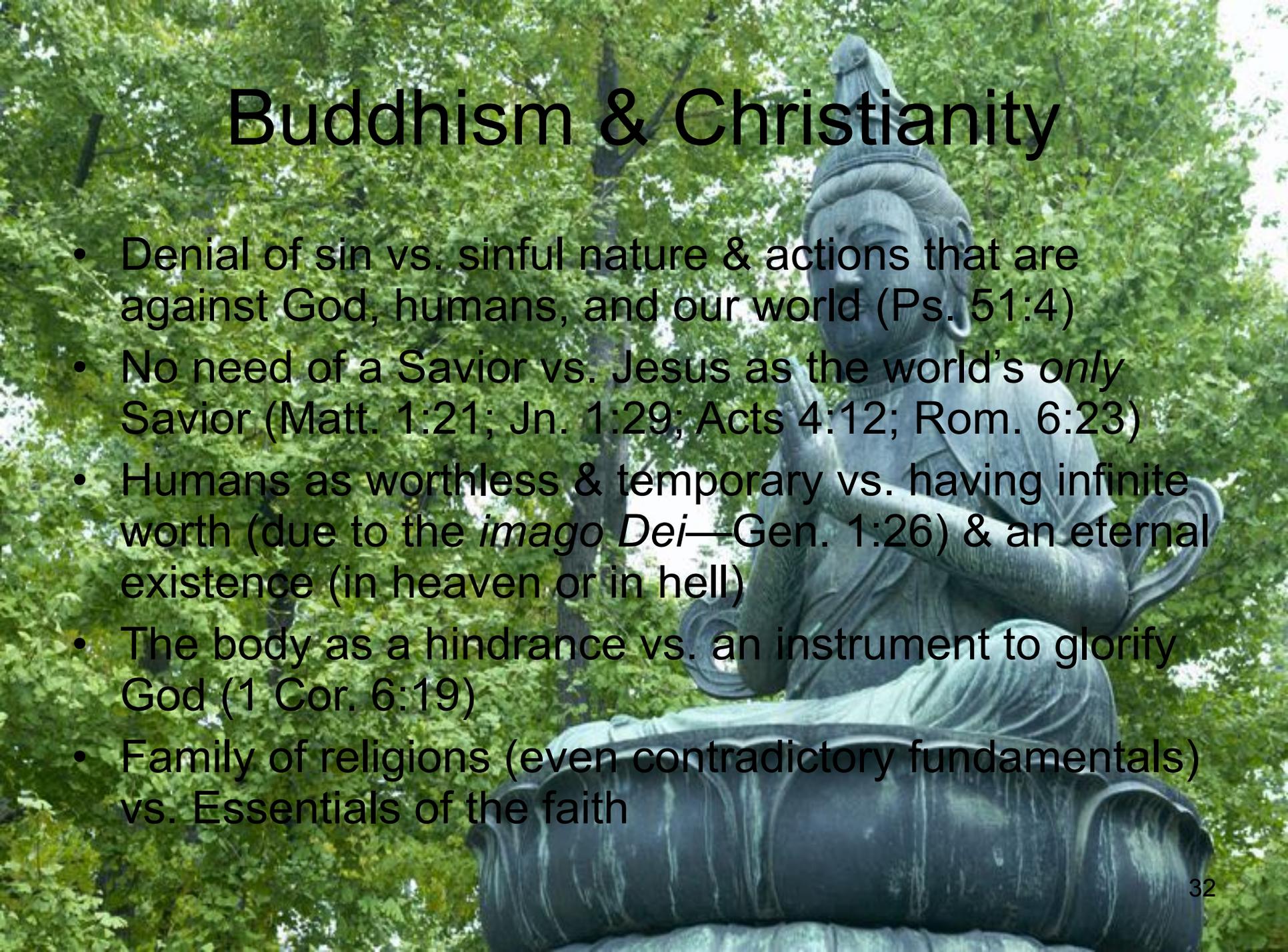
- 13. The obstacles to the attainment of good karma may be removed by the observance of the following precepts, which are embraced in the moral code of Buddhism, viz.: (1) Kill not; (2) Steal not; (3) Indulge in no forbidden sexual pleasure; (4) Lie not; (5) Take no intoxicating or stupefying drug or liquor. Five other precepts, which need not here be enumerated, should be observed by those who would attain more quickly than the average layman the release from misery and rebirth.
- 14. Buddhism discourages superstitious credulity. Gautama Buddha taught it to be the duty of a parent to have his child educated in science and literature. He also taught that no one should believe what is spoken by any sage, written in any book, or affirmed by a tradition, unless it accord with reason.

Buddhism & Christianity



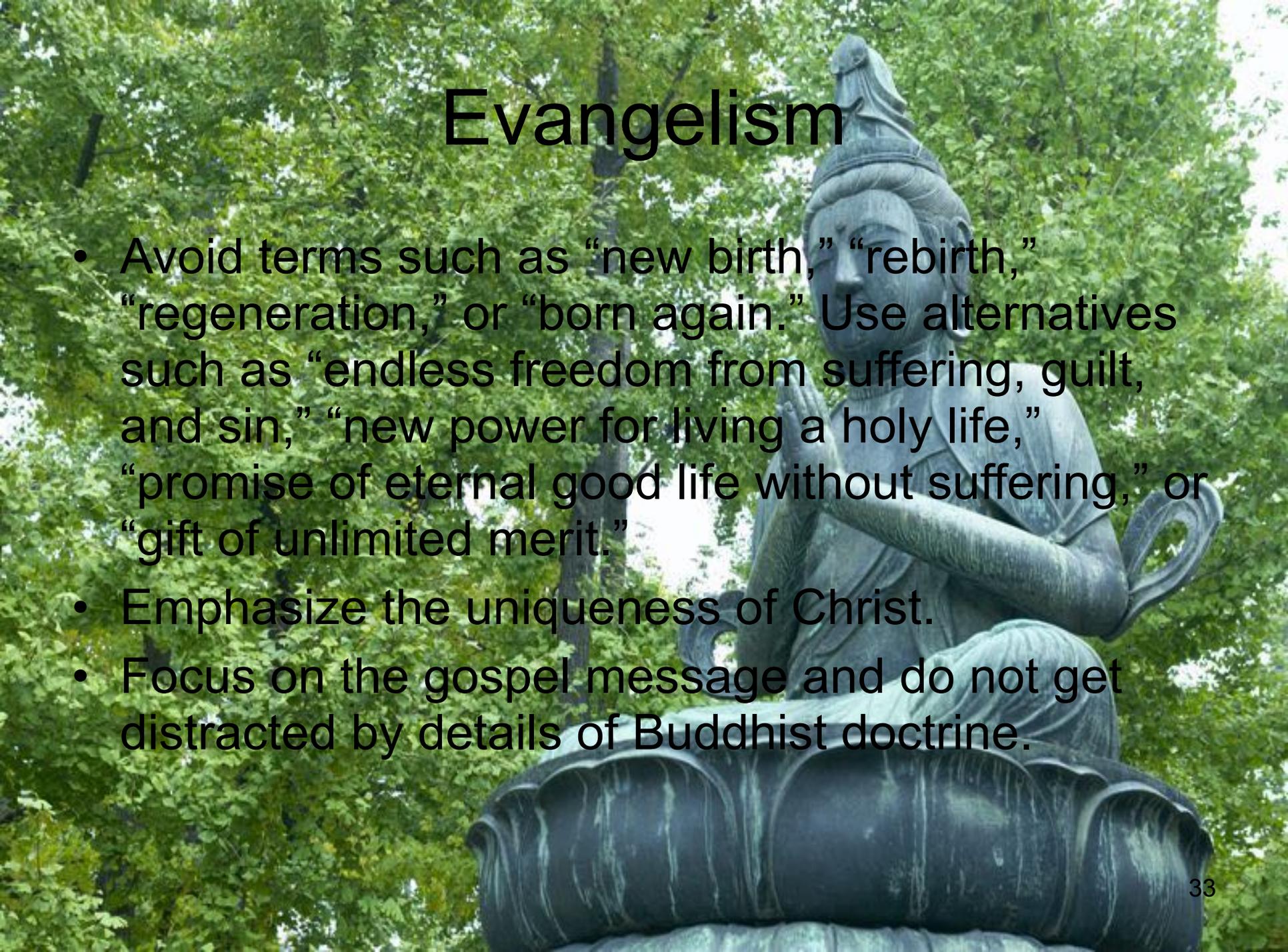
- Reconciliation between two impossible
- Buddhistic worldview: monistic (i.e. no personal Creator & Lord; world operates by natural power & law, not divine command)
- Buddhism: denial of a personal God (though some deify Buddha) vs. Personal God who is the only object of worship (cf. Ex. 20:2, 3; Is. 43:10; 44:6; Matt. 4:10; Jn. 10:7-9)

Buddhism & Christianity



- Denial of sin vs. sinful nature & actions that are against God, humans, and our world (Ps. 51:4)
- No need of a Savior vs. Jesus as the world's *only* Savior (Matt. 1:21; Jn. 1:29; Acts 4:12; Rom. 6:23)
- Humans as worthless & temporary vs. having infinite worth (due to the *imago Dei*—Gen. 1:26) & an eternal existence (in heaven or in hell)
- The body as a hindrance vs. an instrument to glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19)
- Family of religions (even contradictory fundamentals) vs. Essentials of the faith

Evangelism



- Avoid terms such as “new birth,” “rebirth,” “regeneration,” or “born again.” Use alternatives such as “endless freedom from suffering, guilt, and sin,” “new power for living a holy life,” “promise of eternal good life without suffering,” or “gift of unlimited merit.”
- Emphasize the uniqueness of Christ.
- Focus on the gospel message and do not get distracted by details of Buddhist doctrine.

Evangelism



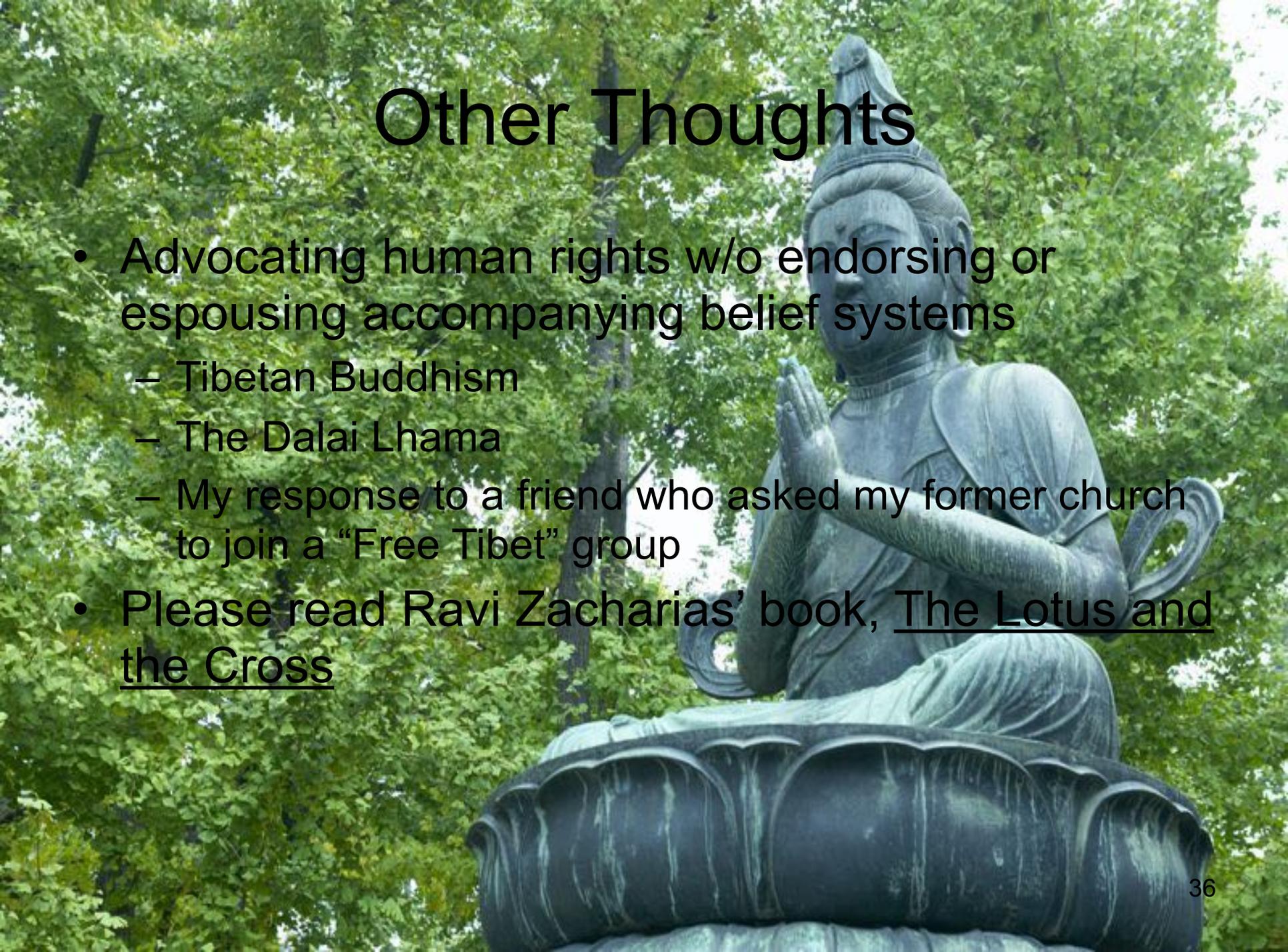
- Understand Buddhist beliefs enough to discern weaknesses that can be used to highlight the hope of the gospel.
- While using bridge concepts (e.g. Sermon on the Mount & the Eightfold Path), be careful not to reduce Christian truth to a form of Buddhism. Buddhism has been good at accommodating other religions. Do not say “Buddhism is good, but Christianity is easier.”

Evangelism



- Share your own testimony, especially your freedom from guilt, assurance of heaven (no more pain), and personal relationship with Christ.
- Prepare with prayer. Do not witness in your own strength.
- Remember, remember, remember: All other religions are “Do” religions; Christianity is a “Done” religion

Other Thoughts



- Advocating human rights w/o endorsing or espousing accompanying belief systems
 - Tibetan Buddhism
 - The Dalai Lhama
 - My response to a friend who asked my former church to join a “Free Tibet” group
- Please read Ravi Zacharias’ book, The Lotus and the Cross