

Unity & Buddhism

Strange Bedfellows or a Marriage Made in Heaven?

My Motivation

My personal history

Christian / Unity / Buddhism

My Purpose/ Intention

1. Not to make one better or more true
2. To help those interested in both to understand relationship & see how they might be complementary

The Common Ground

1. Ultimate reality/ truth is found by development of one's cons rather than creeds, rules, rituals or sacraments. Truth is within- not external
2. Meditation/ Prayer is primary (but not only) practice
3. The appearance of external reality is created by our thoughts and beliefs
 - C Fillmore: Thought is the creative power by which man builds a mentality and a body of perfection. Man understandingly uses his creative thought power by mentally perceiving the right relation of ideas Thus we see the necessity not only for thinking right thoughts, but also for having a right basis for our thinking. We must think according to universal principles.¹
 - Buddha: All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage... If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.²

The Primary Differences

#1- Not Apples & Oranges but Apples & Elephants

- Unity is a metaphysical philosophy

It is a map of ultimate reality

It is not a systematic yoga

- Buddhism is not a metaphysical map

Is a yoga- a systematic training

Not a map but a training manual

Buddha resisted all such questions

The Simile of the Poisoned Arrow³

- E.G.- Want to know about NYC

Unity response: Maps/ Pix etc of NYC

Buddhist response: None of above but- Give you directions how to get there

#2- The Eastern v Western Paradigm

Western:

- Persons/ Relationships/ Events & History are very important
- The focus is how to live in this world & to prepare for next
- Looks “up & out”

Eastern:

- Looks “down & in”
- Self= Ultimate reality

Vedanta: That in whom reside all beings and who resides in all beings, who is the giver of grace to all, the Supreme Soul of the universe, the limitless being -- I am that.⁴

I am that: Atman is Brahmin

- Liberation from suffering & bondage to the world is accomplished by seeing its illusory nature & thus discovering the reality behind it: the Self

Unity is a hybrid- Eastern premises & Western language & form:
“Practical Christianity”

Reality is product of our thoughts- but different conclusions

Unity: Given reality is product of thought we should control our thoughts to create the world we want.

Thinking is very important

Not happy-? It's because thinking erroneous thoughts

Buddhism: Given reality is product of thought then we should look for reality beyond thought

Don't make thinking too important- all thoughts are erroneous

Not happy? It's because attached to your thoughts

E.g. Views of Desire

Cady: Desire in the heart is God tapping... ⁵

Buddha: Desire is the cause of suffering ⁶

Both can be problematic

Explanation of the meaning of each

Differing Ideals

Unity: A world that works for all

Buddhism: Unconditional happiness - Liberation from the conditions of the world

How to Create a Happy Marriage

Recognize that each looks in different directions

Each is an excellent spiritual resource in its own domain. (The best of each: Being in the world but not of it)

When “happily married” they can help overcome the shadow side of each

Unity shadow- Spiritual Materialism

Can foster attachment

Buddhist shadow- Nihilism

Can be life denying

The Marriage:

Passionately in the world yet nonattached to outcome.

This is the optimal way to foster positive change- internal and external.

Robert Brumet, Apr 2011

¹ Charles Fillmore. Christian Healing. Unity. 43.

² Dhammapadda. Yammakavagga: 1-20

³ Majjhima-nikaya 63. Culamalunkya Sutta: 5. Trans by Bhikku Nanamoli and Bhikku Bodhi

⁴ Amritbindu Upanishad. As quoted in *I Am That: Talks with Nisargadatta Maharaj*, Sudhakar Dikshit editor, Maurice Frydman trans, The Acorn Press, Durham NC 1973, page v.

⁵ Emily Cady. Christian Healing, Unity. 67.

⁶ This is a common -albeit inaccurate- translation of the first Noble Truth of Buddhism.