

## 1 BUDDHISM & CHRISTIANITY IN DIALOGUE

Jay Ford

Presentation for WS Dharma Community (12-8-2020)

## 2

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BRIT HUME ON TIGER WOODS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I don’t think that faith [Buddhism] offers the kind of atonement of forgiveness and redemption offered by the Christian faith.”</li> <li>• <b>Question:</b> How are religious systems like language systems?</li> </ul> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LANGUAGE GAMES AND THE RELATIVITY OF LANGUAGE</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="933 430 1031 556"> <b>FOOTBALL</b>            Football            Touchdown            Run/Pass            Field goal            First down            Fumble            Interception         </td> <td data-bbox="1112 430 1242 661"> <b>CHRISTIANITY</b>            God            Jesus            Messiah/Christ            Sin            Soul            Holy Spirit            Alienation            Sacrifice            Forgiveness            At-one-ment            Heaven/Hell            Second Coming            Apocalypse         </td> <td data-bbox="1258 493 1388 724"> <b>BUDDHISM</b>            Depend. Orig.            Gautama            Buddha            Bodhisattva            Ignorance            Impermanence            Desire/Attachment            Dukkha            No Self            Wisdom            Buddha-nature            Nirvana/Samsara            4 Noble Truths         </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="982 577 1096 724"> <b>BASKETBALL</b>            Basketball            2 pt. basket            3 pt            Dunk            Dribble            Rebound            Walk            Steal         </td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> </table>	<b>FOOTBALL</b> Football Touchdown Run/Pass Field goal First down Fumble Interception	<b>CHRISTIANITY</b> God Jesus Messiah/Christ Sin Soul Holy Spirit Alienation Sacrifice Forgiveness At-one-ment Heaven/Hell Second Coming Apocalypse	<b>BUDDHISM</b> Depend. Orig. Gautama Buddha Bodhisattva Ignorance Impermanence Desire/Attachment Dukkha No Self Wisdom Buddha-nature Nirvana/Samsara 4 Noble Truths	<b>BASKETBALL</b> Basketball 2 pt. basket 3 pt Dunk Dribble Rebound Walk Steal		
<b>FOOTBALL</b> Football Touchdown Run/Pass Field goal First down Fumble Interception	<b>CHRISTIANITY</b> God Jesus Messiah/Christ Sin Soul Holy Spirit Alienation Sacrifice Forgiveness At-one-ment Heaven/Hell Second Coming Apocalypse	<b>BUDDHISM</b> Depend. Orig. Gautama Buddha Bodhisattva Ignorance Impermanence Desire/Attachment Dukkha No Self Wisdom Buddha-nature Nirvana/Samsara 4 Noble Truths					
<b>BASKETBALL</b> Basketball 2 pt. basket 3 pt Dunk Dribble Rebound Walk Steal							

## 3 BRIT HUME ON TIGER WOODS

- “I don’t think that faith [Buddhism] offers the kind of atonement of forgiveness and redemption offered by the Christian faith.”
- Question: How are religious systems like language systems?

## 4 LANGUAGE GAMES AND THE RELATIVITY OF LANGUAGE

## 5 BRIT HUME ON TIGER WOODS

“I don’t think that faith [Buddhism] offers the kind of atonement of forgiveness and redemption offered by the Christian faith.”

## 6 THE CHALLENGES FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES

- Why do it?
  - “The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly.”
- How do it?
- Paul Ingram’s Four Conditions
  - No ulterior motive; come with honesty and sincerity; come as equals
  - Dwelling in the religious standpoint of the other
  - Adequate understanding of one’s own religious standpoint
  - Truth must be understood as relational in structure

## 7 RELIGIONS AS “CONVENTIONS”

“Treasuring the traditions that have yielded a vision of the ultimate aspect of things, people naturally tend to confer on these traditions themselves an ultimate status. Thus ancient errors and immoralities, enshrined in supposedly inerrant sacred texts, are propagated to later ages as divine wisdom that must override the protests of reason and conscience. If religion has been, as Enlightenment crusaders claimed, a plague to the human race, it is because of this confusion of ends and means, this transfer of ultimacy to the conventional. To cure religion what is needed is a discerning critique of religious conventions, which can both appreciate their value as paths to ultimacy and see their poverty, flimsiness, and provisionality. Religious education confined to one tradition cannot attain this critical perspective. Only when young people are taught to see their own set of religious conventions in the broader context of human religious creativity can they be inoculated against the viruses of absolutism and fundamentalism” (417).

Joseph O’Leary, “Religions as Conventions”

## 8 THE CHALLENGES FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES

- Why do it?
  - “The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly.”
- How do it?
- Paul Ingram’s Four Conditions
  - No ulterior motive; come with honesty and sincerity; come as equals
  - Dwelling in the religious standpoint of the other
  - Adequate understanding of one’s own religious standpoint
  - Truth must be understood as relational in structure
- Catherine Cornille’s Necessary Virtues: Humility, Commitment, Interconnection, Empathy, Hospitality
- Paul Knitter’s Process
  - Problems w/ Christianity → Passing over to Buddhism → Passing Back to Xity
- General responses to the “Other”: Exclusive, Inclusive, Pluralist

## 9 A BRIEF HISTORY OF BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

- 1<sup>st</sup> Century and Colonial Encounters
- 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- 1980: “A Buddhist-Christian Conference on the Future of Humanity”—University of Hawaii
- 1984: “Cobb-Abe International Theological Encounter,” founded by process theologian John B. Cobb, Jr., and Kyoto-school philosopher Masao Abe
- 1984-2004: Cobb-Abe group of about 40 met every 18 months
- 1987: Founding of the “Society of Buddhist-Christian Studies” affiliate with AAR (met 2X/year)
- *Buddhist-Christian Studies Journal*—published from 1981 to present

### TOPICS COVERED IN THE *BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES JOURNAL*

- |   |  |                                       |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| ▪ Anger                                       | ▪ Economic injustice                               | ▪ Personal transformation             |
| ▪ Attitudes toward women                      | ▪ Economics  | ▪ Pilgrimage                          |
| ▪ Christ and the bodhisattva                  | ▪ Ego and transcendence                            | ▪ Political authority                 |
| ▪ Comparative ethics                          | ▪ Emptiness and kenosis                            | ▪ Racism                              |
| ▪ Conceptions of self                         | ▪ Heaven and hell                                  | ▪ Religious identity                  |
| ▪ Conceptions of Ultimacy or Ultimate Reality | ▪ Human rights and justice                         | ▪ Ritual practice                     |
| ▪ Consumerism and ecology                     | ▪ Inclusivism/exclusivism                          | ▪ Sexism                              |
| ▪ Contemplative practices                     | ▪ Liberation theology and engaged Buddhism         | ▪ Social and environmental ethics     |
| ▪ Cosmology                                   | ▪ Methods of textual interpretation (hermeneutics) | ▪ Soteriology (relating to salvation) |
| ▪ Death and dying                             | ▪ Missionary activity and evangelism               | ▪ Spiritual authority                 |
| ▪ Dual religious belonging                    | ▪ Monasticism                                      | ▪ Trinity and Trikaya                 |
| ▪ Duality, non-duality, and emptiness         | ▪ Mysticism  | ▪ Violence, nonviolence, & peace      |
| ▪ Ecology and environment                     | ▪ Overcoming greed                                 | ▪ Womanist thought and approaches     |

## 11 CATEGORIES & TOPICS OF DIALOGUE

- Categories
  - Conceptual—doctrinal, theological, & philosophical
  - Social engagement—confronting injustice and oppression in the world
  - Interior—the experiential & practice (emphasis on meditation and centering prayer traditions)

- Most Common Topics
  - Theism vs. atheism
  - Love vs. compassion
  - Detachment vs. involvement
  - Christ vs. Buddha/bodhisattva (incl. the roles of each)
  - Prayer vs. meditation
  - Faith/grace vs. wisdom/meditation
  - Sin vs. ignorance
  - Heaven vs. Nirvana
  - What has each tradition gained from this history of dialogue?
- CAUTION: Avoid false equivalencies (remember the lesson of "language games")

