

# Compare contrast buddhism teachings to catholic or other christian denomination

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## **Compare/contrast Buddhism teachings to Catholic or other christian denomination**

Compare/Contrast Buddhist teachings to Catholic or other Christian denomination teachings: Buddhism and Christianity are two dominant world religions in contemporary times. They both converge at certain points, but largely their philosophical and theological underpinnings are divergent. The rest of the essay will provide supportive arguments in favor of this thesis. Firstly, many Buddhist scholars would argue that Buddhism is not even a religion in the conventional sense in that it is more a philosophy/science of the mind. The Buddha or the Enlightened One did not claim to be the God or claim to possess supernatural powers. Instead, he told his disciples that he is simply 'awake' to the absolute reality of the cosmos. The Buddha's teachings essentially pertain themselves with alleviation of human suffering. The chief focus is on adopting certain attitudes and principles in everyday life that would reduce individual suffering while simultaneously nurturing feelings of compassion toward other living things. This is the message transmitted by Buddhist monk Kyentse Norbu, whom the documentary film *The Words Of My Perfect Teacher* covers extensively. In the documentary Kyentse Norbu explains how 'impermanence', 'non-satisfactoriness' and 'non-self' are universal phenomena accessible to the human senses. Cultivating an awareness of these perennial phenomena of reality is said to lead to 'Nibbana' (liberation).

Christianity, on the other hand, is a faith inspired by the life and revelations of Jesus Christ, whom the followers believe to be the Son of God. According to the Roman Catholic tradition, the New Testament serves as the definitive

compilation of the teachings of Jesus Christ, a faithful adherence of which is said to lead to salvation. Salvation is a concept that is comparable with that of Enlightenment talked about by the Buddha, but there is a key difference though. While as per Christian doctrine 'salvation' is attained during the after-life, 'enlightenment' in comparison is to be experienced during an individual's lifetime.

The founding Buddhist scriptures or 'suttas' (which were written in the ancient Indian language of Pali) are not very doctrinaire or dogmatic. This is so because the Buddha believed that no one can be 'taught' the methods of achieving enlightenment. Instead, each aspirant has to tread the path with his/her own knowledge, experience and other resources. In this light, the Eight Fold Path, Four Noble Truths and other codes of living laid out by the Buddha (and also expounded by Kyentse Norbu) can be seen as broad guidelines and not strict, non-negotiable rules to live by. Catholic teachings, on the other hand, come across as immutable. The best example of which is the Ten Commandments - a list of rules that all the faithful will have to follow. The emphasis is more on the individual's relationship with God as opposed to his relationship with fellow human beings.

Moreover, Christian faith (including Catholicism) is steeped in events and miracles surrounding the life of Jesus Christ that his teachings are intertwined with his persona. In contrast Buddhist philosophy and teaching, by virtue of being non-deistic, can be studied for its content alone. In other words, there is separation between the message and the messenger in Buddhism, which is less evident in Christianity.

Hence, in conclusion, we find that there are quite a few differences between

the Oriental Buddhist teachings and Occidental Christian teachings. They do converge in a broad sense, namely, their common concern for the spiritual emancipation of human beings. This metaphor of universality is conveyed by the documentary film as well.

Works Cited:

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