



UU Sangha

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The Unitarian Universalist and Buddhist Nexus: Some Responses

Our last issue explored the connections between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism in the minds of the UUBF Board. We solicited reader comments. The comments here suggest the variety of views held by our membership as we bridge these two great ways of approaching religious belief, practice, and community. In particular we asked four questions. The first two respondents spoke to those questions which are reproduced below.

Gene Reeves

"What is the purpose and mission of this organization? What is our role in the UU Buddhist nexus?"

I think the role of the UUBF should be to provide both encouragement and resources for practicing Buddhism and identifying with the Dharma within the UUA. The idea that one's religious identity must be attached exclusively to one sect is false in fact, and for many people religiously inappropriate as well. By having a UUBF, we testify to the viability of being both UU and Buddhist, making it more possible for others to be so. In this way, the UUBF could be doing the work of the Buddha, witnessing to the Dharma.

"Is one particular Buddhist lineage most compatible with us? Are their ones that are not?"

I think that, in fact, most of us will think that the Buddhist tradition(s) we are most familiar with are most compatible with UUs. One might

think that its origins in bushido, militaristic tendencies, etc. would make Zen very incompatible with UU traditions, but this would be to ignore the fact that a great many UUs have found Zen, or at least Zen meditation, very attractive and useful in their own lives. Also, the existence of a Unitarian-Zen (or maybe Zen-Unitarian) temple near Kyoto testifies to some important affinity. With our UU tendencies toward social activism, others of us are more likely to be attracted to one or another form of "engaged" Buddhism. Mel suggests [in the next article] that because of its focus on getting into the pure land, Pure Land Buddhism is incompatible with UUs. (Or something like that; I didn't save it.) But one of the most this-worldly, socially engaged Buddhist institutions in the world, Taiwan's Fo Kuang Shan, is a Pure Land form of Buddhism—about the business of making this world into the pure land. I suspect that many of us might reject pure land Buddhism because we really don't know much about it. I don't know whether it 'should' be the case, but in fact the Buddhist tradition which has been most closely related to the UUA organizationally is Rissho Kosei Kai, a modern version of Nichiren or Lotus Sutra Buddhism much influenced by Tendai. Though I think very few, if any, UUs have joined RKK, a great many have been positively influenced by it.

While any one of us has a right to his or her own opinions, I think it would be a big mistake for the Fellowship as such to attempt to define what is "compatible," (implicitly good) and "incompatible," (bad) Buddhism. Stay loose and open. The Dharma arises in surprising places.

"Should there be - are there now - UU Buddhist congregations?"

I think it would be nice if there were. Maybe I should start one. Though it does not always follow it, the UUA is rooted in a tradition of

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Editorial Insights

Sandy Boucher
Our General Assembly Presenter!

The UUBF, in conjunction with Beacon Press, has invited Sandy Boucher, author of *Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism*, *Opening the Lotus: A Woman's Guide to Buddhism*, and the recently published *Discovering Kwan Yin* to speak to us Friday, June 25th (tentatively). Her title will be "Feminism and Buddhism: The Not-So-Odd Couple" The blurb in the GA program will read: "A 2,500-year-old male-supremacist religion meets a Western female-powered movement. Offenses are committed; both partners must deepen to accommodate. Beacon author Sandy Boucher has documented this relationship in her books and will speak about the marriage of feminism and Buddhism with humor and insight.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Right this very moment, look at the mailing label on the back of this issue at your mailing label. There at the top of the label is a time stamp. The first number is the year and the second number is the month. If today is more recent than that date, you need to renew your subscription. The mailing list is toping 275 names and I don't know if some of you who I inherited in the mailing list are really still interested in receiving this fine journal. So I'm considering thinning the mailing list since we only need 200 to do bulk mail. Let me know either way.

UU Sangha Always Encourages Submissions!

My thanks to all the people who responded to the invitation to write for this issue in response to last month's nexus issue. While I'm now starting to have a few pieces ready to publish, I'm always in need of more material so send your sermons, writings, poems, cartoons, drawings (I have a scanner but best is in electronic form via email) and anything else you think might help us explore the connections between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism. If it doesn't fit here, it may fit on our web page.

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accepted!

Hope everyone enjoys this issue!

Faithfully yours, Sam

congregational polity. Congregations should be free to define themselves appropriately, or even inappropriately.

"Could someone become a UU Buddhist teacher and take on students?"

While I've never thought of myself as "a UU Buddhist teacher" (more as a Buddhist and a UU I guess), I am a UU, a Buddhist, and I do have students. I can't, at the moment, imagine what could be wrong or inappropriate about this. On the other hand, I also agree with Mel that there is no need for still another form of Buddhism, namely UU Buddhism.

"What about UU Buddhist retreats?"

I'm not crazy about the term "retreat," but I do think there needs to be opportunities for people in a society as small as this one for people who live at some distance from one another to come together for study, practice, and mutual enrichment. I don't think you can create a viable movement without something of the kind.

Dr. Gene Reeves Gene Reeves, process philosopher and former Dean of Meadville Lombard Theological School, recently retired from the University of Tsukuba in Japan and continues to live in Tokyo to teach and write about the Lotus Sutra at Rissho Kosei Kai and in a variety of Asian Chinese Buddhist communities. His mailing address is: Taiyoso, 1-17-4 Wada Suginamiku, Tokyo 166-0012 Japan email : reeves@gol.com

Mel Harkrader-Pine

I think we are here to make life easier for UUs who are interested in or practicing Buddhism, and for Buddhists who are interested in UUism or members of UU churches.

I think that Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing and many Zen orders are particularly compatible with UUism. The 14 precepts/mindfulness trainings of the Order of Interbeing have a great deal in common with the UU Principles. On the other side of the question, I don't think Pure Land, if I understand it, has much in common with UUism. My understanding of it is to stress rote repetition of the Amita Buddha's name in order to reach a sort of heaven.

I don't know of any, but they could develop. I wouldn't try to encourage them. But in areas where people have a choice between UU churches to attend. if one of those church's ministers practices Buddhism and the

membership is predominantly Buddhist, I see no harm in that. At least for now, though, I'd leave it at that. I see no need to encourage it or to act to avoid it.

It's possible that a UU school of Buddhism may develop some day, but we're not there and I see no need to make any conscious effort to get there. If that does happen, then there would be UU Buddhist teachers. For now, we have some Buddhist teachers who are also UUs, and that's cool, but they are teachers in a particular lineage of Buddhism.

If there are no UU Buddhist teachers, I don't see any UU Buddhist retreats. There can be – as there was last summer, I believe – a retreat in a particular tradition of Buddhism that was purposefully UU-friendly, but I don't see UU Buddhist retreats. What I do see is get-togethers, for perhaps a week at a time, at a UU conference center, if possible, where we could have workshops in various traditions of Buddhism in which we are active. Perhaps we could explore some UU Buddhist common ground there, but I would see these

weeks as part recreational and not "political," not a "convention" called together to achieve an organizational purpose – just a way for UUs to explore Buddhism and each other.

Mel Harkrader-Pine is president of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, Virginia, where he has founded a Buddhist Sangha that meets weekly. He considers Thich Nhat Hanh his primary teacher and has been ordained by the Lam Te Dhyana School with the dharma name Nectar of Compassion of the Source. Mel is a writer/editor and corporate communications consultant who lives in Reston with his wife and two sons.

Ken O'Neill

Dear Fellow Dharma Bums:

I've observed recent discussions regarding the nature and function of Buddhism [on UUBF-L] for a week or more now. Uncharacteristically, I've bided my time and bit my tongue, restraining from intruding into the discussion. Now I'll add some thoughts...for fear the conversation has wound down, run out of steam, or everything's been said. For I feel there's much more to say. The best I can do is to offer some thoughts from the other side of the table. How so?

Consistent with Buddhist etiquette, the qualifications of a teacher should be spoke to

qualify his or her words. My MA is from the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley...a member campus, along with Starr King, of the Graduate Theological Union; for me, even more significantly, the IBS's program is now accredited through Ryukoku Daigaku (Ryukoku University), Kyoto. In 1972 I took ordination at the Jodoshinshu Hompahonganji-ha in Kyoto, and received transmission of teaching authority (certification and licensing) from Otani Kosshin, monshu of the Hompa Honganji. At that time I became one of the first non-Japanese to become a kyoshi (the Shin term incorrectly rendered as 'Reverend'; Shin is post-monastic, has teachers equivalent to Zen roshis who are called 'kyoshi'). I was with the Buddhist Churches of America through the turbulent 1970s, leaving behind the acculturation woes of Japanese-American social churches, going independent in 1980. In recent years I founded the White Lotus Society in Tucson, Arizona. I don't regard myself as a Shin Buddhist; instead, Shin forms the root tradition of my work. My chief teacher also trained mythologist Joseph Campbell back in the 1950's; my outlook seems a lot like Joe's since his understanding of Buddhism is a good representation of the Chinese Bliss Birth or Jodomon (you know, what the Anglo-American Academic Patriarchy calls 'Pure Land') as understood in classic Indic and Chinese traditions. That's enough.

Of the questions dealt with, the issue of 'computability' came up. I find that a most interesting question. I've always felt out of place at 'Buddhist Christian' dialogues, convinced they're largely a waste of time dealing with pseudo issues for Buddhism. Compatibility with Christian groups has always been a difficulty since the legacy of the Western Church has been ideological, doctrinal (prescribed, that is) while ruthlessly persecuting any form of Gnostic spirituality upholding a direct pipeline between oneself and spiritual knowing. Hence, the Gnostic heresy that caused Bruno to be burned at the stake. Interestingly enough, the roots of UU are in secularized gnosis; Pico, author of the Ode to the Dignity of Humanity was a leading Gnostic scholar in the Florence of his day, part of the circle imbued and enflamed with gnosis catalyzed the Latin Renaissance. Empiricism and spiritual reformation began to grow at that time...mostly in underground movements to ensure against Inquisitorial persecution, loss of life, etc. It's with that later movement that Buddhism has kinship, not with the ideological, doctrinal approach that puts dogmas before experience.

It's also been questioned about developing UU Buddhist teachers. I have very strong opinions about this one. Who qualifies such a teacher as capable of teaching. How would such a person be certified? I've seen one Zen group recently decide on what their roshi's title should be; utterly ridiculous. The primary reason the Buddhist Churches of America is in rapid decline is that it was taken over by lay people during World War II. When I formed White Lotus, I authored bylaws which separated the jurisdictions between administrative and ecclesiastic functional roles for that reason. Yet I'd caution, after witnessing a succession of various enchiki hakusei (pseudo teachers) locally, that kowtowing (the Mandarin word for what is fashionably called 'prostration' today) is dangerous for your spiritual health. This rambling has had a point: a lot's at stake.

With more than thirty years in the shin tradition under my expanding belt, I'll tell you a secret: it took a lot of that time for a growing realization of how shin represents the evolutionary tip of Buddhism to grow on me. Shin is post-monastic. Some Tibetan Buddhism has lay teachers, which means that monastic patriarchy is the alternative. Shin also has had women teachers AND couple teachers for centuries. So in considering the teacher's role, we have to consider who the student is. Are many of you young monks? If not, you might consider that the antidote to samsara of monasticism is what monks teach...it's their one and only reality. Zen's never resolved that problem. So, the teaching and student model might look to shin not to join, but to take that idea from.

While we're stealing the post-monastic idea, here's some more: the primary shin temple...better still, dojo, place for cultivating the Way...is your home. The microSangha is your primary relationship (and as post-monastic tantra, your bliss relationship has a lot to do with your training and realization), your family. Primary bliss in the home entrains states of consciousness that spill over into the world as love and compassion, as encouraging Being values. So, steal these ideas too. My dream remains one of establishing a grassroots NETWORK of Dharma-Homes, of home based microsanghas...not the big expensive temple compounds.

Practice? Like faking it? No. Training? Bodhibuilding? Yep. Practice is getting out of samsaric habits until you find natural to come from bodhi. Practices is informed by mythology,

specifically the bodhisattva mythos. Practice includes ritual. Everything you do. Mindfully, that is. Reducing 'practice' to seated meditation is not Buddhism...it's a western construction of Buddhism. In fact, did you know that the Buddha didn't even have his followers meditate for the first several years of his teaching career, and only added it due to public complaints? So, the teacher is dealing with View, Outlook, attitude...not a mere meditation teacher.

Much of Asia has synthesized Zen and Jodomon...about 10 centuries ago to be exact. In Japan, the Obaku Zen school does this (yes, a third Zen...information available in French and Japanese). What's good about purelandzen is that the seated practice integrates with the moving practice. The dissociative states between sitting and normal samsaric states are undercut.

How train teachers? As a Gnostic spirituality, the Far Eastern movements...chiefly core Zen and core nembutsudo, pass acknowledgement of acceptable standards of awakening together with capacity for teaching from teacher to apprentice. In Zen, certain secrets are passed on at the time of roshi certification. In shin, those secrets are out in the open. Both systems work through examinations...of your soul, that is. both have koan type systems of study (called anjin rondai in shin). but the ball is passed and has been received. the teacher must understand...from personal waking up. accept no substitutes, as Orson Wells would have it...or was that 'no wine before its time'.

I've contemplated the teacher training a lot. For one reason, I don't have a successor. We have to ask what it is that's passed on...the View, as Sogyal translates drsti and darshana (shou ken for the zennists). If we think it's just meditation, Cleary's translations of 9/10th century Chinese Zen works clearly warn against reducing Buddhism to a 'cult of meditation'. So too for philosophizing it; Hurvitz's work Chih-I shows that Buddhism of the late Han was not much more than 'parlor talk'..idle loquacious dribble. something far more important happens as transformation of outlook and Being values naturally emerge.

Jinen is used by Zen and shin. It means naturalness or spontaneity. It also means 'natural science' in Japanese. Awakening is pure grace. Nothing forced. Buddhism may offer the key to fulfilling the quest of Renaissance Humanism by giving birth to a new image of the possible human...and the possible society.

The possible society? Well, at least micro versions. In my opinion, American Buddhism teeters on the brink of becoming Buddhism if

and only if Sangha emerges. Hongaku (innate awakening or implicate, enfolded awakening) is a key to this. Gnostic spiritualities depend on a cross hair between a horizontal line upholding the potentiality of every person and their Oneness in frustration (dukkha) delicately balanced with an equally humanistic 'empowering hierarchy' of teachers. Not better. Teachers. Awakeners. Sangha is where it all happens as teachers empower apprentices and as students teach teachers.

I'd also call your attention to the warning label on every pack of Dharma addicting 'teachings'. Beware of RTDs (Religiously Transmitted Diseases). Some have talked about Zen and Rissho Kosei Kai. From personal experience, I'd say it's important to take only what's worth taking. Not the fanaticism. For Nichiren stuff, go to Burton Watson's translation of N's writings. The fanaticism comes across in doing Buddhism 'the Japanese way' or the 'Tibetan way' or whatever nationalistic, ethnocentric way. Nichiren believed Japan was the place for Buddhism...the only place. Some Nichiren groups still only ordain Japanese males. So much for universalism, so much for women teachers...god forbid, non-Japanese women teachers. Gaijin! I personally like Rissho Kosei Kai's materials...I was shocked to find they teach like I do, except I don't make the Lotus the end all...just one important myth, the one dealing with how to manage your awakening in an unawake world (which is the substance of my Lotus Workshop).

Rather than look for 'compatibility' I'd recommend steeping oneself in the mythologies. Any living sect is just a reduction of something grander. But I took to calling myself a 'Mahayana generalist of bodhisattva Buddhism' a long time ago. I'd also add that all the sects and teachings are 'Dharma fragments'. Get lots of exposure, going for the 'Buddhism beyond the Buddhism's' as Kasugai Shin'ya used to put it as our koan for today. Compatibility is a pseudo-issue in another way. Our knowledge of Buddhism is like a 17th century map of Africa. We know less than more. Perhaps less that 10 per cent of the sutras have been translated, most by scholarly academics bereft of practice and attainment, hence unreliable with respect to the inner meanings of words and the states they refer to: in law, that's detrimental reliance. Most practice teachers don't know Asian languages, so here we go again. Most American Zen, passing through DT Suzuki, Robert Aitken and Philip Kapleau is extremely watered down. I mean, it's basically good but very, very limited:

read Cleary's translation of Master Nan's books (Tuttle) for a more essential Buddhism shared by Zen, jodomon/pureland, kegon, tendai, etc.

Someone remarked that nichiren came out of Tendai. All kamakura teachings did: soto Zen, rinzai Zen, shin, jodo and nichiren. Tendai was collapsing. The crisis Buddhism of that age demanded new answers to the collapse of the world. I believe Buddhism is passing through another phase: one which will determine if it can become a universal teaching with useful outcomes. That's the real challenge.

(Thanks for reading this far. This is far from exhaustive. Hopefully it will stimulate some real issues. Excuse the writing, *onigaishimasu*. I'm shooting from the hip or having thoughts from the top of my head.)

I suspect that a potential strength within UU congregations is that they aren't likely to run to 'Buddhist Masters'. Thank goodness. The more exposure I've had to American Buddhist centers, the more I stay away from them. In some sense Al Rappaport's Buddhism In American conferences stand as a sort of living characterization of the dominant stereotypes we can call 'American Anglo Buddhism'. The pettiness and sectarianism, often with added ethnocentricity, really make teaching much of anything worthwhile a major chore. To that end, McKnight's book *Sacralizing the Secular* is a good read for UU's in quest of how to fit Buddhism in. It's a book about gnosis in the Western spiritual and political heritage (LSU Press, 1989 or 90).

gassho
Ken O'Neill, Kyoshi
White Lotus Society
Tucson, Arizona

Mary J. Scott

Dear Friends;

As someone fairly new to Unitarian Universalism, I also consider myself a novice Buddhist practitioner. I enjoy the U.U. Sangha Journal and wished to share my thoughts on the topic of the U.U.- Buddhist Nexus.

I came to U.U., or perhaps I should say U.U. came to me, through a chance meeting with a wise woman in the person of Rev. Linda Hoddy. She had a wonderful presence and within a few months I began attending the newly formed U.U. Congregation of Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

As a practitioner in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh I noticed the similarities between the first three, of the fourteen precepts of the Order of Interbeing, and the first four elements listed in "What do Unitarian Universalists Believe?"

The First Precept: Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.

The Second Precept: Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

The Third Precept: Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.

"What do U.U.'s Believe" by David O. Rankin

1. We believe in the freedom of religious expression. All individuals should be encouraged to develop their own personal theology, and to present openly their religious opinions without fear of censure or reprisal.

2. We believe in toleration of religious ideas. All religions in every age and culture possess not only an intrinsic merit, but also a potential value for those who have learned the art of listening.

3. We believe in the authority of reason and conscience. The ultimate arbiter in religion is not a church, or a document, or an official, but the personal choice and decision of the individual.

4. We believe in the never ending search for truth. If the mind and heart are truly free and open, the revelations which appear to the human spirit are infinitely numerous, eternally fruitful, and wonderfully exciting.

Just as Unitarians learn from and respect all traditions as guiding means in life, Thich Nhat Hanh, (Thay) has advised his students to honor and keep their first faith, as two roots are always stronger than one. Apparently this view is becoming accepted by orthodox religions as well. There have been Roman Catholic Priests

present for the transmission of the Five Precepts (Mindfulness Trainings) from Thay.

Unitarian social action and engaged Buddhism also arise from the place of compassion in our human nature, although stemming from different practices. Weekly at worship voices join together and pronounce that "love is our doctrine and service is our prayer." While chanting the "Refuge Chant", "I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning and relieve the sorrow of one person in the afternoon. "

Though quite compatible, my U.U. and Buddhist practices are separate by nature, but in ways that support each other. The bowl as the container of space and emptiness arises as an image for me, although it is that space which also allows for that which nourishes us. That space is the practice of mindfulness, the precepts, daily sitting practice, and the awareness of the interrelationship of everything. The bowl supporting my practice is the Sangha, as well as the U.U. congregation. I am fortunate to have an extended spiritual family.

I am reminded not to become too attached to views, as I hear Reverend Linda counsel us to look inside ourselves for Christ light, or for our Buddha nature, or for Krishna consciousness, as the essence of these may be found in each of us. In this way U.U. has become like a mirror in reflecting the reality of my practice. The enclosed poem by Thay also reflects this quite well.

In gratitude, I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and Unitarian Universalism.

Metta,
Mary J. Scott
Sacred Space of the Heart"

INTERRELATIONSHIP by Thich Nhat Hanh

You are me, and I am you.
Isn't it obvious that we "inter-are"?
You cultivate the flower in yourself,
so that I will be beautiful.
I transform the garbage in myself,
so that you will not have to suffer.

I support you;
you support me.
I am in this world to offer you peace;
you are in this world to bring me joy.

Mary Scott is an administrator for SUNY. She has designed and led workshops in emerging alternative healing modalities and mindfulness based stress and pain reduction. You may reach her by email at: scottm@accsunyacc.edu.

BUDDHISM: ONE OF MANY STREAMS by Frank E. Robertson

The Fall 1998 issue of the *UU Sangha* asks for responses to its several authors who have written about the Buddhist influence in their lives. Although I do not choose to connect my identity to a particular world religion, perhaps a few words about the Buddhist part of my life process would be welcomed by readers of the "UU Sangha."

Streams from Buddhist sources have been flowing into my life since the 1950s when I first began to read Eastern religious literature and make friends in college from Thailand and Japan. My home Universalist church in Lowell, Massachusetts, helped me welcome such streams and expand my circle of growing beyond the naturalist Christian context of my childhood years. My experiences in teaching the world-centered curricula of the church school in Lowell was a major encouragement.

During one of those college years, I volunteered to organize a United Nations Sunday service sponsored by the International Students Circle of Lowell Technological Institute and held at the Universalist Church. Buddhist students were among those who participated and the service helped us all celebrate the vision of all the world's religions as sources of wisdom in our lives as well as our dream of the world's peoples living in peace together.

I experimented with various methods of meditation; but, rather than adopt one of the ancient systems, I decided to create my own. That choice seemed very natural to me because of the free creative spirit of my Universalist faith and the presence of prescientific belief systems in those ancient methods. An interpretation of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths and Eight-Fold Path were a part of my daily meditations during those years of my young adulthood. I made myself a string with a series of knots, twelve of which were the above. Additional knots included such things as Schweizer's concept of "reverence for life." I recall that I rejected the idea of having beads on a string because beads would be separate from the string which

represented the unseen behind all things, and the idea of knots in a string affirmed a kind of oneness of it all.

Traditional Buddhist and Hindu meditations seemed to assume a belief in reincarnation and a need to escape life. In my meditations, the scientists' story of evolution and an ethical concern inspired by the Western humanist tradition replaced those beliefs. It seems to me probable that many people who call themselves "Buddhist" or "Hindu" today do the same.

As UUs, the challenge seems for some to be: What do we call ourselves? There does not seem to be an easy answer to that question. I suppose that if one finds oneself largely influenced by a particular traditional religion, one ought to call oneself by the name of that religion. For me, the sources are so varied that it would be misleading to call myself by one of them. I suppose that to the degree that I am "nothing" I am closest to the Buddhist way of life.

Actually, I would prefer to be called something like a "world religionist" or simply a "religious liberal" in the Unitarian Universalist movement. Titles have their usefulness and help people decide whether or not they will attend something or subscribe to a certain journal.

I rejoice that there is a journal called the "UU Sangha" and hope that folks like me who have multiple allegiances will always be welcomed into full membership in the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship.

The Rev. Frank Robertson is a recently retired minister living in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He is Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, Il. In retirement he continues to be active in areas of religious education, most recently Dean of the UUA/Meadville/Lombard Winter Institute.

Jesus Saves; Buddha Enlightens

by Ken Mochel

Have you ever seen a bumper sticker or maybe a billboard advertisement that says Jesus saves, or Jesus is the answer? When I see "Jesus is the answer," I think: "The answer to what? When I see a bumper sticker with Jesus saves on it, I have this desire to get one printed up that would say " Jesus saves and Buddha enlightens." The question is: Does this represent a true contrast between Buddha and Jesus? I will look first at what we mean by enlightenment.

Awakening The Buddha Within: is the title of a book published recently. The author's name is Lama Surya Das.

"Awakening the Buddha within." That is the ultimate goal of Buddhism. That is what happened to the Buddha, sitting under a tree, exhausted from years of trying all the spiritual disciplines that he could find in his environment. He had such a rush of insight: such an experience of pure consciousness: that he felt the Buddha awakened within himself. Thus he became enlighten/ awake.

Some schools of Buddhism say that Buddha had a difficult choice to make as a result of this experience under the Bo tree. He could choose to leave this world of tears, pain, suffering, impermanence, birth and death and rebirth. He could escape this world of travail by entering into the world of pure consciousness, by resting in Nirvana.

Instead he choose to remain in this world and to devote his life to helping others experience liberation: to help others awaken the Buddha within.

The author begins with a story about a spiritual seeker and traveler. Margie Smith is a pleasant looking women who gave birth to her children in the 1950's (that was the time of Harriet Nelson and June Cleaver). She approaches a travel agent.

"I must get to the Himalayas for my vacation. I've got to speak to a guru." "The Himalayas, Mrs. Smith! Are you sure?" "It's a long trip, different language, funny food, smelly oxcarts. How about London, or Florida? Florida is lovely this time of year."

Mrs. Smith is adamant. She must go to the Himalayas to talk to a guru. So, wearing her best blue suit and her black pumps with the sensible heels, she heads East, taking a plane, a train, a bus, and, yes, an oxcart, until she finally arrives at a far-off Buddhist monastery in Nepal. There an old lama in maroon and saffron robes tells her that the guru she seeks is meditating in a cave at the top of the mountain and cannot be disturbed. But Mrs. Smith came a long way and she is a determined woman who won't be put off.

Finally the lama relents. "All right, if you must, you must. But there are some ground rules. You can't stay long, and when you speak to the guru, you can say not more than ten words. He lives there alone, in silence and meditation."

Mrs. Smith agrees. With the help of a few lamas, monks, and Sherpa porters, she trudges

up the mountain. It's a long hard climb, but she doesn't give up. With an enormous effort of will and energy, she reaches the top—and the cave in which the guru is meditating. Her mission accomplished, Mrs. Smith stands at the entrance, and in a loud, clear voice, she says what she came to say:

"Sheldon...Enough is enough! It's your mother. Come home already."

There were many Sheldons in the 60's who went to the East. They returned with a message for us. One such person was the author of this book – Lama Das. In the 1960's his name was Jeffery Miller. A friend of his – whom he visited often while he was in college – was killed at Kent State by the national guard. In a twist of fate, another of the students killed that day at Kent State had the same name – Jeffery Miller. And they were both from Long Island. Many of his friends thought that it was he who had been killed. He writes:

In this period following Kent State, I could not help thinking about the Jeffrey Miller who had been gunned down on his own college campus. The tragic photograph of his body lying in a pool of blood with an anguished young woman crying over him was everywhere. It could have been me. If I were to believe my ringing phone, it was me.

This lesson turned him to the East. He went East. He sought answers to his questions. Who Am I? Why Am I? Most of us do not go so far from home in search of answers. But we do share a similar quest.

Enlightenment is variously described: nirvana, samsara, peace, liberation, freedom, rebirth. Beginning with the example of Buddha, the teachings of Buddhism contain 2500 years of wisdom about how ordinary folk can become enlightened. As enlightened as Buddha herself. The Buddhist path is a well-laid-out road map to enlightenment and spiritual rebirth.

The path includes a combination of practices: sitting and walking meditation; breathing, fasting, chanting, right speech, right living, non-violence, and community support on the path of seeking.

The path includes one of the most commanding and comprehensive systems of psychology ever developed: It includes a deep Awareness of and practice with our perceptions, our feelings, our mental states, our concepts.

It includes a series of insights about the nature of life and the human experience. The

understanding that life is one, despite surface disparities and illusions. Realization that beneath our surface desires and individuality there is a bedrock of non conceptual reality or consciousness. Of Selflessness. That there is no true home or true self – other than the Buddha within you. That below our diversity and individuality there is only one reality.

Enlightenment is not about becoming divine. Instead, it's about becoming more fully human. Enlightenment is the end of ignorance. "To be enlightened is to be one with all things." said a Zen master.

In some ways, this is similar to Unitarian Universalist beliefs: the interdependent web of life. That we are connected in yet mysterious ways to all of life and to the globe and to the universe. Buddhism spells it out in more detail and with more rationale than we do as Unitarian Universalists. In this sense I think that Buddhism is a missing piece for Unitarian Universalism in America. In other ways, I feel that Unitarian Universalism is a missing piece for Buddhism in America. What is Salvation?

I have a much more difficult time answering this question than I do answering the question "What is enlightenment?"

Are we looking for salvation from sins? If you believe in Original Sin, that humankind exists in a sinful state, then salvation by Christ is a hopeful possibility.

Does Jesus save in the sense that he is the only mediator between human kind and God? A prominent Christian spokesperson (present Pope) states that "Christ is absolutely original and absolutely unique. If He were only a wise man like Socrates, if He were a "prophet" like Mohammed, if He were "enlightened" like Buddha, without any doubt He would not be what He is. He is the one mediator between God and humanity."

Thich Nhat Hanh, a well know Vietnamese Buddhist, comments on this passage. "The idea behind the statement is the notion that Christianity provides the only way of salvation and all other religious traditions are of no use. This attitude excludes dialogue and fosters religious intolerance and discrimination. It does not help." In the Buddhist tradition, we learn not to become so attached to religious ideas and concepts. Non-attachment. In Buddhist terms, the Pope has become "attached" to the concept that Christ and only Christ can save.

There is a third meaning for salvation current today. And that is that Jesus can save us from the apocalypse. The belief that God will bring this world to a sudden and cataclysmic end and

UU Buddhist Practice Groups

usher in a new age of God's rule. This belief is held by many conservative Christians. It was a popular belief in Jesus' time. It was the message of John the Baptist. It was the belief of the day; by disciples, St. Paul, and was part of the beliefs of the early Christian community. But as one Biblical scholar has put it – Jesus was not a Christian. The evidence of Biblical scholarship is that Jesus did not share this popular belief of his day and of his followers.

Jesus did not believe in the sudden end of the world and the coming of God's Kingdom in a New Age.

Jesus did not consider himself the Messiah.

Jesus did not call for the repentance of Sins.

Jesus did not offer salvation.

Jesus did speak often of the Kingdom of God. Jesus spoke of God's rule or Kingdom as close by; already present, but not yet fulfilled or realized. Even though present – still in the process of becoming.

Jesus stated that God was within each of us and amongst us. He also stated that it is difficult for us to know this – to realize that God or spirit in with us and amongst us. We are unaware of God's presence within us and among us. That seems to be the message of Jesus' words, as best we can reconstruct them.

So Jesus seems to be concerned about awareness and enlightenment. And his message is not so far from the Buddha's message.

After listening to Thich Nhat Hanh, I have come to this very intuitive feeling that I can see and understand Jesus much better than I ever have before by looking at Jesus through the eyes of Buddha – or as they say in Buddhism, with Buddha eyes.

Ken Mochel, Unitarian Universalist minister, now retired. Studied Buddhism at St. Lawrence in 1950's. Attended weekend retreat on Zen and UU'ism led by James Ford and Robert Senghas and a retreat by Jack Kornfield. I have experienced two weeks of sitting with Thich Nhat Hanh at Omega Institute the last two summers. Last church was Big Flats UU Fellowship from 1992-1996. Presently working with a new UU group in Hornell, NY, and incorporating mindfulness meditation practices into Sunday morning worship.

To be listed, a group must have both a Buddhist and a UU connection. If you'd like to have yours included here please contact the editor, Sam Trumbore (see page 2 for email and postal address).

Black River Sangha

Unitarian-Universalist Meetinghouse
21 Fairground Road Springfield, Vt.

Thursday evenings at 7pm. Two periods of zazen interspersed by Kinhin with chanting of four vows to close followed by tea and informal discussion Zen UU Buddhist with lineage in both Soto and Rinzai
Contact person : Richard Ryoha Dunworth M.R.O.
Phone: 802-228-2476

Martha's Vineyard Vipassana Meditation

Unitarian-Universalist Church (1/2 block beyond Library) 238 Main Street Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
Tuesday mornings from 10:15 ~ 11:45 AM
Dharma talk/discussion followed by 30 minute meditation Contact Jo Rice at 508-693-2827
<jscotrice@capecod.net>

Buddhist Explorers Group

The Community Church of NY
40 East 35 St. NY NY 10016

Meets 1st Sunday of the month, 12:45 pm
and 1st and 3rd Tuesday evenings 6:45 pm
Contact Gary Jacinto (212-267-2694)

UU Church of Lancaster

538 W. Chestnut Street Lancaster, PA 17603
Contact Paul & Paula (717) 295-3041
email: pgable@redrose.net

Central Pennsylvania Buddhist Fellowship
c/o Dan Cozort 717-245-1385

Dept of Religion, Dickinson College
PO Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013

Non-sectarian; meets Mondays at 7 p.m. in East College 206 or 405 at Dickinson College. Format: alternates film viewing, meditation, discussion, and Dharma talk on successive Mondays.

Natural Buddha Sangha (Dzogchen/Unitarian Universalist)" meets Fridays 7-8PM

at 2001 West Main Street, Stamford, CT
06902 (203-356-9762) Rev. Joel Baehr, convener

Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston
1625 Wiehle Avenue
Reston, VA 20190 (703) 742-7992
Mondays from 7:30 to 9 p.m., meditation/discussion
contact: Mel Harkrader-Pine (703) 707-9332 (h)
email: melhpine@aol.com

Meditation Group (Vipassana)
Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church
1909 Windmill Lane Alexandria, VA 22307
703-765-5950 mvuchill@juno.com
meets weekly on Sundays at 7pm
Teachers: Forrest Tobey & Lynnell Lewis

The Buddhist Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Virginia
4444 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204
Tradition: Insight Meditation and Zen
Routine Schedule: Meditation every Monday, 7:30-
9:00 pm; Dharma Discussion the first and third
Sundays of each month, 12:45-2:00 pm.
Contact: Michael I. Roehm, Coordinator:
(202) 332-7236, email: mroehm@earthlink.net

Eno River Buddhist Community
Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
4907 Garrett Road Durham, NC 27707
We are an ecumenical Buddhist group, finding
common ground in the teachings of Thich Nhat
Hanh. Meets Monday eve. for meditation, Dharma
discussion, recitation of the mindfulness training,
and occasional chanting.
Contact: Kim Warren 919/220-0321.
warre016@mc.duke.edu

Meditation Group
POBox 1791
2600 E. Phillip Ln Appleton, WI 54913
1st/3rd Sundays 7-9pm 2 sitting periods, reading/disc.
Contact: Jane Keggi (920) 734-5123

Unitarian Universalist Church of Pueblo
110 Calla Ave. Pueblo, CO 81005 (719) 561-0880
A traditional Soto Zen Meditation group meets
Sunday evenings from 7:00-8:30 for sitting
meditation and discussion.
Contact: David Cockrell (719) 546-3409
email: cockrell@ria.net

Zen Meditation Group
Foothills Unitarian Church
1815 Yorktown Avenue Fort Collins, CO 80526
Friday evenings at 6:15 pm
Chris Kurth, Facilitator 970-493-5906

Northwoods Sangha
At Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church
1370 North Millbend Drive
The Woodlands, Texas 77380
Contact: Dwight Hatfield 281-298-8419
Meets: Sundays 6:00-8:00pm
Two 20 minute sitting periods, 5 minute walking,
chanting 4 vows, Dharma reading, discussion,
fellowship. Rotating leaders.

Desert Lotus Zen Group
Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
1700 W. Warner Rd Chandler, Arizona 85224
(602) 899-4249
Harada/Aitken Zen lineage
Monday evenings at 7:15pm. Dharma talk first
Monday of the month. One day zenkai monthly.
Teacher: James Ishmael Ford,
California Diamond Sangha apprentice teacher

Michael Servetus Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
in Vancouver, Washington.
4505 E 18th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661
Contacts: Cassandra Sagan Bell at 360 750 0031 or
Chris Faatz at 360 696 3085 <cfaatz@teleport.com>.
We meet first and third Mondays of each month, at
7pm. 30-45 minutes of sitting, then a discussion.

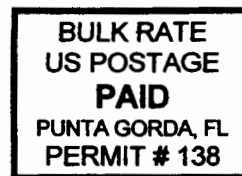
UUBF of The First Unitarian Church of San Jose
Meets every Tuesday night.
7:00 PM to 8:00 PM Meditation
8:00 PM to 9:00 PM discussion, book study, guest
speakers, video, etc.
First Unitarian Church of San Jose
Sanctuary 160 North Third Street
San Jose, CA 95112 (408) 292-3858
Contact: Jerry Cluney cluney@blueneptune.com

Monterey Peninsula Mindfulness Practice Group
(based on the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh)
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey
Peninsula 490 Aguajito Road Carmel, CA 93923
Wednesday mornings from 10:00-11:00 a.m.
Contact: Nancy Melton (831) 647-9155
e-mail: nanc@netpipe.com

Name: Davis Unitarian Buddhist Meditation and
Study Group
Style: Vipassana (via Sri Lanka and Spirit Rock)
Teacher: Various guest teachers
Location: Unitarian Church of Davis, Patwin Road,
Davis CA
Church Phone: 530-753-2581
Meeting Time: Thursday 7:30-9:00pm
Contact: Dick Warg, 530-662-1669
Format: 45 minute meditation followed by 30-45
minute lay led discussion

UU Sangha

c/o UU Fellowship
1532 Forrest Nelson Blvd.
Port Charlotte, FL 33952-2124



Return service requested

Please renew by: 1998-09

Rev. Robert Senghas
54 Rivermount Tr
Burlington, VT 05401



UU Sangha

Winter 1999

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