Christianity and Buddhism: Worlds Apart

Dr. Craig J. Hazen
Professor Emeritus, Comparative Religion and Apologetics
Chief Strategy Officer, Stand to Reason

The Strange Case of Christianity in a World of Religions

1 Corinthians 15: 12-19

The Unique Character of Christianity

Does Christianity Qualify as a Religion?

Why should a religious seeker try Christianity first?

Evidence/Check-out-able-ness
Grace
Non-compartmentalized life
Worldview fit
Jesus Christ

Buddhism as a case study

Origins and Basic Teaching
The Early Life of Siddhartha Gautama
The Enlightenment
The Four Noble Truths
The Eight-Fold Path

The Three Turnings of the Wheel of the Law
Therevada (Hinayana), Mahayana, Vajrayana

Other Buddhist Sects
Zen and Nichiren (Soka Gakkai),

The Philosophical Core of Buddhism
samsara — nirvana
nisvabhava ("without own being") and s*unyata* (emptiness, void)
Nagarjuna's *Catuskoti* (Tetralemma)

Conclusions about Buddhism

Outline of the Argument
       Validity of reason
       Reason presupposes mind (*logos*), therefore something exists
       If something exists, then the door is open for other things (God, time, the physical world)
       Once you establish this, you can use standard Christian apologetics

Nagarjuna

One of the most famous Indian Buddhist philosophers, Nagarjuna, the father of the *Madhyamaka* School (Doctrine of the Middle Way), worked hard on trying to get <u>beyond</u> language and reason in order to understand the nature of existence.

Traditional "Western" Laws of Thought

1. Law of identity $\qquad$ A = A

2. Law of non-contradiction $\qquad$ A ¹ non-A

3. Law of excluded middle $\qquad$ A = B or non-B

4. Law of rational inference $\qquad$ If A = B and B = C, then A = C

Nargarjuna's Laws of Thought (from the *Madhyamaka-karikas*)

1. (Identity) $\qquad$ All x = A

2. (Difference) $\qquad$ All x = non-A

3. (Identity and Difference) $\qquad$ Some x = A and some x = non-A

4. (Neither Identity or Difference) $\qquad$ No x = A and no x = non-A

Applying word algebra to Nargarjuna's 4th Law

No x = A and no x = non-A

(apply the law of rational inference)

If No x = no x, **then A = non-A**

· Nargarjuna's 4th Law says, without apology, that A can equal non-A.
· Nagarjuna's Buddhism is fundamentally irrational.

Hazen – Special Vocabulary for Studying Buddhism

Buddha
Siddhartha Gautama
Sakyamuni

Four Passing Sights
Bodhi Tree
Mara

Four Nobel Truths
Dukkha
Tanha (thirst, craving, desire)
The Eightfold Path

Pali
Sanskrit

The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha

Sunyata
Impermanence
Nisvabhava
Dharma (several meanings)
Karma
Atman (Anatman)
Skandhas
Samsara
Nirvana
Parinirvana
Pratityasamutpada

Theravada (Hinayana) (Arhat)
Mahayana (Bodhisattva)
Vajrayana
Siddha
Tripitaka
Zen
DT Suzuki/Masao Abe

Pure Land
Amitabha (Amida)
Namu Amida Butsu
Nichiren Shoshu, Soka Gakkai
Dai-moku
Nam-myoho-renge-kyo
Gohonzon
Shaku Buku

Maitreya

Nagarjuna
Madhyamaka School
Mulamadhyamakakarika
Catuskoti

For further study:
K. Yandell and H. Netland, *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal* (IVP, 2009)
Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism* (Routledge, 1988)
Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism* (Routledge, 1989)

NAGARJUNA

One of the most famous Indian Buddhist philosophers, Nagarjuna, the father of the *Madhyamaka* School (Doctrine of the Middle Way), worked hard on trying to get <u>beyond</u> language and reason in order to understand the nature of reality.

Traditional "Western" Laws of Thought

1. Law of identity $A = A$

2. Law of non-contradiction $A \neq \text{non-A}$

3. Law of excluded middle $A = B \text{ or non-B}$

4. Law of rational inference   If $A = B$ and $B = C$, then $A = C$

Nargarjuna's Laws of Thought (from the *Madhyamaka-karikas*)

1. (Identity)   All $x = A$

2. (Difference)   All $x = \text{non-A}$

3. (Identity and Difference)   Some $x = A$ and some $x = \text{non-A}$

4. (Neither Identity or Difference)   No $x = A$ and no $x = \text{non-A}$

Applying Word Algebra to Nargarjuna's Fourth Law

No $x = A$ and no $x = \text{non-A}$

(apply the law of rational inference)

If No $x = \text{no } x$, **then A = non-A**

· Nargarjuna's 4th Law says, without apology, that A can equal non-A.

· Nagarjuna's Buddhism is fundamentally irrational.