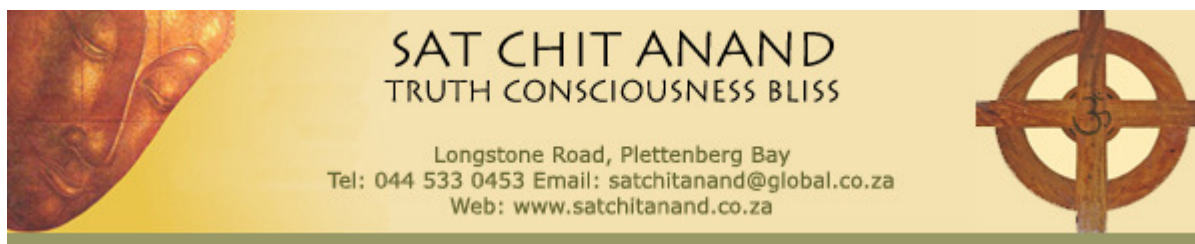


Sat Chit Anand

From: "Sat Chit Anand" <satchitanand@global.co.za>
Sent: 01 May 2011 07:19 PM
Subject: Newsletter: 01 May 2011



Christ and Buddha Icon

The meeting of Buddhism and Christianity will come to be viewed as the most important event in modern history.

- Arnold Toynbee, great British historian ... Their meeting is the hope for the world - Thich Nhat Hanh



Arnold Toynbee, the great British historian, said that the meeting of Buddhism and Christianity would come to be viewed as the most important event in modern history. Christ and the Buddha could spark the evolution of a new consciousness throughout the world, taking us to a new awareness of our humanity and our divinity, and infinitely expanding our possibilities to grow into our true nature which is divine, and then express that divinity through service and love.

The bond of love depicted by this icon rests on the universal wisdom they share. They both taught the laws of the heart, the eternal fragrance of virtue, the path of generosity, the power of faith, contentment and compassion. They both inspired their disciples to turn from the materialism of the world and live a life of the spirit, to come to know the timeless truth, to awaken to the undying. "There is one truth, not many," say the Buddhist texts. It is open to all. "See and know this for yourself," said the Buddha. Jesus pointed in the same openhanded fashion when he said, "The Kingdom of God is within you." ... When we are silent and still in meditation or prayer, we touch the living Buddha and the living Christ within ourselves. When Christ and the Buddha meet, there is no need for them to speak. In the face of

God there is nothing to say, but allowing God's presence to be. In the icon they are silent but touch and embrace.

Theistic Christianity and non-theistic Buddhism seem poles apart, but there is lots of commonality. "It is true that in Buddhism we do not talk about God, but we do talk about the

Ultimate dimension - Nirvana. If God means the Ultimate dimension, the foundation of all manifestation, then there is God in Buddhism - God is our ground of being." [Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh]

Both Christ and Buddha introduced radical teachings at odds with the prevailing politics, values, religions and cultures of their times. Both are depicted bare-footed, indicating their humbleness and humility. Buddha was born into a royal family and gave up his privileged position and worldly wealth to be a poor monk. Christ washed his disciples' feet and said: "I came to serve and not to be served." Both religions deal with the central theme of suffering. Buddha said: "I teach suffering and the transformation of suffering." The 4 Noble Truths reveal the Path to cessation of suffering. Christianity sees suffering as part of the fallen order of things. It is sin or separation from God that causes suffering. Christ revealed the Way to re-unification with God. Both instruct us to practice self-sacrifice and attend to the call of others. The Buddhist saint Shantideva said: "All happiness in the world comes from thinking of others, and all suffering comes from thinking only of yourself." Jesus commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves and said: "What you do unto the least of them you do unto me." Both Buddha and Christ taught about emptying or dying to the self in order to transcend to higher consciousness - being a light to the world or becoming en-light-ened. Buddha taught beneath the tree of enlightenment, and Christ died on the tree of redemption.

We welcome a new and meaningful addition to the Centre: a reproduction of an icon painted by Brother Richard Maidwell, part of the Redemptorist Order in Cape Town, whose speciality is the study, restoration and painting of religious icons. The original of this icon is at Temenos Retreat Centre in McGregor. We thank both Temenos and Br Richard for giving permission to have the icon reproduced for our Centre. Thanks to Christine for providing the photograph and wording pasted on the back, and to Graham Williams for his commentary on the icon. Graham and Br Richard will be doing a retreat at the Buddhist Retreat Centre, Ixopo, Kwa-Zulu Natal, later in the year based on this icon and the meeting of Christ and Buddha.

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Please notify us if you wish to be added or removed from our mailing list.