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Religious Perspectives - Buddhism

Is there a mandate in your faith to share your faith in order to win converts?

“Buddhism is similar in a way as any scholar of religion would tell you, Buddhism is a proselytizing religion. It shares its message, you can convert into Buddhism, although obviously it has a certain geographical origin and has for centuries been confined to mostly those geographical, those countries in southeast Asia and northeast Asia. Today it is coming to the West and actually in the traditional biography of the Buddha it says that before his death he sent his disciples, the monks, to carry the Dharma, to carry the teaching to all the corners of the world. Almost in the same words as Jesus sends his apostles to preach in the Christian Bible.

The big difference is the stakes. And the sort of the amount of pushiness that Buddhism is willing to put into proselytizing. Which is not a lot because... it's true that Catholicism nowadays is very unaggressive but we all know historically all the religions had those periods where they were very rapidly expanding and not always by word alone. Because ultimately there is this imperative in many religions that the ultimate goal is to convert the whole world. That's one of the goals. It's somewhere there.

Buddhism sort of doesn't care. If the person is not ready to receive the Buddha-Dharma it can only be an impediment. It makes things worse. You don't want to be pushing anything on anybody ever. In fact, the Dali Lama who is probably the most famous Buddhist in the world, though he is not even like the Pope for the Catholic church, or maybe a little in the sense that he is the head of a particular school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is actually not the head of all the Buddhist everywhere. He's nearly universally respected and loved but he doesn't have that authority.

But he suggested in a recent interview that Westerners should stop seeking Buddhism because often they do it out of the desire for something exotic. So he said, 'You have your beautiful religions, you have Christianity. Go back to it, rediscover what is truly there. Rediscover the compassion and love and the message that is there. And that is your path.' So again, middle way; proselytizing - yes, pushing – no.”

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