On the passing away of the 33rd Menri Trizin, the spiritual head of the Bön – more correctly Yungdrung Bön, "Eternal Bön" – religion in 2017, Tibetan religious and political leaders expressed appreciation of his lifelong efforts to preserve and promote Bön as an important contribution to continuing Tibetan culture in the diaspora. At the same time, there is a long-standing tradition among Tibetan Buddhists of regarding Bön, sometimes called "black Bön", as an evil, anti-Buddhist, even atavistic religion, a viewpoint also previously adopted by certain Western scholars. The presentation will discuss the grounds of opposition between Bön and Buddhism, the genesis of this conflict and the parameters along which it can be defined, including the question of whether Bön is a "religion" or a "tradition"; it will also suggest that there is real convergence in terms of doctrine and practice. Finally, it will venture to point out certain developments which in the future may serve to consolidate rather than lessen the divide between the two religions.

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