

A Dead Man Can't Help You
By Scott Noble (waterpark777@yahoo.com) June 14, 2012

There are many things which dead men can't do. One very important thing a dead man can't do is to save a person's soul. In my previous paper titled "The Buddhist Road Map," I explored some of Buddhism's teachings. If we liken life to a journey, the Buddhist map does not state the destination clearly, the map's maker is no longer around to help guide anyone, and the map itself is full of dangerous spiritual advice, resting its authority on subjective and limited human experiences.

My purpose in writing such papers is not to slander, but simply to help people examine the limitations of Buddhism and to welcome people to make peace with God, our Creator. In this paper, there are five topics I would like to take a look at: 1. Historical Inaccuracies in Buddhism; 2. Being One's Own Refuge; 3. The Unfilled Void in the Human Heart; 4. Morality Without an Anchor; and 5. Going Astray from Jesus Christ. In this paper I will also reveal which animal the Buddha is most commonly associated with in art.

1. Historical Inaccuracies in Buddhism

The Dhamma (Buddhist Scriptures)

To begin with, the Buddhist scriptures of the Pali Canon were written down very late, and the scriptures of other schools of Buddhism were formed and written down even later. The Pali Canon was written down about 70 BCE in Sri Lanka (Veidlinger, 23):

"Most scholars currently believe that the texts of the Pali Tipitaka were transmitted orally for about four hundred years, from the time of their genesis until the first century BCE." (Veidlinger, 2)

There is also a huge time gap from the time of writing to the time of the earliest surviving manuscripts. Veidlinger writes:

"...the bulk of traditional chirographic Pali texts in the Theravadin world exist in nineteenth-century manuscripts. The oldest Pali manuscript yet found dates back to the sixth century....it consists of a selection of passages...The earliest extant manuscript from Sri Lanka is of the Samuttanikaya from 1411 CE..." (14-15)

This is also confirmed by two website quotations:

"The earliest physical remnants that we have are Nepalese and date from the 8th or 9th century; the earliest complete manuscripts of any individual texts are from the 15th century; and we don't have any copy of the complete canon dating from before the 18th century."

<http://dharmastudy.net/the-pali-canon>

"...no manuscripts from anywhere in India except Nepal have survived. Almost all the manuscripts available to scholars since the PTS [Pali Text Society] began can be dated to the 18th or 19th centuries C.E."

http://www.palitext.com/subpages/lan_lite.htm

Hinuber likewise confirms this situation in writing, “The continuous manuscript tradition with complete texts begins only during the late 15th century. Thus the sources immediately available for Theravada literature are separated from the Buddha by almost 2000 years.” (4). The words “complete texts” here mean individual texts from the Pali Canon. If we date the Buddha’s death to about 410 BC, according to modern scholarship, then the gap between the Buddha and a complete Pali Canon in manuscript form is over 2000 years.

We have then a four hundred year gap from the time of the Buddha to the writing down of the Pali Canon, almost two thousand years from the Buddha to the earliest complete individual manuscripts (though there are some fragments before then), and more than two thousand years from the time of the Buddha to the earliest complete Pali Canon manuscripts!

By contrast, we have individual New Testament books in manuscript form from about 150 years after Jesus was raised from the dead (though there are some fragments before then), and complete Bible manuscripts from about 300 years after Jesus’ resurrection. We have individual books of the Old Testament from about 200 BC from the Dead Sea caves.

In the 19th century the Pali Canon was written in stone in Burma...

“Mindon introduced the first machine-struck coins to Burma, and in 1871 also held the Fifth Buddhist council in Mandalay. He had already created the world’s largest book in 1868, the Tipitaka, 729 pages of the Buddhist Pali Canon inscribed in marble and each stone slab housed in a small stupa...”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindon_Min

Although “written in stone” is an idiom for something absolute and steadfast, Trevor Ling writes of King Mindon’s project, “Mistakes in the carving of the text had made necessary a revision...” (124). This revision took place during the sixth Buddhist Council from 1954- 1956 in Burma.

In Sri Lanka’s history [the place where the Pali Canon was first written down (70 BC), and where its commentaries were composed (c. 500 AD)], the texts went through a purging in the 12th century:

“When Parakkamabahu I. (1153- 1186) reformed Buddhism in Ceylon during the 12th century, the monks of the Abhayagiri- and the Jetavana-vihara were reordained according to the Mahavihara tradition. Consequently, their texts gradually disappeared, and the only Theravada texts surviving are those of one single monastery, the Mahavihara.” (Hinuber, 22)

The history of the Pali Canon is far from being something written in stone (even if that was attempted). Even the so called words of the Buddha himself (in the Vinaya Pitaka of the Pali Canon) point out that his teachings will not be preserved uncorrupted:

"If, Ananda, women had not obtained the going forth from home into homelessness in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, the Brahma-faring, Ananda, would have lasted long, true dhamma would have endured for a thousand years. But since, Ananda, women have gone forth...in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, now, Ananda, the Brahma-faring will not last long, true dhamma will endure only for five hundred years." (356)

Since women did "go forth" and five hundred years have already passed, by his own statement, the dhamma has already expired. If we say it is a false prophecy, then the authority of the Pali Canon is undermined and the Buddha is a false prophet. If we say it is a true prophecy, then it is still false, since five hundred years have already passed, and thus "true dhamma" (including this prophecy if it were true) would no longer be around.

Shravasti Dhammika, although a committed Buddhist himself, has written a devastating critique of Theravada Buddhism. He even confesses Christianity's strengths several times in his book:

"Although Christians make up a tiny minority of Thailand's population they do a significant percentage of its non-governmental social work. The same is true in other Theravadin lands." "The funds for the little Theravadin social work that does exist often comes from beyond the community and such social work is usually done by either Western or Christian influences...is in imitation of Christian social work or is done to counter the social work Christians do." "What is it in Christianity that has made love so central to the life and practice of its followers? What is it in Theravada that has retarded this from happening?"

<http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf>

In spite of this though, he has not recognized that the Pali Tipitaka itself is defective. He still asserts, "The tragedy is that the teachings of the Buddha in the Pali Tipitaka are probably better able to address contemporary problems and needs than any other ancient teachings."

<http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf>

This is ironic, especially since only a few pages later he contradicts himself in undermining the authority of the Pali Tipitaka and using his own opinions rather than the Tipitaka to address a contemporary problem:

"Whatever the Buddha said or is supposed to have said, Buddhayanists would believe that it is wrong to exclude woman from the monastic life, that it is inappropriate in the 21st century to require them to always take second place to a male and that it is degrading to treat them as if they had some sort of contagious disease. They would take as their guide on this and several other issues the Kalama Sutta in which the Buddha says; 'Do not go by

tradition...do not go by the sacred text ... But when you yourself know that certain things are right, good, skillful and when followed or practiced results in happiness and benefit, then follow them' (A.I,188).

<http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf>

First he exalts the teachings of the Buddha, and then he undermines its authority in saying, "Whatever the Buddha said or is supposed to have said..." and in relation to women's roles does not follow the teachings of the Buddha (the "whatever" teachings). In this case he does exactly what he criticized the 5th century AD commentator Buddhaghosa, and modern Theravada Buddhists of doing: "Most Theravadins will side with Buddhaghosa's interpretation even where it contradicts the Buddha's words." (see website above). Dhammika has done the same thing in coming up with a modern interpretation which contradicts the teachings of the Buddha. Then Dhammika comes back to the Buddha's teachings as an authority only to undermine its authority, "...do not go by the sacred text..." Why not go by the sacred text? Because the sacred text says so. This is self-defeating logic. It really shows that he has no authority at all except his own opinions. He can pick and choose anything that is right in his own eyes.

The real problem here is not finding a suitable interpretation or even adhering strictly to the letter of the Pali Canon. The problem is that the source itself is defective and incapable of giving answers to people's deepest spiritual needs. Looking beyond the unreliable history of the Pali Canon, the more important question to ask is, "Did the Buddha have authority to teach on spiritual subjects in the first place?" Being only a man (with very limited knowledge), and currently a dead man, he is woefully underqualified to give advice on any ultimate topics (e.g. where will you spend eternity? What is your purpose in life? Where did you come from?).

In fact the Buddha often took people's attention off of these important topics only to focus their attention on temporal rather than eternal topics. Of course modern monks who seek for reform have no greater claim to authority than did the Buddha. Only God who knows everything, and who has power over death, and who created and owns the world, has the authority necessary to teach people spiritual truths. Here are two stories which show some of the exaggeration used in the Pali Canon...

In the Vinaya of the Pali Canon, an incredible story is told to explain why candidates for the monkhood must be asked whether or not they are a human being. According to this story a naga (a giant snake, like the one which supposedly shielded the Buddha from rain with its cobra-like hood), changed its form to look like a human and became a monk:

"Then one day, that other monk got up at night, toward dawn, and stepped outside to practice walking meditation. The naga, feeling certain that his cellmate had gone off, fell asleep, and in his sleep he took on his natural form. His snake's body filled the whole room, and his coils came out through the windows. Then, his roommate, thinking he would go back inside the cell,

opened the door and saw the whole room filled with snake....Terrified at the sight, he screamed.” (Strong, 1995; P. 62)

Another incredible phenomenon in the Pali Canon, which is supposed to be in existence even now (more specifically- “as long as the world lasts”)- is a roofless house, which never takes in rain:

“...there is a story in the Majjhima-Nikaya (Middle Length Sayings) of some monks who ‘borrowed’ the roof of a potter’s house for the repair of their monastery. But rather than being angry at this appropriation of their roof, the potter and his blind parents were suffused with ineffable joy for 7 days. Then in accordance with the law of Cause and Effect a strange phenomenon come into being. Drench the whole village or the whole country by immense rainfall, but not a single drop of rain falls into this roofless house. And it is ordained that this site of Gati Kara’s house be in such state as long as the world lasts.” (King, 121)

The author goes on to make a contemporary application of the above account:

“This place must be somewhere in the vicinity of the eternal town of Benares. The Indian Government should find out, especially Mr. Nehru who seems to venerate Buddhism. It is an easy task. Within a radius say of a hundred miles around Benares each and every headman of the village tracts can enquire minutely and try to seek for this marvelous place. Once it is found the impact of Buddhism upon humanity will be enormous and the tourist income of India will be magnificent.” (King, 121)

Another example of historical inaccuracy is the Milindapanha (the debate of king Milinda), which the Burmese consider to be canonical. Hinuber writes, “Although Menandros is a historical personality, Mil [Milindapanha] is an ahistorical text: Milinda talks to the six heretics, who were contemporaries of the Buddha (!)” (83). Menandros was separated in history from the Buddha by over 250 years. For more examples of historical inaccuracies, please see appendix 1, regarding King Asoka.

On the other hand, take someone like Luke, whose accounts in the Bible are verified even after intense historical and archeological examination by those hostile to the accounts. A semi-technical book on this is Colin Hemer’s book... “Acts in a Setting of Hellenic History.” The so called history of Buddhist Scriptures is filled with inaccuracies. The Pali Canon contains large sections of legend. Since these scriptures did not get it right when it comes to physical reports of “the way things are,” then why in the world would anyone want to trust them when it comes to their eternal soul? An eternal soul is also denied in the Buddhist Scriptures, but it shouldn’t be too surprising to find spiritual inaccuracies present in a book that has historical inaccuracies. Sadly and ironically, instead of this lack of authority in their scriptures, making Buddhists search for God, they tend to depend more on themselves- the very thing which according to their own teachings is non-enduring and ever changing.

2. Being One's Own Refuge

The lack of historical correlation in the Pali Canon is recognized by some Buddhists and thus the Buddhist scriptures are de-emphasized. With this lack of emphasis on the scriptures, more emphasis is placed on self instead. Instead of solving the problem though, this only moves the problem from one unreliable foundation to an equally weak foundation, considering the concept of anatta (no soul). Walpola Rahula, in "What the Buddha Taught" writes, "...the Buddha denied categorically, in unequivocal terms, in more than one place, the existence of Atman, Soul, Self, or Ego within man or without, or anywhere else in the universe." (Rahula, 56-57).

The three traditional refuges in Buddhism are the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. The whole idea of going to a refuge presupposes needing help outside of ourselves. It presupposes a person is limited and finite and needs a refuge which is infinite and reliable. All three of the traditional refuges are flawed, but to make matters worse, a fourth refuge is proposed, which is SELF. A teaching in the Dhammapada of the Pali Canon (in the Jataka of Kumarakassapa's mother), brings "self" to the foreground: "Bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, those who depend on others cannot attain any progress or development in life, therefore one is one's own refuge or master, no one else can be our refuge."

<http://www.buddhapadipa.org/plinks/MHAR-6ELBY2>

The three refuges are put into perspective with this Jataka exposition. "Self" is highlighted as a supremely important refuge. But, in the end, all four refuges are unreliable:

1. To take refuge in the Dhamma (the teachings) is really by and large to take refuge in one's self, as this is the direction the teachings point to. But, we've seen the teachings to be historically unreliable, and the teachings are contradictory in saying, "do not go by the sacred text" (A.I,188). If one disregarded this admonition, and went by the sacred text, then in going by the sacred text one would have to again not go by it! Many Buddhists today do not see the Buddhist texts as being transcendent and unalterably authoritative, but rather as something that can be modified according to modern opinions of people (reliance on self more than on scriptures).
2. To take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in a dead man no longer present to offer any help. Even his biography is not helpful, because it is filled with legends and unreliable history.
3. To take refuge in the Sangha (the community of monks), is to depend on impermanent and ever changing (anicca), non- enduring selves (anatta) who have their own suffering (dukkha) to deal with. Also, in the Jataka tale above, it was said, "those who depend on others cannot attain any progress or development in life," which would include depending on the Sangha.

4. To take refuge in one's self is just the finite taking refuge in the finite. It does not solve the problem of getting a person beyond their own limitations. In one breath self is derided (anatta) and in the next it is made into a refuge.

Is any person truly independent? Or, to put it another way, is any self truly dependable? Can anyone say they have received nothing from other people, and nothing from God? How could any person truly and consistently live out the slogan "one is one's own refuge"?

Let's take for example a tailor who for some reason took this as his slogan. He would have to make all of his own clothes to begin with. He could not wear anything that another made or bought for him. But, even then he could not use any threads or cloth which he did not himself harvest from the cotton fields or silkworm farm, etc. And, he could not use any scissors or sewing machines, unless he himself had made these. And, he could not make any sewing instruments unless he himself had mined and smelted the iron ore for that purpose. But, how would he mine the iron ore without using equipment made by others? Then, our hypothetical tailor could not eat anything, unless he himself had planted and cooked these. And, with what could he cook except with instruments he himself had made. And, where would he live, except in a house he himself had made.

If this poor fellow was beginning to feel the extreme demands of his time and labors in separating himself from all human dependence, perhaps he would then wish to go and live in the forest. But, even there he would have to come to the realization that he is not at all independent or sufficient to be his own refuge. In the forest (as also in the city) he would need to depend on the many things God has created- the plants for food, and trees for shelter, the water to sustain his life, etc. He could not even eat without using the mouth God gave him or make anything without using the hands and feet God gave him. Likewise he could not think or make choices without using the brain and soul which God gave him. No matter how much he wanted to be his own refuge, he would need to face the fact that his own limitations do not allow him to be his own refuge in any ultimate or even temporal sense.

3. The Unfilled Void in the Human Heart

To find a Buddhist who is content with only Buddhism, is a rare thing, even in a Buddhist country. Most people who consider themselves to be Buddhists in good standing, supplement their Buddhism with all kinds of non-canonical items.

In Thailand, the mythological Garuda Bird is used on money and official documents as a type of national protector (the Garuda bird is derived from Hindu mythology, but is also used in Buddhist mythology). The Naga snakes are a type of protector of the Buddha (such as the time when he supposedly sat on the coils of one, with its cobra-like hood sheltering him from the rain- and giant Naga snake sculptures can be seen

ominously bedecking many Buddhist temples). In this mythology, the Naga snakes are the enemy of the Garuda birds, which is also shown on the democracy monument in Bangkok, Thailand. So, oddly enough, the protector of Thailand is the enemy of the protector of Buddhism.

By telling people that they need not concern themselves about God, it is as though the Buddha had said thinking is not important. It's something that is innate to every human being, because God created us with this hunger to know and worship God. But, in replacing this hunger with other things, the search goes on unsatisfied. It's like somebody telling a bird that flying is not important and then clipping the wings of these birds. In the next generation of birds, the wings would grow to be normal wings, but in the environment of saying "flying is not important," the birds would use their wings in the dirt, not for flying. They would still "hunger" to fly though. Just as birds were made to fly, people were made to love and worship God. Buddhism does not fill the need in the human heart to know their Creator, and so the search goes on. Unfortunately though it's become a search for personal prosperity instead of a search for truth and righteousness, which would lead to God.

Richard S. Ehrlich in a 2007 article, wrote...

"Jatukam amulet sales may have reached 500 million U.S. dollars during the past two years, according to economists...More than 100 versions of the Jatukam amulet now appear in shops throughout Thailand, and competition among sellers is fierce. Some versions include tempting names, such as the expensive "Arch-Millionaire" and "Money Pouring In" series.
(<http://www.globalpolitician.com/22711-thailand>)

Some temples got so taken by covetousness that they made big investments in amulets on loan, and when the demand dropped off, they ended up in major debt. That's rather ironic. One would think that having storehouses full of "Arch-Millionaire" and "Money Pouring In" mystical medallions would guarantee riches. Not so. Instead of seeking the God of truth, people sought any so called god or power which promised to fulfill their desires. This attitude of seeking any god that "works" is at the heart of the problem. Art Katz identified the problem of the human heart when he said that idolatry is "self- serving," rather than "God- honoring."

The classic Buddhist analogy about the issue of our origin and the issue of what is important to focus on, is the man who was shot with an arrow. That man does not worry about where the arrow came from, who shot it, what kind of bow it was shot from, etc., but instead focuses on getting the arrow out! So it is said that humans need not worry about the beginning of the world or the destination of the Buddha and other "metaphysical questions." But, unfortunately, by relegating God to the sidelines, the true source of (everlasting) relief is also missed. God is overlooked and rejected, like a wounded man telling the doctor to go away.

Buddhist relics have become a major focus for many Buddhists. In this day of DNA testing, it would be interesting to see if all of the relics even have the same DNA. Why haven't such tests been done or published? And, why is it important to have relics at all? The Buddha was just a human and attachment to material objects is considered a hindrance. Obviously it is a non-Buddhist practice that is nonetheless being practiced by Buddhists. The reason for this is clear. The void in the human heart has not been filled, and the search for spirituality continues through various expressions. Unfortunately the one true answer has been eliminated from consideration.

Many Buddhist communities claim to have bone fragments from the Buddha and several even claim to have a tooth of his. They wanted the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth. But, can they handle the tooth? Please forgive the puns. In relegating God to the sidelines, creation (in this case a tooth) is focused on instead of the Creator. Instead of seeking out one of Buddha's 40 teeth (according to the Pali Canon, the Buddha had 40 teeth as a baby), or even revering such a tooth, glory should be given to God. Following after relics, and eliminating God from consideration will lead only to gnashing of teeth: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13: 28)

4. Morality Without an Anchor

There are a variety of philosophies that promote self. Some basically say: "Focus on self and do whatever you want," or "Focus on self and obey the dictator." Buddhism is different in that it basically says "Focus on self-effort and do good." But, it is the same in that it has no transcendent authority which defines "good," and no transcendent authority to decide that self should be the focus. In other words, in all of these philosophies, any assertions that are made could be countered with the question, "Says Who?" In a speech in Munich, Adolf Hitler put the emphasis squarely on self-effort:

"In ourselves alone lies the future of the German people. Only when we ourselves raise up our German people, through our own labor, our own industry, our own determination, our own daring and our own perseverance, only then shall we rise again."

<http://www.earthstation1.com/Hitler.html>

We all know where his focus on self led- to the death of about 6 million Jews and more than 6 million casualties in the wars he started.

Buddhism has a similar, though different, emphasis on self, saying that "One is one's own refuge." In 1950, the not yet prime minister of Ceylon, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, declared before the World Fellowship of Buddhists that man is free to decide for himself regarding what is right and wrong, without reference to God's will...

The Buddha preached that ultimate freedom of man when the human mind need not be subject even to the will of God, and man was free to decide for himself what was right or wrong... (Swearer, 117)

With a philosophy like this, he should not have been surprised that three years after being elected as prime minister, someone did decide for himself what was right by shooting and fatally wounding him (he was elected in 1956 and assassinated in 1959). That someone was not a Hindu Tamil, whom his government had marginalized, but a fellow Buddhist, who was a monk. He simply followed Bandaranaike's advice and decided for himself. And where did "ultimate freedom" lead to for Ceylon (called Sri Lanka since 1972)? In the article, "No middle way for Sri Lanka's militant monks", written in 2007, it is plain that the Buddhist monks there are still not opposed to the use of violence:

As the war that has ravaged Sri Lanka for 25 years enters a new and terrible phase, Rathana and his fellow hardline monks are urging President Mahinda Rajapaksa to keep the promise on which he came to power in late 2005: to crush the Tigers with military force.

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2007/06/15/1181414556706.html?page=fullpage>

The causes of this civil war began in the days of Bandaranaike's government when they marginalized the Hindu Tamils and other minorities:

His [Bandaranaike's] espousal of a Buddhist civic religion, however, contributed to a Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinism that exacerbated the communal conflict between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority populations on the island. In 1983 the conflict erupted into a still unresolved fratricidal conflict. (Swearer, 117-118)

Historically, the conflict goes back even further to the days of Dutthagamini, who sought the overthrow of the non-Buddhist Tamils from Ceylon in 101 BC.

"Dutthagamini placed a relic of the Buddha in his spear and claimed that his struggle was not for his own advantage but for the promotion of the religion." (see Dhammika's book in website references). Even the Buddhist monks who came with Dutthagamini were "...encouraged to put aside their robes and join the fighting and several who were on the verge of becoming arahats did just that." (see Dhammika's book in website references).

Buddhism does not usually advocate violence or immorality per se, but it does create a vacuum in people, where the anchor is cast off, and "self" becomes the center. In fact, the well known Thai Buddhist scholar P.A. Payutto has said, "No matter where Buddhism spreads to, or how distorted the teaching becomes, this emphasis on human endeavor never varies. If this one principle is missing, we can confidently say that it is no longer Buddhism." (38).

In "The Basic Points Unifying the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna is an important Buddhist ecumenical statement created in 1967 during the First Congress of the

World Buddhist Sangha Council (WBSC).” Point number 3 makes it clear that Buddhist doctrine does not include a Creator God: “We do not believe that this world is created and ruled by a God.” In 1981 this was revised to say, “Whether Theravāda or Mahāyāna, we do not believe that this world is created and ruled by a god at his will.” In the 1981 statement it was also said:

“...everything is relative, interdependent and interrelated and nothing is absolute, permanent and everlasting in this universe. We understand, according to the teaching of the Buddha, that all conditioned things (samkhara) are impermanent (anicca) and imperfect and unsatisfactory (dukkha), and all conditioned and unconditioned things (dhamma) are without self (anatta).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic_Points_Unifying_the_Therav%C4%81da_and_the_Mah%C4%81y%C4%81na

In saying that, “...nothing is absolute, permanent and everlasting in this universe,” it leaves a pretty weak foundation on which to build any system of morality. The origin of the universe is one of the questions the Buddha left unanswered. But, the Pali Canon mocks the idea of an absolute, permanent, everlasting, and personal Creator God. Thus, we have an interesting predicament. In our world we have personal beings, but no admission is made of a personal beginning of our universe. Can something personal come from something impersonal? Take a rock for example. A rock is impersonal. Can a personal being come from this impersonal rock?

Furthermore, morality is personal (rocks don’t have morality), and yet karma is said to be an impersonal force. John Jones sums up the dilemma:

“The morality of karmic consequences seems to call in question the strictly impersonal nature of karmic processes since, if these are moral processes, the only type of morality for which we have empirical evidence is that associated with personality. There is thus a tension between the impersonal and the moral attributes of karma” (Jones, 37).

How can personal morality come from an impersonal beginning? This is the same predicament atheists have. Of course an atheist or a Buddhist can choose to be good. But, just as easily, an atheist can choose to be a villain. Without God, these are just opinions. The question is not “CAN an atheist be ethical?”, but “SHOULD an atheist be ethical?” Without God, an atheist is just a set of chemicals and any “SHOULD” are just opinions.

In Thailand, there are 2-3 times as many prostitutes as there are Buddhist monks (about 800,000 to 1,000,000 prostitutes, and about 300,000- 400,000 monks), and yet this is a nation that is supposed to be 95% Buddhist- many of the prostitutes still considering themselves Buddhists. Regarding the monks of Thailand, Dhammika wrote, “A study released in 2002 showed that the leading cause of death amongst Thai monks was smoking related illnesses.” This is ironic for a religion which teaches in the Four Noble Truths, that desire must be eliminated. Smoking is a prime example of something which operates on “desire.” The point here is not that there are

Buddhists who live inconsistently with Buddhism. There are Christians and people of other religions which live inconsistently, to their teachings.

The point I want to make is that Buddhist teachings themselves unintentionally lead to this kind of result. Focusing on self in a supposed impersonal system of karma and with the outlook of many future rebirths, it's not surprising that many people adopt a procrastinating attitude and a practical philosophy of just taking care of immediate needs or wants. And, in the midst of the impersonal system people still hunger for personal contact with the spiritual world. Unfortunately, this leads many times to idolatry. Idolatry ironically though reinforces an impersonal way of dealing with things. Idolatry is likened to prostitution in the Bible. Prostitution is the taking of something very personal and turning it into just a business deal of two people using each other. Idolatry also promotes just using rather than a personal relationship. In the end it's a lose-lose situation, because the personal God of the Bible was not sought out: "My people seek advice from their wooden *idols*, and their rod declares to them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to go astray, and they have gone lusting away from under their God. They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because its shade is good. So your daughters shall be harlots, and your brides shall commit adultery." (Hosea 4: 12- 13)

This does not mean that Buddhism must be reformed. Dhammika in spite of his devastating critique of Theravada Buddhism, wants to bring reform to Buddhism. He does not see that his efforts at reform are just as limited as were those of the Buddha. Even if he could bring modern Buddhism up to the standard of the Buddha himself or even beyond that, the whole system would still be based in human opinions, and would lack any absolute authority. He may succeed in bringing about a reform which he is pleased with, but disregarding God's ways, this effort would eventually display all the limitations of the present Buddhism.

We cannot just decide for ourselves what is right or wrong as the former prime minister of Ceylon declared. Sometimes the laws of the land themselves are immoral, such as some of the laws in Germany during Hitler's regime. In this case the country's laws are acting like a renegade policeman, promoting immoral/optional things or prohibiting moral things. Buddhism itself is like a renegade policeman, because it is making up its own rules without having the authority to do so.

The conclusions which Buddhist ethics reach are not always so innocent. For an interesting example of some unethical things espoused by Tibetan Buddhism, here are eight poignant questions to the Dalai Lama: www.trimondi.de/EN/deba03.html

Any system which disregards God, must ultimately rest its morality on human opinion alone. This is the predicament of Buddhism. Many teachers may espouse lofty and humanitarian ideals, but these are only opinions with no authority to back

them up. Other teachers, because of this lack of authority don't bother to emphasize morality, at least not an absolute one:

“Although he stressed the necessity of the formalities of Zen practice, [Shunryu] Suzuki-roshi declined to establish an ethical code for his students, on the rationale that ethics were relative to culture. Such a code, he said, would have to be developed gradually over time through trial and error...his general ethical relativism had an obvious appeal to the generation that had pushed through the revolution in American sexual mores.” (Robinson, 304)

Just as this teacher of Zen Buddhism did, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher also downplayed the importance of morality:

“Trungpa viewed ethical norms as part of the ‘bureaucracy of the ego’ that meditation was intended to overthrow....Trungpa’s writings...were quite popular, and his frank rejection of ethical norms notorious.” (Robinson, 304-5)

In both of the above cases, the results were predictable:

“Suzuki-roshi died in 1971, and Chogyam Trungpa in 1987. Both had appointed American Dharma heirs shortly after their deaths; both of their heirs quickly became involved in sex scandals and were eventually removed from their appointed organizations. Soon similar scandals in other Zen, Son, and Tibetan centers, involving Asian as well as American teachers, brought home that these were not isolated instances but part of a general pattern...” (Robinson, 306)

In spite of teaching that there is no soul (no permanent person to receive the rewards or punishments of their deeds), but that there is rebirth, Sakyamuni Buddha still held to a conviction that the universe is not amoral. Concerning Buddha's conviction that this is a moral universe, Jones concludes: “He could not claim that this conviction had a sound basis in the rational, analytical part of his teaching; indeed, it would seem to me not too strong to say that there is a hopelessly irreconcilable contradiction between the two” (Jones, 36).

Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer wrote, “If you begin with an impersonal, no matter how you phrase that impersonal, there is no meaning for morals.” (37). Also, taking Plato as an example, Schaeffer wrote:

“We must understand at this point that Plato was absolutely right. He held that unless you have absolutes you have no morals. Here is the complete answer to Plato's dilemma, he spent his time trying to find a place to root his absolutes, but he was never able to do so because his gods were not enough. But here is the infinite-personal God who has a character from which all evil is excluded and so His character is the moral absolute of the universe.” (42)

Plato's situation was similar to that of the Buddha. The Buddha rejected the absolute and personal God and thus could not justify his conviction of there being such a thing as morals. Impersonal karma cannot account for personal morality. Buddhists have

to place a lot of faith in the finite conclusions of the Buddha who said there is such a thing as karma which functions unchangingly and absolutely. How could the Buddha, being finite and using his non-self, impermanent, non-absolute mind to reach these conclusions- be sure that his conclusions are absolute?

Buddhists must place their faith in one man's conclusions, which are sometimes supplemented by the equally non absolute, subjective, and mystical conclusions of meditation. If someone meditates and "discovers" that they are the true heir (in a supposed past life) to an unclaimed piece of property, would any court of law accept this meditative revelation as evidence? That meditation is on the same par with dreams and of course would not be accepted as legal evidence. Buddhists must go by faith, without evidence to support their claims about the way things are.

The world we live in is amazingly fitted to correspond to itself in a way that does not come about just by a random, impersonal beginning. Trees and plants put out oxygen and take in carbon dioxide. Humans and animals do just the opposite. Our stomachs are able to digest and use the food we find all around us. We have eyes, and we also have the corresponding light needed to use these. The migration instincts of birds correspond to the way the geography of our world is laid out. We also have a sense of morality which is built in to our human make-up, which evolution or an impersonal beginning cannot explain. Human morality is different from what we see in the animal world. Animals don't have police or courtrooms or prisons. It would be absurd to try to enforce morality on animals. It would be equally absurd to let go of all morals among humans. We were made as moral beings.

In reading various articles from Buddhist journals, websites and books, there are a variety of theories of ethics which are proposed for Buddhism. The trouble with all of these though is that they cannot be metaphysically anchored (in a consistent and reasonable manner). Buddhists can propose a variety of systems for being good, but ultimately what defines good in these systems is just human opinion. Personal morality cannot come from an impersonal force. Instead, Buddhists, who are personal beings have made up their own morality. This does not carry with it any ultimate authority though, and it does not take into account our Creator who does have authority to teach us what is good.

5. Going Astray from Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ said, "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (John 10:11). There are many wrong ways a sheep can go to get lost. To be in the fold one must have a relationship with Jesus Christ. In what ways do Buddhists go astray from God's ways?

To begin with, Buddhists do not love God: "Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22: 37- 40)

Also, Buddhists do not have faith or trust in God: “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11: 6) This faith is based on evidence God has given us, not a blind faith.

In eliminating God from consideration, Buddhists do not give proper respect to God: “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.” (Proverbs 9: 10). Instead of fearing God, many Buddhists end up living in fear of ghosts and in bondage trying to appease various spirits.

By being one’s own refuge, a Buddhist leaves no room for humble dependence on God: “...God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.” (James 4: 6). “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 18: 3).

Instead of glorifying God, Buddhists follow vain imaginations by glorifying meditation and imagined previous lives: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...” (Romans 1: 21-22)

“And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17: 3) Knowing God is the goal. This is personal.

God did not call people to have a spiritual adventure by use of their minds. The prescriptions of some quack doctors can result in apparent success for a while. Even if quacks prescribe something reasonable it doesn’t mean they are valid doctors. The Buddha did prescribe some reasonable morals, but he also prescribed some things which take people far away from God. Whether or not meditation leads to an experience is not the point. The Buddha’s qualifications are sorely lacking. God calls us not to seek after experience, but to seek a relationship with Him, and obey Him.

What was so wrong with Adam and Eve taking and eating of the fruit that God forbid? Aside from the obvious sin of disobedience, they also fell for the lie of “seeking knowledge apart from God.” This is a lie that surfaces in many forms, one example being astrology. When people turn to the horoscope section of the newspaper, it is a form of divination; seeking knowledge apart from God. To do this a person must suppress the truth God has already revealed. The problem is not one of

ignorance. It is not a matter of not knowing the truth, but a matter of not wanting to know the truth. The attitude of not wanting to know what God has revealed stems from an unwillingness to obey. Everyone has some knowledge of God, even if that knowledge is only an awareness of His existence. But, once the knowledge is suppressed people tend to seek out other answers- “knowledge apart from God.”

This is the same lie the Buddha fell for. Instead of seeking knowledge from God, acknowledging his Creator, he suppressed that truth, and sought knowledge apart from God, through meditation. Meditation is a form of divination just as astrology or tarot cards are. The deeper problem with this lie is that it is a manifestation of distrust. Instead of trusting God and having a relationship with God, the relationship is severed and the serpent’s words are repeated, “Did God really say....?”

The Buddha has given people lies instead of the truth and the result is spiritually tragic: "Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. (Ezekiel 13: 22)

Finally, instead of being in the care of a loving Shepherd, Buddhists are left in the presence of the devil, the serpent (the naga serpents which Buddhism exalts, but which really are demons).

Conclusion

To put it very simply, a dead man can’t help anyone to find the answers to life’s most important questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where will I go when I die? The Bible can answer these questions. Jesus Christ is alive. He has risen from the dead. Would you like to make peace with your Creator? If you do, you can begin by confessing your sins to Him, including the sins of ignoring Him and not giving Him the honor that is due to Him. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1: 9). God wants each person to believe in Jesus Christ and thus have a personal relationship with God.

I’ve summarized some of the items covered in this paper with an acronym: HOODED. This is the precarious position a Buddhist is in. Like the Buddha himself it’s as though a giant hooded cobra is perched above their head, because of the inadequate answers to or ignoring of life’s most important questions, like a wounded man telling the doctor to go away. On the other hand there is the acronym CAMPER which stands for the evidence which a Christian has, which make faith in the Bible a very reasonable and reliable foundation for answering life’s most important questions. I’ve presented many reasons here, but now the choice is yours. Will you

respond to God’s love? Will you come to Him humbly? Will you yield your life to Him, with a child-like faith?

Buddhist Uncertainty (HOODED)	Christian Evidence (CAMPER)
Highly impersonal beginning	Creation
Overblown stories	Archeology
Over a 2000 year Scripture gap	Manuscripts
Devoid of prophetic insight	Prophecies
Experience is the subjective test	Eyewitnesses
Dead and absent leader	Resurrection

A little more on the “E” of HOODED (Experience is the subjective test): In addition to meditation being highly subjective (things “learned” through meditation could not be admitted into a court of law as evidence), meditation also opens up a dangerous door into the spirit world. The meditator must go into an altered state of consciousness. In explaining the path to awakening in Buddhism, through meditation, Robinson in his historical introduction to Buddhism, summarizes, “The content of Awakening is thus two-thirds shamanism, ethically transformed, and one-third phenomenology...” (19). Robinson defines shamanism: “In the simplest terms, shamanism is the effort to gain knowledge or power from altered states of consciousness.” (290).

I know someone in Bangkok whose landlord was being taught meditation a few years ago. One time, as she was doing meditation, a hideous being appeared in front of her. She was scared and ran out of the room. Her meditation teacher later told her not to worry about it, but to go back and teach that hideous being the “peaceful” ways of Buddhism. In that way, the evil spirit deceived her into thinking she was doing some good, when in actuality she was in the presence of an evil deceiver only pretending to learn peace, but keeping her bound in deception. The Pali Canon gives historically and scientifically inaccurate information as can be seen in this article and in my previous article. Thus, to trust its instructions in the spiritual realm would be just as misleading. Meditation opens up a person at their deepest level to be led not by accurate and objective truths, but rather to be led by subjective experiences away from the God who loves them.

Shravasti Dhammika in talking about meditation in Sri Lanka, writes:

“...the meditators walk around looking like the long-term inmates of a psychiatric hospital. Indeed it is not unknown that some people who spend time in these meditation centers end up having serious mental problems. A joke circulating in certain circles in Sri Lanka in the 1990’s went ‘One month in Kanduboda, six months in Angoda,’ Kanduboda being a well-known meditation center in Colombo and Angoda being the city’s main mental asylum.”

<http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf>



http://patokallio.name/photo/travel/Thailand/NongKhai/Buddha_Naga2.JPG

HOODED: The Buddha covered by the hood of a giant seven headed serpent. In the Pali Canon, it doesn't say there were seven heads, but it says it was for seven days and seven coils. (Muccalinda Sutta in the Udana of the Pali Canon)

Here is the canonical account of the Buddha and the naga:

“Then Mucalinda the naga-king left his dwelling place and having encircled the Lord's body seven times with his coils, he stood with his great hood spread over the Lord's head (thinking) to protect the Lord from cold and heat, from gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and the touch of creeping things. At the end of those seven days the Lord emerged from that concentration. Then Mucalinda the naga-king, seeing that the sky had cleared and the rain clouds had gone, removed his coils from the Lord's body. Changing his own appearance and assuming the appearance of a youth, he stood in front of the Lord with his hands folded together venerating him.”

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.2.01.irel.html>

To sum up what I've written in my previous article and in this article, the Buddhist is left with a faulty map in hand, told to depend on self, which is undependable, and has a hooded snake hovering above head! May I introduce you to Jesus Christ, instead?

In writing about the archeological evidence that supports the Bible account, Mark Cahill says, “There have been over 25,000 archeological finds that provide support regarding people, their titles, and their locations mentioned in the Bible. Nelson Glueck, the renowned Jewish archaeologist, wrote: ‘It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference’” (Cahill, 65)

“Lionel Luckhoo (1914-1997) was a famous lawyer and later an evangelist, whom the Guinness Book of World Records lists as having had the most successive acquittals in murder trials, with 245 ... He said, "I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world and am still in active

practice. I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt."

http://www.conservapedia.com/Lionel_Luckhoo

Jesus Christ was God Almighty in the flesh. Jesus is the Creator of the universe. He lived among us for 33 years, did miracles, healed people, cast out demons, taught with authority, was crucified, laid in a tomb, and then rose from the dead on the third day. His disciples were willing to testify to His resurrection with their own spilled blood. Hundreds of prophecies preceded Jesus' ministry and were fulfilled by Him. Most of these prophecies were given even before the Buddha was born. Jesus Christ is not a dead man like other religious leaders, but rather is alive. He is the only one who has the authority to cleanse us of our sins and receive us into heaven. But, to reject Him is to reject the truth in favor of lies. Do you love the truth? Are you willing to follow Jesus Christ at any cost? Although salvation is offered freely, there is a certain cost for yielding to God to let Him be the Lord of our lives, but there is a greater cost for keeping "self" as Lord. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

CAMPER: "By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise with him." (Hebrews 11: 19)



<http://vormedia.com/>

Appendix 1: King Asoka

King Asoka is often referred to in Buddhist writings as a promoter of Buddhism and is sometimes idealized as a great benevolent king. It is as though, with the lack of authority in the Pali Canon, and the lack of authority for anchoring the Buddhist system of morals in an impersonal universe, this king is pointed to in order to somehow substantiate or with his kingly authority to give credibility to the Buddhist way. But, in hungering for the personal and the ultimate, instead of exalting God, a mere man has been exalted, who cannot satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart. In addition to that, the historical records regarding Asoka further show the lack of reliability in Buddhist writings.

There are two main sources in addition to the Edicts. The Sanskrit Asokavadana which is Hinayanist (but non-Theravadin) was likely compiled in the second century AD in Northwest India (Strong, 1989. Pp. xi-xii). The Pali Mahavamsa on the other hand was compiled sometime in the fifth century AD in Sri Lanka. To what extent either of these works was based on earlier notes is unknown. Both the Asokavadana and the Mahavamsa relate the story of King Asoka, but with great variations.

Here are some of these differences:

“In the Asokavadana, Asoka is said to have been born one hundred years after the parinirvana of the Buddha; in the Mahavamsa, however, he is said to have been consecrated king 218 years after the parinirvana.” (Strong, 1989. P. 21).

According to the Asokavadana, even after Asoka’s conversion he still retains his penchant for killing...

“...Asoka shows no mercy toward Candargirika, his former executioner-in-chief, and has him tortured to death. Or again, later on, he flies into a fury and has eighteen thousand heretics [Ajivikas] killed...and then launches a veritable pogrom against the Jains, setting a bounty on the head of any heretic. Still later, he announces with relish all the tortures he is going to inflict on his wife Tisyaraksita, and carries through with her execution...” (Strong, 1989. P. 41)

On the other hand, “As one might expect, in the Sinhalese chronicle [the Mahavamsa], most of the negative side of Asoka’s personality has been dropped.” (Strong, 1989. P. 67) It is not because the Mahavamsa is completely opposed to bloodshed though that this is the case.

When the Mahavamsa relates how Buddhist Prince Dutthagamini overthrew the non-Buddhist Tamil government, in 101 BC, the Mahavamsa records how Duttagamini killed one million Tamils, with monks accompanying the troops into battle. According to Dhammika, “Eight arahats assured him that he had made very little bad kamma because he had only killed passim, i.e. animals; nonbelievers being no more than animals. Again, by any standards Duttagamani’s struggle would qualify as a religious war.” (see Dhammika website in references). From the makers of Mahavamsa we also have the incredible story of a queen who had “children” by cohabiting with a lion. (<http://hettiarachchi.tripod.com/dipa.html>) Is this history? In Buddhism people are often subdued by fantasy rather than empowered by truth.

Coming back to Asoka, some of his inscriptions (if they are his) are also in contradiction to him killing heretics: “he [Asoka] even donated artificial caves in the Barabar Hills, near modern Gaya, to the Ajivikas, opponents of the Buddhists.” (Basham, 468) Referring to the third council (organized by Asoka-

according to the Pali Mahavamsa, but which is not a well substantiated council, since the Sanskrit Asokavadana does not even mention it)- Asoka supposedly had all of the non-Theravadin heretic monks (no less than 60,000) ousted from the sangha.

Concerning Asoka's Edicts, the first one to be translated in modern times was in 1837. In these edicts, the king usually refers to himself as "Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadassi." There are six edicts which mention something about Buddhism in a favorable light, and three inscriptions which mention the Ajivika religion in a favorable light. Out of the six Buddhist inscriptions two are highly suspect (the Rummindei and Nigalisagar inscriptions), having been brought to light by a known con artist (Dr Alois Anton Fuhrer)...

<http://www.lumkap.org.uk/Lumbini%20On%20Trial.htm#p1>

One of these inscriptions (the schism edict) does not mention Buddhism, but "the order." Most Buddhists have assumed this means the Buddhist Order. The 7th Pillar Edict mentions Buddhism as one among many religions receiving attention:

"My officers of Dhamma are busy in many matters of public benefit, they are busy among members of all sects, both ascetics and householders. I have appointed some to concern themselves with the Buddhist Order, with brahmans and Ajivikas, with the Jainas and with various sects. There are many categories of officers with a variety of duties, but my officers of Dhamma are busy with the affairs of these and other sects."

<http://www.katinkahesselink.net/tibet/asoka1b.html#Nigalisag>

So, that leaves only 2 out of 33 inscriptions which clearly refer to Asoka's personal faith in Buddhism (the Maski and Bhabra inscriptions). It was not until 1915 that the Maski inscription was found with the name "Asoka." This is the only edict containing the name "Asoka."

The picture of Asoka's life is quite different depending on whether we consult the Mahavamsa, the Asokavadana, or the Edicts. In the Edicts, Asoka (?) mentions heaven three times, but never Nirvana. He also does not mention the Four Noble truths. His attitude in the edicts is ecumenical rather than sectarian. We have three contradictory pictures of Asoka's life.

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