

The Lotus and the Cross

A Look at Buddhism from a Christian

Over the past year, our families have slowly grown accustomed to the prevalent faith of those around us. In Cambodia, over 95 percent of the population claims to be Buddhist¹. These means that virtually everyone we meet is either a Buddhist or comes from a family of Buddhists. This mystic faith is often respected by many in America as a path to inner-peace. Certainly there are celebrities and the like who tout Buddhism. Westerners who despise Christianity or who have been hurt by people claiming to be Christians often flock to Buddhism as the answer.

Cambodia is a relatively peaceful kingdom where most are easy going about everything. However, we are at war against Buddhism. Siddhartha Gautama (the man who would become the Buddha) has created a culture of superstition and relative morals that make for a clever enemy in this country.

According to an honest Buddhist: God, self, suffering, happiness, pleasure; everything that we see and do not see are all illusions. When one is able to accept that all is an illusion, he can attain enlightenment. In fact, Buddhism teaches that there are no absolute moral rules to follow. Absolute moral authority is repugnant in Buddhism and to them it distracts humans from being enlightened.

What happens when we take God away? If there is no righteous God in control of all things, a person often ends up trying to appease what he doesn't understand. Pain, suffering, and death are realities and Buddhism's "illusion" does little to comfort the lay person. So, with a lack of God comes superstitions. Habits develop out of fear of the unknown. The people were left to create reasons for their suffering, happiness, etc. As a result, idol worship of the Buddha flourishes. Superstition of spirits is rampant. With no absolute authority, Buddhists are an army of moral relativists and superstitious practitioners.

The Bible teaches there is a God², an absolute authority³, and that suffering and pain are real and are consequences of sin⁴. The Bible rejects superstitious beliefs not based on faith⁵. While we may read this and see such positive aspects of the Christian faith, these same points are ridiculed and wildly strange to a Buddhist.

As a result, Buddhists have spiritual mountains to overcome. To accept that there is a God, a moral authority, and an exclusive faith is earth shattering for a Buddhist⁶. We must remember that the ideas of Buddhism are the enemy. The people have souls and are loved by God⁷. This war will be won with love for the truth, not hateful spite. We take comfort in knowing that the Bible has already "spoiled" the surprise: Jesus is victorious! When I think about *Who* I have to fight with me, I know that we are more than conquerors⁸.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Cambodia

² Genesis 1:1

³ Genesis 1:3-31

⁴ Genesis 3

⁵ 1 Timothy 1:4, 4:7

⁶ The gospel message can be "earth shattering" to any who haven't heard it before. One of the best sermons given to an audience who are first time gospel listeners is Paul's sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17:22-34.

⁷ 2 Peter 3:9

⁸ Romans 8:37