

BUDDHISM

The oldest known date in the history of India is the death of the one called Buddha in 483 BC, and even that date is somewhat controversial. Buddha means "one who is intuitive, awakened, or enlightened." The famous historical person known as Buddha was also called the Tathagata, which means "the one who has come thus," and Shakyamuni, which means "the sage of the Shakya tribe." He is said to have lived eighty years, and thus was probably born in 563 BC.

THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BUDDHISM

Gautama Buddha, who founded the Buddhist religion, was the son of the famous chief of the Kaya tribe of North India, and was born and brought up within a hundred miles of Benares. At an early age, Siddhartha Gautama, his true name, observed the many contradictions and problems of life; he abandoned his wife and son when he felt he could no longer endure the life of a rich nobleman, and became a wandering ascetic in search of the truth about life. Buddhist historians tell us that after almost seven years of wandering, inquiring, meditating and searching, he found "the true path," and "great enlightenment," under the legendary bo tree (tree of wisdom), and thus attained Nirvana, that most desirable of all states, which Zen Buddhism says can be the experience of any member of the meditation school. In this they differ with classical Buddhist thought, which maintains that cycles of reincarnations are necessary in order to attain Nirvana. Zen maintains that it is a here-and-now possibility.

The teachings of Buddha are embodied in his "Four Noble Truths": 1) The truth of suffering; 2) The truth of the cause of suffering; 3) The truth of the cessation of suffering-, and 4) The Truth of the Way to remove suffering.

According to Buddhism:

Existence is pain ... because it is irrevocably bound to the cycle of births and deaths. In this connection, suffering is an undeniable fact of existence. The cause of suffering is craving, which is in turn due to ignorance, as explained by the twelve-fold chain of causation ... this chain bears a striking resemblance to the Sankhya categories of Hinduism. At any rate the Buddha was not interested in the deduction of categories: he was wholly concerned with the practical problem of removing the cause of suffering. To this end he put forth the doctrines of impermanence and non-ego. The Buddha declared that things as compounds are always in the process of productions, stagnation, deterioration and extinction and are, therefore, impermanent. Neither is the self permanent, because it is but an aggregate of elements. This does not mean a denial of the empirical self, but a refutation of the permanent, abiding personal identity. These doctrines suggest no nihilism; they were intended to reveal the true nature of existence, which to the Buddha was dynamic becoming, instead of static being or non-being. . . . hen

suffering is destroyed, Nirvana (negatively, the extinction of passions and positively, the state of bliss) is attained. One then becomes an Arhat or a worthy one, either in this life or after death.

The fourth noble truth is the truth of the Way to remove suffering. This involves a comprehensive system of moral cultivation, but the fundamental Way is a noble, eight-fold path. . . . Right views, right intentions, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration and right action. . . . The most important element of these teachings is the middle path, between the extremes of passions and asceticism, the way to realize the four noble truths which the Buddha stated in his first sermon at Benares. Throughout the entire history of Buddhism, the middle path has remained the central concept, although its interpretation varies with the different schools. To the Buddha it was a way of life, a sensible, moderate, comprehensive, practical system of ethics. He called the truths noble, because he regarded nobility as a moral and not a racial quality. His order was established on moral principles, a brotherhood without distinction of castes.'

With the true Zenist, teachings of the Buddha places man within the tension of the eternal "now." Reality becomes timeless, and "man will only find his integrity if he can react with an instinctive act to 'now.'" Zen is hence revolutionary, holding that enlightenment comes with clarification and simplification through acting out of old values of time and experience, and depending upon only the supreme experience, "now." One state of consciousness and the next cannot be measured by hours or miles, as the Master tries to say, in a *koan* ... the standard advice of Zen, using one of the 1700 traditional questions to highlight it. The snap of a finger can be a lesson . . . indicating that this very moment is the immediate experience of reality, past time and embracing all dimensions.

Zen is brusque in its teachings, aimed at the roots of inconsistency. It demands action of a curious sort. This can only be achieved when it is simple, natural and totally correct. It finds truth through shrinking away from error, not discovering a way to truth. Such a mystic philosophy, oddly enough, bears a kinship to primitive Christianity. Like the ardent fundamentalist awaiting the second coming which will bring heaven to earth, the Zen ideal is to achieve a Nirvanic state and a saintly condition on this earth. . . . The *koan*, which goes back to the twelfth century, when it was devised to test the students' understanding of the Zen spirit and shake his mind from conventional thinking, leaves most professed Zen followers in Japan uninterested today. And, of course, one can never achieve *satori* - the nonrational and intuitive understanding of reality - until he understands the exercises of *koan*. . . . *Zen* is a paradox within a paradox, a mystical doctrine which laughs at all doctrines and dogma, and becomes a doctrine and dogma in the doing (*Faiths, Cults and Sects of America*, Richard Mathison, pages 364-368).

With a philosophy such as this, it is easy to understand how Zenists can sit cross-legged (zazen - Japanese) meditating upon a flower petal, or a rock thrown haphazard over a floor or on a garden path. For them, reality is not objective correlative truth, but subjective, egocentric reflection, which becomes reality if they deign to participate in its manifestation.

The following quotations deal with the theology of Zen Buddhism in a general way, for if ever a system was devoid of a theology, except by implication and interpretation, it is Zen.

SOME AFFIRMATIONS OF ZEN

1. Revelation – "Neither logic nor metaphysics is to be relied upon for insight. Theoretical instruction may be positively harmful. The truest of books can be at best but a 'finger pointing at the moon.' If we fix our gaze on the finger, we miss the heavenly glory." Compare this with: Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, page 264.

"It is an experience of Reality beyond doctrine" - Watts, A. W., *The Way of Liberation in Zen Buddhism*, pages 28, 38.

"Zen is the science of the Real, and the nature of the Real forbids all mental representation of attribution. Reality transcends the dualistic intellectual analysis" -C. F. Linssen, *Living Zen*, pages 76, 79, 81, 131.

2. Authority – "Zen is the most irrational and inconceivable thing in the world. Zen was not subject to logical analysis or to intellectual treatment. It must be directly and personally experienced by each of us in his inner spirit" (Barrett, (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, pages 7-13).

"Zen is ex-hypothesi, beyond the intellect and chains of intellectual usage"(Humphreys, *Zen Buddhism*, pages 2,3).

"Zen teaches nothing. Whatever teachings there are in Zen, they come out of one's own mind. Zen merely points the way. There is nothing in Zen purposely set up as its cardinal doctrine or as its fundamental philosophy" (Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, page 38).

"Zen purposes to discipline the Mind itself, to make it its own master through an insight into its proper nature. Anything that has the resemblance of an external authority is rejected by Zen. Absolute faith is placed in man's own inner being . . . Zen wants to live from within, not to be bound by rules, but to be creating one's own rules" (cf. SuZUKI, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, page 40, 44, 45, 64, 131).

3. The Nature of God (Pantheism) and Morality – "I see much common ground in Zen and the mysticism of Meister Eckhart, as he wrote, 'The eye by which I see God is the same eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and same -one in seeing, one in knowing and one in loving'. . . . When I have shut the doors of my five senses, earnestly desiring God, I find him in my soul as clearly and as joyful as he is in eternity. . . . (Ogata, *Zen for the West*, pages 17-19).

"Immaculate Yogins do not enter Nirvana and the precept- violating monks do not go to hell. To avoid sin and evil by obedience to any moral law is only an idle attempt. Every being must act according to the Nature. . . . There is no need of rules of morality" (Humphreys, *Zen Buddhism*, pages 178-179).

"The finite is infinite and vice versa. There are not two separate things, though we are compelled to conceive them so intellectually. The mistake consists in our splitting into two what is really and absolutely one" (Barrett, (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, page 15).

"Since Zen does not affirm the existence of God, it is not only absolutely destitute to

the special revelations of God in His Word, but it is also alien to the God of revelation" (Lit-Sen Chang, *A Christian Challenge to Zen Buddhism and Existentialism*, page 38).

"To quote Meister Eckhart again, 'Simple people conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so; God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him.' In this absolute oneness of things, Zen establishes the foundations of its philosophy" (Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, page 245, 270).

4. Self-Salvation – "There is no supernatural intervention, way or refuge. We bear the whole responsibility of our actions and no sage whosoever he be has the right to encroach on our free will.... Only ignorance, laziness and cowardice can lead us to seek outside aid. One thing seems fundamentally necessary: 'To know ourselves.' If we attain the perfectly clear vision of what we are, we no longer need 'to go elsewhere.' The exterior ways become to us ways of perdition. Just as all men and women of all the people of the earth have said and will say at the moment of their Awakening, so do we say simply, 'I am the way' (Linszen, *Living Zen*, pages 73-75).

"Smash whatever you come across, smash Buddha, smash your parents and relations. You will be in real emancipation!" (*The Sayings of Master Linchi*, cf. Ogata, *Zen for the West*, page 12).

"The attainment of cosmic consciousness (Satori) does not touch the deepest levels of human life. It does not generally reach down to the depths of conscience in its relation to God. Although a 'cosmic awakening' may bring a certain clarity and peace of mind to a man . . . his life of faith has not been kindled at all, because the object of faith is vague and unhistorical, it is all veiled in the mist of pantheism" (Reichelt, *Meditation and Piety in the Far East*, pages 16, 17).

"Zen takes us to an absolute realm wherein there is no antithesis of any sort."

"Unless we break through the antithesis of 'yes' and 'no,' we can never hope to live a real life of freedom."

"To be free, life must be an absolute affirmation" (Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, pages 66, 68).

5. The Holy Spirit (In Zen this is "Satori," which is Enlightenment). Example of the Phenomena:

"After his master Matsu abruptly took hold of his nose, he gave it a twist. This made his back wet with cold perspiration. He was said to have 'Satori' " (Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki, page 92).

"When he (Yun-men) was pushed out of the gate by his master, one of his legs was caught and broken. It is said the intense pain resulting from this awakened him, and he had 'Satori' " (Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, page 12).

6. Sin – "The real human tragedy began when nature was to be dominated by man, for when the idea of power, which is domination, comes in, all kinds of struggles arise" (Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, pages 232-234).

"As long as there is a dualistic way of looking at things, there is no emancipation. Light

stands against darkness, the passions stand against enlightenment. The Buddha nature knows neither decrease nor increase. The Buddha nature is above birth and death" (Teaching of Hui-Neng, Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, pages 169-170).

7. The Nature of Reality – "The Unconscious is thus the Ultimate Reality, the true form" (Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism*, page 193).

"Reality transcends the duality. Reality is in itself entirety, it is beyond the traditional opposition of mobility and immobility. The experience of Satori is a result of emancipation from the arbitrary practice of partitioning our mind" (Linssen, *Living Zen*, pages 76, 79, 81,131).

From the foregoing, the deep-seated philosophical mysticism of the Zen school of meditation of Buddhism is accurately reflected, revealing Zen to be a philosophy that negates a personal God. Secondly, it denies the reality of sin due to the absence of an absolute standard of revealed law and holiness. Thirdly, it rejects the necessity of personal redemption from the penalty of sin revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is *the Way*.

It was the Apostle John who declared, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8), and this is the curse of Zen, with which its adherents are forced to live and from which they can never fully escape, psychologically or spiritually. The transgression of the law of God does produce guilt in the soul and mind of men which no amount of meditation, cross-legged or head-standing can obliterate. Adherents of the Zen cult dislike intensely the Biblical doctrine of personal responsibility for sin. They quite naturally revolt against any form of authority, particularly if it be a revealed authority outside of their own subjective criterions of morality, reality and truth.

Zenists have no antidote for the piercing analytical pronouncements of Scripture "Romans 3:23 "23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10 "10 As it is written:"There is none righteous, no, not one;." And the reality of divine judgment can be brought to bear upon them through proper use of the Scriptures and logic. One trip through the gas ovens of Dauchau, Belsen, Auschwitz and Buchenwald is worth a thousand theological propositions, and Zenists ought to be reminded of this fact -the fact that those crimes were crimes against an absolute standard which is not subjective, but objective and universal, i.e., "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13).

The true nature of Buddhism is, in reality, that of ego-absorption, to the extent that one becomes obsessed with himself, not with his sins and the desperate need for their erasure. The Buddhist is a stranger to social responsibility also, which leaves little to justify his existence.

Lit-Sen-Chang, a convert from Zen Buddhism, wrote some telling criticisms from both a philosophical and an experiential viewpoint:

"... While, however, Zen gains plausibility from some of its teachings, it is nevertheless objectionable because of its serious inadequacy and sheer futility.

1. It supersedes the doctrine of a real Creator. Zen is a peculiar and subtle form of atheism. By identifying deity with nature, it denies the infinity and transcendence of a living personal God. All visible objects thus become but

modifications of self-existence, of an unconscious and impersonal essence which is called God, Nature, the Absolute, Oneness, Suchness or Tathagata, and so on. This robs God of sovereignty by denuding Him of His power of self determination in relation to the world. God is reduced to the hidden ground. Since Zen does not affirm the existence of the living God, it is not only absolutely destitute of the special revelation of God in His Word, but is wholly alien to the God of revelation. Since Zen contends that it does not deny the existence of God, it is more plausible in its pretension, more fascinating to the imagination, and less revolting to the reason than those colder and coarser theories which ascribe the origin of the world to mere mechanical laws of matter and motion. Besides, Zen adopts the very language of theism, and may even generate a certain mystic piety; statements are often embellished with the charms of seductive eloquence, and become the formidable rival of Christian theism. .

“In "seeing into one's own nature" Zen fails to recognize that self-knowledge is rather twofold: first, the condition in which man was at first created; and second, his condition since Adam's fall.... Therefore, instead of "seeing into one's own nature," our need is for a new nature and for the Spirit of God to form in us anew the image of God which was marred by the transgression of Adam.

“In the attainment of Enlightenment, Zen ignores the Pauline declaration in 1 Corinthians 2:5 that "your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." . . . Although Zen asserts that without "Satori" (Enlightenment), "Zen is a sealed book" (Barrett, *op. cit.*, page 135), the actual fact is that apart from divine revelation, "Satori" can never be genuine. Even a psychologist as sympathetic to Zen as Dr. Carl G. Jung says, "We can never decide definitely whether a person is really enlightened, or whether he merely imagines it; we have no criterion of this." These words of Jung actually appear in the foreword of *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, by Suzuki, greatest living authority of Zen Buddhism.

“Since Zen is a revolt against any authority and it does not affirm the existence of God nor the need of a Saviour, it has no object of faith. It purposes to discipline the mind and make it its own master, through seeing into one's own nature. Although Zen masters claim certain similarities between Satori and the sudden conversion of Christianity" (Watts, *op. cit.*, page 76), there is in fact no ground for comparison. In their own words they say, "conversion is held to come to essentially depraved man from an external God, while Satori is the realization of one's own inmost nature.... It is one's own spiritual realization that makes the difference and the mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven" (Ibid., pages 79, 80).

"Zen thus distorts the Biblical truth by ignoring the gravest factor in the history

of mankind, namely, the fall of Adam, by which the ground is cursed and our sorrows are multiplied (cf. Genesis 3:16-19). It is true, Adam's spiritual life was originally united and bound to his Maker, but his estrangement and his revolt against God perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and earth and deteriorated his race. Zen masters, like other philosophers, only tell us to live in harmony with nature, but the Bible enjoins us to regulate our lives with a view to God to whom nature belongs." (*The Challenge of the Cults*, Zondervan, A Christianity Today Symposium, 1961, pages 66-72).

THE CORE OF ZEN

Zen Buddhism is one of the more philosophic and orientally flavored imports of cultism, peculiarly adapted to the Western mind in that it decidedly shuns outright supernaturalism, but encourages a "Satori" (enlightenment) experience, "an awakening of our original inseparability with the universe."

The ultimate goal of Zen Buddhism is "the freeing of the will," so that "all things bubble along in one interrelated continual." Those who would be disciples of Zen must allow their ego to be detached until "one's real self calmly floats over the world's confusion" like a ping-pong ball skimming over the turbulent rapids of life. In a world faced with deprivation, hunger, disease, death and the ever-present shadow of nuclear warfare, the denial of such reality borders on the criminal. Zen Buddhism, in our opinion, is the most self-centered, selfish system of philosophy that the depraved soul of man can embrace, for it negates the two basic principles upon which all spiritual reality exists, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind ... and your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37,39).

For Zenists, it is love of self first, last and always. This is the core of Zen, which releases one from spiritual responsibility and substitutes intellectual enlightenment for conversion, and the absence of concern for one's fellow man for peace with God. Historically, Buddhism has produced nothing but indescribable conditions under which its subjects live. For in almost every area of the world where Buddhism of any form holds sway, there stalks the specter of disease, hunger, and moral and spiritual decay. The peoples of the Orient are the slaves of their religions, and Buddhism, with its egocentricity, inherently selfish concept of life and of responsibility to society is by all odds one of the greatest offenders. Let those who consider Buddhism as a superior form of religious philosophy should look well at its history and its fruit, for "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

A man who had been involved in Karate stopped the practice when he learned about the God of Heaven. Here are some of his reasons for doing this:

"The difference between Christian meditation and Eastern meditation is that Christian meditation is about "filling our minds with the things of God" and "whatever is lovely, good, pure, think on these things". But Eastern meditation is about emptying our minds, relaxing them, and opening them up to "ideas dropping into them like ripples in a pond." I believe this leaves a person open and vulnerable to demonic suggestion, and over time to possession."

“In my particular style of karate there is a "kata" (precise pattern of movements) called "gek sai dai". This translates to "breaking down a small fortress." The philosophy behind this, and most forms of martial art is that whatever obstacle I come against, if I break it down into small enough components, then I can overcome anything. This sounds good on the outside, but from a Christian perspective, I know that I am a finite human being. I am not invincible nor infinite. When I am confronted by an obstacle larger than myself, if I do not acknowledge my source of strength as coming from God, then I will seek some form of "inner strength" that will come from somewhere else.”

As it is with many other seemingly “innocent” activities, we can see that there are some strong connections between them and false religious practices.

Questions on Buddhism:

1. What does the word “Buddha” mean? _____

2. By what names is the one who founded the Buddhist religion known? _____

3. What caused him to set out on a search for the “truth about life?” _____

4. How do the Buddhists and the Zen Buddhists differ with regard to the doctrine of “nirvana?” _____

5. Enumerate the “Four Noble Truths”: _____

6. Explain what Buddhism says is the connection between “the doctrines of impermanence and non-ego” and removing the cause of suffering. _____

7. What is the “eight fold path” Buddhism says one must take to remove suffering? _____

8. What is a koan and what is it used for in Buddhism? _____

9. How do Buddhists feel about authority? _____

Is this *objective* or *subjective*, and which of these words describes what we find revealed in the Bible? _____

10. Buddhists are pantheists - what does this mean? _____

11. What is found in the quote from Linssen, in *Living Zen*, that smacks of blasphemy? _

12. In Buddhism, what do they equate with the Holy Spirit, and how is it manifest their experience? _____

13. What three things do the philosophical mysticisms of Buddhism do to destroy the truth that is revealed by God in His word? _____

14. How does the author suggest that the reality of an absolute TRUTH or RIGHT and WRONG can be demonstrated, and how do you feel about such evidence? _____

15. What does Lit-Sen-Chang suggest that Buddhism is “a subtle form of?” _____

Why do you agree/disagree with this conclusion? _____

16. What possible dangers are there in practicing martial arts that emphasize the teachings of Buddhism? _____