

A Contemporary Problem : Buddhism and Christianity

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Looking for some common aspect between Eastern and Western religions, one immediately hits on intuition. In trying to understand ultimate reality, both Zen and Christian mysticism, as Eastern and Western intuitive religions, make intuition their basic, major approach. The greatest difference between these two types of mysticism is not that their methodology diverges, but in the fact that they arose from two different cultural backgrounds, each with its own particular characteristics. In comparing Eastern and Western religions, it is necessary to eschew extremism from the very start. A commonly held extreme opinion is that Eastern and Western religions are so different as to have nothing in common at all.

1. The Christian doctrine of *Creatio ex nihilo*

The formula *creatio ex nihilo* does not appear in the Bible¹. However, the early Christians came to regard it as the most adequate expression of the biblical conception of a created world. The first chapter of Genesis is of course the major statement of faith in creation, but the following passages also contain indications of the doctrine: Romas 4 : 17, where Paul refers to Abraham's faith in God and who brings the dead to life and calls into being what does not exist. "Hebrews 11 : 3, "It is by faith that we understand that the world was created by one word from God, so that no apparent cause can account for the things we can see."² It was not out of already existing matter that God created the world, but by his word alone, as in Genesis 1 : 3 "And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light."³ We may remark here that it is not from cosmological concern for the origin of the world, nor from anthropological interest in man as an animate creature, but from faith in God as creator that this doctrine comes. Among dialectic theologians, Karl Barth in particular has emphasized this point :

The doctrine of Creation turns our attention for the first time directly to a reality different from the reality of God, the reality of the *world*. This doctrine has, for all that, absolutely nothing to do with a "world view," even with a Christian world view.⁴

Barth also points out that the Apostles' Creed refers to the "creation of heaven and earth"⁵ rather than to

the world as created by God. The point he stresses is that the doctrine is solely concerned with confession of faith.

We must ask, then, what is meant by the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The following two points seem to be important: (1) God created the world entirely through his own free will. (2) The world owes its existence to God alone; if left to itself, it would inevitably tend to disappear into nothingness. Now, let us discuss these two points in more detail.

(1) Creation is a free act on the part of God, and there is nothing outside God which can or did influence him or cause him to create the world. In addition, God used no matter or tool external to himself to fashion his creation, but rather expressed his will through his word, thus proving his absolute transcendence over the world. This is exactly what is in Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."⁶ Barth asserts that it is just this freedom which constitutes God's holiness.

... the creation of the world is not a movement of God in Himself, but a free *opus ad extra*, finding its necessity only in His love, but again not casting any doubt on His self-sufficiency: the world cannot exist without God, but if God were not love (as such inconceivable!), He could exist very well without the world.⁷

We can therefore say that *creatio ex nihilo* does not imply an *ontic* causation of the world, and man within it, but rather states that everything was created by the will of God and that all is ultimately dependant on

God for its very existence. Thus the doctrine concerns itself with the problem of man's personal, existential ground. On the other hand, Greek philosophy has its roots in the rationalization of a mythological view of the world, and goes on assumption *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Greek philosophy sees the ultimate components of everything as matter and form, and even Plato could not create forms freely. The Greeks saw the world as more or less independent of the gods -- even Zeus himself could not change destiny. The Greek world was not created from nothing; it was "formed" from previously existing matter. Thus, even Aristotle was able to avoid the question of creation by postulating the eternity of matter⁸. Contrasting sharply is the Christian teaching that the world was created solely by the word, of God, through the power of his will. The *nihil* out of which the world was created must not be confused with formless matter or the invisible material principle, which Plato called *me on*. Actually it is more like *ouk on*, the negation of all being whatsoever. In his Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich says:

The mystery of nonbeing demands dialectical approach. The genius of the Greek language has provided a possibility of distinguishing the dialectical concept of nonbeing from *ouk on*. *Ouk on* is the "nothing" which has no relation at all to being; *me on* is the "nothing" which has a dialectical relation to being. The Platonic school identified *me on* with that which does not yet have being but which can become being if it is united with essences or ideas. The mystery of nonbeing was not, however, removed, for in spite of its "nothingness" nonbeing was credited with having the power of resisting a complete union with the ideas. The *me-ontic* matter of Platonism represents the dualistic element which underlines all paganism and which is the ultimate ground of the tragic interpretation of life.

Christianity has rejected the concept of *me-ontic* matter on the basis of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Matter is not a second principle in addition to God. The *nihil* out of which God creates is *ouk on*, the undialectical negation of being. Yet Christian theologians have had to face the dialectic problem of nonbeing at several points. When Augustine and many theologians and mystics who followed him called sin "nonbeing," they were perpetuating a remnant of the Platonic tradition.⁹

(2) From *creatio ex nihilo*, we are led to understand that the world is an entirely separate entity not identical with God, and therefore subject to death and decay. The created world is real and not an illusion, but this reality is nevertheless distinctly different from the reality of the Creator. Again, from Barth:

Creaturally reality means reality on the basis of *creatio ex nihilo*, a creation out of nothing. Where nothing exists -- and not a kind of primal matter -- there through God there has come into existence that which is distinct from Him.¹⁰

The world is neither God nor His son. It exists by virtue of creation rather than by generation. It was not begotten of God, not fashioned out of pre-existing material, but actually created out of nothing. Therefore, its continued existence depends entirely on God, who has his aseity but created the world entirely out of love. Creation is thus an act of grace, where man and his world are granted their existence by God. The reverse of this doctrine is the realization of the nihility inherent in the existence of all creatures. All created beings, devout Christians included, balance on the edge of the abyss of nothingness -- constantly threatened by *Nihil*. Rudolf Bultmann says:

This, then, is the primary things about faith in creation: the knowledge of the nothingness of the world and of our own selves, the knowledge of our complete abandonment. "Therefore," Luther says in the Large Catechism, "if we had faith in this article, it would humble us, it would terrify us." Yes, this is the kind of faith that is involved. For such knowledge is only true and authentic when it is not mere knowledge or an occasional feeling, but rather actually places its stamp on our attitude, our willing and acting -- when we really abandon ourselves to God by existing for him and giving him the glory.¹¹

This discussion of the two meanings of *creatio ex nihilo* plumbs the very depths of Christianity. The man who denies the nihility present in his world and tries to establish his own existence by his own power is doing more than making a grave mistake -- he is committing an unforgivable sin against God. This has occurred in the history of humanity. Original sin has caused man to be abandoned to death and his own vanity. However, when Jesus, crying "My god, my god, why has thou forsaken me?" delivered himself to death, he assumed man's nihility onto himself and thus absolved man from his original sin. Man can realize the depths of his sin only in the light of Christ's sufferings and death, and for this reason Christ is thought to be the son of God, or his Logos incarnate. The same God who created the world has saved man from his original sin, thus becoming the world's redeemer, and immanent in it. This aspect of divine activity is called love, as opposed to holiness, which means his freedom over the world.¹² The Christian faith sees man delivered from the bondage of sin and death by the love and grace of God as revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, both creation and redemption are regard-

ed as divine acts of love.¹³ Such are the main points in the Chistian doctrine of creation.

2. God and Buddha

Understanding the Christian view of existence and creation, let us now compare it with the Buddhist view. Christian faith postulates an absolute, transcendent and personal Creator, while Buddha is he who has awakened to True Suchness. The ultimate God of Christianity is understood as being rather than non-being, but Suchness in Buddhism is beyond being and non-being. In this sense, Christianity may be termed a religion of being (the Supreme Being, the Absolute Being or Being Itself) while Buddhism is the religion of Absolute Nothingness. However, the comparison between the two religions is not really so simple or straightforward. When one wanted to give scriptural proof of the idea that God is Being, one quotes Exodus 3:14 "I am who I am," but scholars in the field now believe that the Hebrew word *hāyah* means "to become" and "to work" as well as the traditional "to be." It may also mean "to happen." Thus the Chistian God is not mere "Being" but rather "the dynamic unity of being and becoming." Dr. Ariga says:

It should not be understood as the subject, God, first existing and then coming to work, but rather, as the subject revealing himself in his very activity itself. In his case, therefore, the existent subject and his action cannot be dissociated from each other: his being is his action and vice versa.¹⁴

This is the angle from which the doctrines of divine creation and divine providence should be approached, revealing the Christian God as not merely "Being" but an active God with a will, and a living God who opens himself to man.

The Christian concept of god as oneness of being and action seems, in essence, very similar to the idea of the Buddha as the "oneness of Substance, Form and Function." First of all, however, the Chistian God, combining being with action is thought of as Eternal Life which transcends and overcomes non-being and death, while the Buddha is the Awakened One who has realized True Suchness, a concept which is unrelated to and cannot be described as "Eternal Life." The Buddha delves into the root-source of reality without opposing being and non-being, and thus discovers the non-discriminating Wisdom which, being beyond both being and non-being, is able to give them each their respective functions. Buddha represents a living viewpoint which realized as-it-is-ness and is able to place *samsara*, the life-and-death cycle as it is (即 SOKU) in *Nirvana* (Awareness).

The Christian God, although he incorporates both being and action, is a personal and transcendent God

who creates and reveals, but who is completely and entirely different and unreachable from man and the material world. Buddha, on the other hand, is the one who has awakened to the one, original Self. Thus we can say that Christianity sees God as the Absolute Other, while Buddhism find deity in the True Self As Absolute Self.

The above two points reveal diametrically opposed viewpoints on the part of Christianity and Buddhism on the subject of non-being and the Absolute. These ideas may be based on their different conceptions of non-being or nothingness (無), so let us study this point in more detail.

3. "Nothingness" in Buddhism

Christianity is concerned with the existential problem of life and death rather than the metaphysical problem of being and non-being. *Nihil*, as in *creatio ex nihilio* does not apply to "non-being" as opposed to "being" in an ontological sense, but the nihilism which imposes such characteristics as creatureliness, finitude, and mortality on all beings. In addition, non-being, nihilism and death, is totally transcended by God, who created everything out of nothing, and whose eternal life is beyond all nihilism and death. God has the power to obliterate nihilism and death with his absolute life. Christianity thus accords non-being the status of a privative principle in a relative only. In contrast, the Buddhist concept of non-being, rather than being simply a negative principle, is an absolutely affirmative principle which cuts through the opposition between being and non-being to their original source, making both affirmative and negative views possible. In this way, nothingness becomes more than just something to be overcome. It is the ultimate principle which allows everything to exist in its own individuality. Nevertheless, the metaphysical problem of being and non-being is not of primary concern to Buddhism either. Like Christianity, Buddhism is fundamentally interested in the problem of life and death. Because of its conception of *Karma*, the state of ongoing mutation in the life and death cycle in which all sentient beings must constantly move, Buddhism has concentrated on teaching us how to emancipate ourselves from this life and death chain. Even so, Buddhism retains an interest in the ontological or logical categories of being and non-being, affirmation and negation. Buddhism does in fact discuss the problem of life and death, but the discussion is inevitably reduced to the problem of being and non-being, because Buddhism considered all creatures, both human and non-human, to be "beings" and teaches how transitory they are, without making any sharp distinctions between man and nature, or between sentient and non-sentient beings.

According to Dogen (1200-1253), his position of

"oneness of practice and enlightenment" combined with "all beings are the Buddha nature" completely overcomes the following three dualities:

1. The duality of subject and object. When Dogen emphasizes "all beings *are* the Buddha nature" instead of "all living beings *have* the Buddha nature is no longer an object that is possessed and aimed at to be realized by the subject (living beings), but subject (all beings) and object (Buddha nature) are identical, combined by are." Yet they are not immediately identical because all beings are limitless and the Buddha nature is nonsubstantial. Through the realization of impermanence they are dynamically nondualistic yet one. Here realizer and the realized are one and the same. Even a distinction between creator and creature does not exist because the realization of "all beings are the Buddha nature" is based on dehomocentric, cosmological dimension. Oneness of practice and enlightenment, an exceedingly human and personal problem, is realized not on a personalistic basis but on the limitless cosmological basis. Hence simultaneous attainment of a *zazen* practitioner and everything in the universe. This is also the reason Dogen emphasizes self-enlightenment qua enlightening others.
2. The duality of potentiality and actuality. The Buddha nature is not a potentiality to be actualized sometime in the future but originally and always the basic nature of all beings. At each and every moment in the ever changing movement of all beings including men, the Buddha nature manifests itself as "suchness" or "thus-comes." Since "suchness" or "thus-comes" is the Buddha nature, Dogen says as stated before that "The principle of the Buddha nature is that it is not endowed prior to enlightenment . . . The Buddha nature is unquestionably realized simultaneously with enlightenment." Therefore, for Dogen the distinction of Buddha nature and Buddha is also overcome. The simultaneity of the Buddha nature and enlightenment (Buddha) is realized only here and now at each and every moment. From this point of view the theological ideas of "participation" and "anticipation" are not acceptable because, though dialectical, they imply the ultimate Reality beyond "here and now." They look to be well aware of man's finitude but are lacking a keen realization of impermanence common to all beings, which is fully realized only "here and now" at each and every moment in the ever changing world.
3. The duality of means and end. Practice in itself

that is, as a means, approaching enlightenment as an end, is an illusion. With such a practice one may infinitely approximate but never reach the "end," thereby falling into a false endlessness (G. schlechte Unendlichkeit). In the very realization of the illusory character of such a practice one may find oneself at the real starting point for life because in this realization one realizes that the Buddha nature is not the end but the basis of practice. Even in an initial resolution to attain enlightenment the Buddha nature fully manifests itself. Dogen says, "Both the moment of initial resolution and the moment of attaining highest enlightenment are the Buddha Way; beginning, middle, and end equally are the Buddha way. For Dogen religious conduct, i.e., initial resolution, practice, enlightenment, and *nirvana*, consists of an infinite circle, where every point is its starting point as well as its end."¹⁵

In dealing with the problem of being and non-being, Buddhism treats human beings as existing in the same dimension as nature in general. There is a distinct and essential difference between Buddhism and pure logic or philosophy in that Buddhism is a practical way of life which takes as its goal the removal of all discriminatory thought on the path to a non-discriminating Wisdom. The idea of "doing away with the dichotomy of being and non-being, "which is seen as a problem of discriminatory mind which attaches itself to the distinction between being and non-being, is emphasized with an eye toward the practical need to be free any two-sided view of reality.

Although related, the problem of life and death is not identical with the ontological problem of being and non-being to the Buddhist. In fact, these two problems are not even commensurate with each other. The problem of life and death may be classed with other practical problems related to human values, for example, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil, etc. These problems are not considered only in their ethical sense, but also as relating to discrimination, for it is in the discriminating mind that such dichotomies originate. Thus, it can be seen that Buddhism's goal is to help man realize the non-discriminating Wisdom by eliminating all discriminatory thought, and returning to the non-dualistic, true suchness that makes no differentiations whatsoever. Accordingly, Buddhist wisdom transcends any kind of dualism, be it ontological, ethical or epistemological. Not only life and death, even as involved in distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, etc. But all distinctions and oppositions throughout the universe of man and nature are transcended by the non-discriminating Wisdom as taught by Buddhism, thus opening the way for emancipation,

not only of man (self) but also of nature. For this reason, Buddhism states: "all the trees and herbs and land may attain Buddhahood, "and "Mountains and rivers and the earth itself all disclose their *dharmakāya* (the embodiment of Truth). Buddhism calls the case of all "discrimination-thought" *avidya* (ignorance), and only by dispelling its darkness can the true non-discriminating wisdom come to light. Buddha, the Awakened One, is one who has fully and perfectly attained this non-discriminating wisdom, so that in the end, we must say that the problem of life and death consists of the problem of the discriminating mind which originates in ignorance.

According to Dogen, *Shoji* (Birth and Death) is as follows:

"Since there is a buddha within birth and death, there is no birth and death." It is also said: "Since there is no buddha within birth and death, one is not deluded by birth and death." These ideas were uttered by two Zen masters, Chia-shan (805-881), and Ting-shan (771-853). Being the words of those who have attained the Way, they cannot have been uttered in vain. Those who would be free from birth and death must clearly realize their meaning.

For a person to seek buddha apart from birth and death would be like pointing the cart thills northward when you wished to go south to Yueh, or like facing south to see Ursa major (in the northern skies); the cause of birth and death would increase all the more, and he would leave completely the Way of deliverance.

Just understand that birth and death itself is *nirvana*, and you will neither hate one as being birth and death, nor cherish the other as being *nirvana*. Only then can you be free of birth and death.

It is a mistake to think you pass from birth to death. Being one stage of total time, birth is already possessed of before and after. For this reason, in the Buddha Dharma it is said that birth itself is no-birth. Being one stage of total time as well, cessation of life also is possessed of before and after. Thus it is said, extinction itself is non-extinction. When one speaks of birth, there is nothing at all apart from birth. When one speaks of death, there is nothing at all apart from death. Therefore, when birth comes, you should just give yourself to birth; when death comes you should give yourself to death. Do not hate them. Do not desire them.

This present birth and death itself is the Life of buddha. If you attempt to reject it with distaste, you are losing thereby the Life of buddha. If you abide in it, attaching to birth and death, you also lose the Life of buddha, and leave yourself with (only) the appearance of buddha. You only attain

the mind of buddha when there is no hating (of birth and death) and no desiring (of *nirvana*). But do not try to gauge it with your mind or speak it with words. When you simply release and forget both your body and your mind and throw yourself into the house of buddha, and when functioning comes from the direction of buddha and you go in accord with it, then with no strength needed and no thought expended, freed from birth and death, you become buddha. Then there can be no obstacle in any man's mind.

There is an extremely easy way to become buddha. Refraining from all evils, not clinging to birth and death, work in deep compassion for all sentient beings, respecting those over you and pitying those below you, without any detesting or desiring, worrying or lamentation -- this is what is called buddha. Do not search beyond it.¹⁶

When we talk of emancipation from life and death, we do not mean the mere negation of or going beyond the existential facts of life and actual mind which discriminates between life and death and adamantly clings to these distinctions. Emancipation means to enter into the reality of life and death as they really are, and to live and die in accordance with the natural laws of and death, thus transcending them from within by touching their deepest depths. To eliminate discriminatory thoughts, we must eliminate the discriminating mind, for if we do not emancipate ourselves from the *avidya* or fundamental ignorance which spawns it, we can never escape from the vicious circle of life and death. However, we can also say that the discriminatory mind, with its inherent ignorance, disintegrates the moment one comes to terms with the problem of life and death. Because the problem of life and death is thus understood in terms of the discriminatory mind, Buddhism believes that one's emancipation is not limited to one's self but takes place in the context the emancipation of all other selves and the entirety of nature. True emancipation from the life and death cycle can take place only when the discriminatory mind relating to all things (for example, oneself and other selves, subject and object, man and nature, etc.) is totally overcome and destroyed. Therefore, the state of emancipation and *Nirvana* are often termed the Reality of Suchness, *Sūnyatā* (the real Emptiness), Naturalness, or As-it-is-ness. Nishitani says:

As the saying goes, "A bird flies and it is like a bird: a fish moves and it seems to be a fish." The in-itself of the flying bird is "like a bird," the moving fish-itself is "resembling a fish." or conversely, the "like" (*gotoshi* 如) of the bird is no other than "like true reality" (suchness, *nyojitsu* 如実).¹⁷

However, just as the non-discriminating Wisdom is about to be attained through the renunciation of all discriminatory thought by eliminating its roots, there arises acutely serious problem: the problem of attachment to the negative principle of non-being. In Zen, particularly, it is wrong to make the relative concept of non-being into an absolute. This attachment has come under fire throughout Buddhist history as a "rigid view of nothingness," a "view of annihilatory nothingness," or "little understanding of negativity." If we stop Buddhahood as transcending all sentient beings, we will have stopped short of our goal of freeing ourselves from discriminatory thought. In fact, by being attached to the relative principle of non-being, we will have regressed and made the discriminatory mind that much more deeply rooted, for it will have absorbed its own feedback by absolutizing the concept of *Nirvana* which distinguishes it from life and death, as well as the concept of Buddhahood which separates it from sentient beings. If the non-discriminating Wisdom is differentiated from the discriminative mind, it cannot be called "non-discriminative mind, it cannot be called "non-discriminating," because this differentiation alone is discrimination, which must be overcome in order to achieve the true non-discriminating Wisdom. Therefore, absolute negation, even the negation of the so-called non-discriminating Wisdom, must occur -- the complete negation, even of nothingness, and the thorough elimination of the "rigid view of nothingness." In short, the overcoming of transcendence and a complete reversion to negativity make possible a total return to and full realization of the One Self who is neither transcendent nor immanent, neither one's own self or other selves, and at the same time, both transcendent and immanent, one's own self and other selves, in other words, an Absolute Nothingness which is totally beyond relative being or non-being, and can let them stand in relation to each other. This absolute nothingness is not a negative principle but an absolutely affirmative one. The Buddhist absolute, the non-discriminating Awakened One is the same as the Self-Realization.

4. Conclusion

We have previously discussed the fact that the Japanese mind is a complex one, (as are the minds of other nations), and we have seen how Buddhism and other forms of belief have exerted their influence in its family structure, its concern for happiness in one's own lifetime, and its ability to assimilate foreign ideas and influences. The Japanese mind is uncritical and unanalytical; at the same time, it is opportunistic, eclectic and syncretistic. Today, as the old religions lose their hold on the Japanese family, the Japanese people are searching for a new spiritual foundation, something to replace the sense of solidarity and continuity that was lost after the defeat in World

War II.

Ninety years ago Japan began to assimilate European culture. Today practically ninety per cent of the teaching at Japanese universities is bound up with the culture of Europe and America. The study of Japanese culture is almost entirely neglected. Students swallow whole chunks of Western culture, but they are unable to digest spiritually what has been offered them. They study diligently prior to examinations and, after the examination is over, proceed to forget what has been learned. The main objective for most of them is to complete university studies in order to secure a good position for a good living. Studies very often do not become a means for cultural enrichment. The Japanese have accepted only the material side of Western culture and even that imperfectly.

. . . Because they lack the spiritual culture (*Geisteskultur*) on which Western material culture is built, the little they have adopted of that spiriture is confined to a materialistic sceptical philosophy which will, in the long run, prove fatal to the development of traditional Japanese culture, for it is not conducive to a positive spiritual reconstruction of culture. For this reason Japanese spiritual life is at present undergoing a severe crisis.

The younger generation is pitiable. While the older generation may still be to live by the light of traditional culture, the younger generation has been cut off from the sources of Japanese culture, without having made the spiritual basis of European culture their own. The younger generation with rare exceptions has no *Weltanschauung* and few ideals. Some have tried their luck with Communism and give up in disappointment. Democracy and freedom, so widely advertised in post-war Japan, have also disillusioned the younger generation. The consequence of all this is that university students see studies as stepping-stones to an economically good life and no more. Also, with regard to morals, many go astray. Serious young men see an escape from the situation in suicide. Few find their way to the Christian religion.

Japan is also facing a severe crisis in the religious field. When Buddhism came to Japan, it spread rapidly and widely, more so than in any other country. It has a true treasure in enlightenment. But now it is divided into many sects and is steadily losing ground and influence with the people. For quite some time now a materialistic philosophy has been gnawing at its very marrow. Moreover, because of the agrarian reforms put into effect after the last war, many temples which were formerly rich have now lost the greater part

of their wealth. The temples were allowed to keep only as much property as was necessary for their livelihood. Very often bonzes have to till the fields with their own hands in order to feed themselves and their families. Naturally, they get as much help from their faithful as they can, and this has led to the criticism that they perform their religious duties perfunctorily and interested only in religion as a business, in order to make money. Often one can hear ordinary people say that Buddhism is a good religion, but the bonzes have no zeal.¹⁸

We will discuss, therefore, the compatibility of the absoluteness of faith and the indigenization of the Gospel.

We must admit that it is a contradiction in terms to say that christianity must hold fast to its claim of ultimacy and take the responsibility of elevating the Japanese mind, and at the same time say that Christianity must be revised to fit local custom and practice in order to win acceptance by the Japanese. I am convinced, however, that we must inevitably travel this selfsame path because we have the responsibility to create opportunities for continuity and discontinuity, which are indispensable for the entry of the Gospel into Japan.

If Chistianity is to be acceptable to the Japanese, it must come to them as Japanese itself. They must be able to relate to it and feel comfortable with it, and it must be relevant to their historical, social and spiritual needs. Chistianity will have to touch the Japanese through their sense of the present, otherwise, it may not even become subject to choice for them. However, Christianity must never lose sight of its central responsibility : to raise the Japanese mind to concern for the ultimate.

There always lurks the danger of syncretism : the Japanese may well decide to reformulate the Gospel to their own preference, regardless of its true meaning. But risk must not discourage the undertaking ; as Tillich says :

Living faith includes the doubt itself, the courage to take this doubt into itself, and the risk of courage. There is an element of immediate certainty in every faith, which is not subject to doubt, courage and risk -- the unconditional concern itself. . . . faith still can be affirmed if the certainty is given that even the failure of the risk of faith cannot separate the concern of one's daring faith from the ultimate.¹⁹

In affirming our faith in Jesus Christ, we are aware of the risk we incur, but we have the courage to state our beliefs. In the same way, we must face the challenge implicit in our goal of the indigenization of the Gospel, and we must meet it with courage and at

the risk of our faith.

Let me explain what I have stated so far. Japan's major religions are obviously Shinto and Buddhism. In my opinion, Shinto has penetrated the Japanese consciousness so deeply that the Japanese themselves are unaware of it. Confucianism and Buddhism, of course, have influenced Shinto and vice versa. What is the reason for Shinto's deep influence on the Japanese? The geography of Japan has played an important role in this influence, and Japan is considered a fertile ground for a religion like Shinto.

After World War II, however, Japan was forced to make a drastic modernization of its society, greater than in any previous period. As the modernization progressed, the nature and geography of Japan were modified drastically. Both industrialization and urbanization have robbed Japan of much its natural beauty. Losing its natural environment, what direction can Shinto take? The same thing can be said not only of Shinto but also of Japanese Buddhism as well.

What we must consider next is whether or not we can find a mentally supportive element in Shinto and Buddhism for the future of Japan. Shinto is a very vague religion and I can perceive no goal in it. In addition, the concept of Nothingness (Mu) in Buddhism no longer influences young Japanese today. Then, can we expect something from these religions in terms of the future of Japan? Although I would not class myself as a pessimist, I do not think we can expect much from them. And I believe that anyone who has ever considered the Japanese religious situation would agree with me.

In the past, over the course of many centuries, Buddhism has given Japan many things. This is undeniable. The present poor state of Buddhism has a connection with its intellectual, that is dialectical weakness. The young are sceptical. They wish to know the why of everything. This questioning method they have learned from the West. Science is idolized, and the young are now facing the problems of faith and knowledge. But Buddhism and its philosophy is not suited for logical and dialectical reasoning, which is the foundation of modern science. Buddhism should not be condemned outright for its lack of dialectic, but the young are impatient and think that Buddhim is backward and that it is impossible to reconcile its teaching with modern science, especially the natural science. . .

A revival of Buddhism seems as unlikely as a revival of Shinto and Emperor worship. Anyone who knows the Japanese of today and their character will have to admit this. Many bonzes see the difficulties clearly. Some are clamouring for an adaptation of Buddhism to the mentality of the modern Japanese. The question is : How far can this be done without destroying the

essence of Buddhism?

For the sake of completeness, a word or two about the new religions (Shinkōshū-kyō), that is, religions founded in recent times, is in order. These religions claim great numbers of followers. They are growing steadily and much faster than Christianity. Most of these religions are concerned primarily with earthly advantages, such as health and property. They do not have the depth of true Buddhism and for this reason cannot be expected to last too long.²⁰

If Japan expects to coexist peacefully with the other nations of the world, it is impossible to focus on National Shinto as the center of the country as was done in pre-war Japan: there is no need for it either. National Shinto did succeed in uniting the Japanese race, but the result was disastrous. First of all, Shinto possesses no historical facts. For a religion to survive without historical fact would make for a very difficult future.

What within Shinto can transcend its own particularism and provide the basis for a genuinely modern and a genuinely differentiated personality, culture and society? Probably nothing. . . It should be emphasized the genuinely mediatorial and non-absolute character, not only of the emperor, but even of *Amaterasu Omikami*, who after all was never claimed to be an absolute creator God.²¹

For example, the Exodus of Moses gave us the concept of corporate liberation. There is a corporate historical experience of liberation as a people. Intellectually, Buddhism has far deeper principles than Shinto, but ended up a mere personal ethic in Japan. It is therefore unlikely that the Japanese Buddhist ethic can develop a universal concept like common justice. Christians in Japan compose less than one percent of the Japanese population, however, there is no other religion which can play Christianity's prophetic role in the future of Japan. Of course, the direct application of Western Christianity to Japan will probably fail as it has in the past, because it does not relate to the feelings of the Japanese, but if so, how can this problem be solved? This is most difficult thing and puts me in the thought at all times. Here again Dr. Bellah says:

Already educated Japanese move more easily in a culturally diverse world than all but a handful of the most emancipated Westerners. But somehow confident selfidentity as a Japanese and confident appropriation of and contribution to world culture need to be seen as necessarily going together rather than as alternatives. To the extent that this is not fully the case the old

distinction between "Japanesec tradition" and "Foreign culture" needs to be finally transcended.²²

Slogas such as "Let's change Japan into a Chistian nation!" no longer seem to be acceptable. Although it is impossible to imagine what the future of Christianity in Japan will be, we can call it a success if the central concept of Christianity, *Agape*, becomes one of Japan's universal concepts.

It is appropriate to close this article with Karl Rahner:

For in the Christian outlook -- and only in this outlook -- man has become the subject which Western man has discovered himself to be; only in Christianity and by its teaching about the radically created nature of the world as something confided to man to serve as the raw material of *his* activity and as something which is not more important and powerful than man but is meant to serve and is created *for* man, could there spring up that attitude to the cosmos which demythologizes it and which legitimizes the will to control the world. . . Christianity has always been the religion of an infinite future when Christianity tells us that the future which it professes has always already surpassed all the ideologies concerning the intramundane future of the new man -- and when, even though in a critical spirit, examines and tones them down, demythologizing them also so to speak -- then it does this out of a truly Chistian, eschatological spirit and not out of a spirit of static conservatism. In this way, Christianity makes man morally responsible to God in his justified desire for an intramundane future -- to be created by man himself in unlimited development -- and opens this desire to the infinite life of God. This is the life of which it is will always remain true (and of which it always becomes true anew) that it has been promised to us as our most proper future by grace.²³

N O T E

1. Cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. III, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 1016-1017.
2. *The Jerusalem Bible*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Stand Ed.), p. 273 & p. 383.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
4. Karl Barth, *Credo* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 28.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
6. *The Jerusalem Bible*, p. 15.
7. Barth, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
8. Cf. Wender Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek*

- Paideia* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1961).
9. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (New York : Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), Three volumes in one, pp. 187-188.
 10. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* trans. by G. T. Thomson (New York : Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 55.
 11. Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, selec. and trans. and intro. by Schubert M. Ogden (New York : Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), p.177.
 12. Barth, *Credo*, p. 31.
 13. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
 14. Tetsutaro Ariga, *An Interrupted Logic* in the volume of essays dedicated to Dr. Daisetz Suzuki on his ninetieth birthday with the title *Buddhism and Culture*. (Kyoto : Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1960), pp. 175-176. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 173-187. See also same author's *Problems of Being in the Christian Thought* (Tokyo : Sobunsha Publishing Co., 1969).
 15. Masao Abe, "Dogen on Buddha Nature," *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. IV, No. 1, May 1971, pp. 61-63.
 16. Dogen's *Shoji* (Birth and Death) in *The Eastern Buddhist*, trans. by Norman Waddell and Masao Abe, Vol. V, No. 1, May, 1972, pp. 78-80.
 17. Keiji Nishitani, "The Standpoint of Sūnyatā," trans. by Jan van Bragt and Seisaku Yamamoto, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. VI, No. 1, May, 1973, p. 89.
 18. Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle, *Zen-Way to Enlightenment* (New York : Taplinger Publishing Company, 1966) pp. 65-67.
 19. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York : Harper Torchbooks, 1957), pp. 102-105.
 20. Enomiya-Lassalle, *Zen-Way to Enlightenment*, pp. 67-68.
 21. Robert N. Bellah, "Shinto and Modernization," *Proceedings the second International Conference for Shinto Studies, Theme : Continuity & Change* (Tokyo : Japanese Culture Institute, Kokugakuin University, 1968), pp. 160-161.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
 23. Karl Rahner, "Chirstianity and 'New Man'" in *Theological Investigations*, Vol, V, trans. by Karl H. Kruger, (London : Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), p. 153.

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