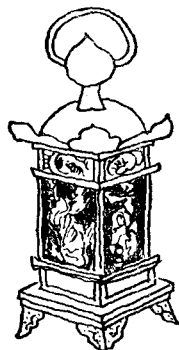


RELIGION AND MORALITY

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Generally speaking, religion and morality are treated together, but scientifically this combination creates a real problem. Moreover, since it is not easy to explain the logical relation between religion and morality, I shall treat the subject today from a more familiar and comprehensive viewpoint.

When a Japanese travels abroad he comes face to face with the problem of his personal religion. To get a passport he usually must fill in a space in his application papers which concerns his faith. At the hotels of Europe there is a blank in the hotel registry for the religious faith of the guests; and since Europeans dislike unbelievers and will assume that we are unbelievers if we don't make some entry, we have to write in the name of some religion.

Suppose, however, that I do not know what religion to write in. My father's tomb is in a Buddhist temple. In so far as his tomb is concerned, I may be considered to be a Buddhist, but unlike pre-war Japan, today we do not live in a society which considers the family as the basic unit. We live in a democratic society in which the individual is the basic unit. Therefore, it is dubious as to how far I can be considered to be a Buddhist.

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When I was a pupil in the primary school, my mother was zealously devoted to Buddhism in order to heal the spiritual shock which followed the death of my father. At that time, because my mother made me, I attended Sunday school at a temple, visited the temple at the spring and autumn equinox, and listened to sermons. When I entered middle school I rapidly began to lose all interest in religion and, by the time I was a high school student, I had become completely sceptical toward all established religions. This was nihilism. Finally, I become a stranger to Buddhism and the temple.

To-day, being a professor of philosophy and morals, the problem of religion is naturally a subject with which I must wrestle as one of the problems of philosophy. However, this does not mean that I am a religious man. Moreover, being a student of the philosophy of religion, I take an interest in the metaphysical doctrines of Buddhism, but this does not mean that it is my faith.

Christianity : Non-church-ism

To speak frankly, since I have been studying European thought and its history, I am strongly attracted by Christianity. In the future I may have greater interest in Buddhism, but up to now I have been concerned about Christianity. Yet even so, I cannot say that I hold the Christian faith. Christian knowledge has come to me either through the Bible or through the works of early theological thinkers such as Augustine. I have not been baptized, and do not intend to go to church.

Here in Japan we have what is called "Non-church-ism"

(*Mukyōkai-shugi*).^a Kanzō Uchimura^b (1861—1930) was its founder. However, this name does not mean non-faith in Christianity. The adherents of “Non-church-ism” are strong in faith and have a strong evangelistic zeal. In saying that I do not go to church, I do not mean to imply an interest in “Non-church-ism.” Though I am interested in Christianity, I have no faith.

In this connection we often hear the criticism that in Japan there is no religion in the true sense of the term. The Japanese people, we are told, are not religious-minded. They are religiously indifferent. Why does this criticism arise? I think there are several reasons. One is because of the supposed relationship between religion and morals. Religion usually requires that we be conscious of a transcendent or supernatural world; whereas morality has its focus on human reason. But man does not live by reason only. Since he has passions, desires, and impulses, morality becomes a thing easy to say but hard to practice. If we try to be moral we ineffectually go round in circles. The harder we try the more keenly we feel the evil in ourselves, the desires which are irrepressible. Then at last we find that we cannot deal with ourselves by morality alone. Ultimately we require the power of love which exceeds morality or reason.

The Buddhist Position

Here emerges religion which is different from morality: the gospel of Christ's love in the Christian religion in Europe, for

a. 無教会主義 b. 内村鑑三

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example, or the Buddhist teachings of Shinran^a (1173--1262) in the Kamakura^b period: "Even the good are saved; why not the wicked." In the dimension of religion it is required that we be in union with the transcendent world. This is the world which is beyond the human relations of our daily moral life. In comparing Christianity and Buddhism, the former tries to embody its faith in the daily, moral life as love of one's fellowmen, while the latter tries to be released from that life.

In this respect we may say that in a certain sense Buddhism is stronger than Christianity in its religious character. For instance, we can say that the way to reach the state of union with transcendent or universal being is by means of *zazen*^c ("meditation in zen") which is purer and more religious than the moral and relative character of Christianity. When we compare Buddhism with Christianity, generally speaking, Buddhism may be said to have a strong tendency to escape from this world. In other words, when it rises above morality, it finds the way of religion.

Until the Meiji era, religion existed separate from morality. I suppose this resulted from the religious character of Buddhism. It is not of such a nature that it can provide a basis for social intercourse. Escape from the temporal was the way of the virtuous priest or the priest of note, and was at the same time the objective of the faith of the common people.

However, we cannot say that all Buddhism follows this principle. In Burma and Ceylon, countries of Hinayana Buddhism, for instance, Buddhism is almost a state religion, like

a. 親鸞 b. 鎌倉 c. 坐禪

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Shinto in Japan before the war; but in Japan where the influence of Mahayana Buddhism has dominated, to be above the world has been regarded as the purpose of the religious faith. Accordingly religion in Japan had no relation with daily life, either personal or institutional. Thus, in a certain sense, as this is the proper nature of religion, we cannot say definitely that the Japanese people are not religious-minded. An aspect of religion has been kept alive in Japan which has no relation with morality. It is above morality, and since religion in Japan has no relation with morality or daily life, the common people are not bound to adhere to any one religion. Consequently at the spring and autumn festivals they visit both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. But they do not care about the number of kami or sects. Our history has developed around this idea.

Concept of Morality in Japan

Therefore, a question arises regarding the history of morality in Japan. Generally speaking, the characteristic view of the Japanese people centers in the question of the presence or lack of material value. But this is true in Europe also. For instance, when we say "good" (*yoi*)^a or "bad" (*warui*),^b it does not necessarily mean moral evil or goodness. We say, "Today the weather is bad (*warui*)"; "I am out of sorts (*kibun ga warui*)^c"; or "I feel fine (*kibun ga yoi*)."^d These are daily expressions. When Gabriel Marcel, the French existentialist philosopher, visited Japan in 1957, he also said that the French word *mal* ("bad") originally had been used in this meaning.

a. 善い (良い, 好い) b. 悪い c. 気分が悪い d. 気分が良い

It is the same in English and in German. Originally, such simple and everyday words as “good” or “bad” had no moral quality. I think this is especially the case with Japanese. For Japan is so blessed with a climate of four seasons and the Japanese people have such a wholly pleasure-seeking character, that definite moral ideas could not have originated from the natural features of this country.

Confucian Influence

Then where did such normative or systematic morality come from? It has a Confucian Chinese origin. Though it is somewhat doubtful as to what extent Confucianism is suited to the character of the Japanese people, it made remarkable progress after the civil war of the Ōnin^a era (1467—1468). Then the samurai class gained strength and the feudalistic system based on the relation between master and retainer took shape among them. And, as some morality was necessary in order to maintain such a system, Confucianism was adopted for this purpose. In the Edo^b period, when the Tokugawa^c government rigidly regulated the relations of master and retainer, and established the social standing of the military, agricultural, industrial and mercantile classes, as well as the parent-centered family system as the basis for the feudal system, Confucianism played an important role. Yet, although in Kyoto there was a movement under the direction of Baigan Ishida^d (1685—1744) to propagate a Confucian school called *Sekimon Shingaku*^e among the townsmen, it is doubtful whether Confucian ideas penetrated the moral view of the common people in the Edo period.

a. 応仁 b. 江戸 c. 徳川 d. 石田梅巖 e. 石門心学

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For example, the monogamous system common to Western democracies was not implanted by Confucianism. The fact that there was a monogamous system in Europe was made known to us through missionary work after the introduction of the Christian religion by Francis Xavier in Kagoshima in 1549. Until that time, it was thought that an ordinary man remained monogamous only because he could not feed more than one woman. Even though the nobles and the rich had several women, they were not regarded as immoral. I think it was only after the Meiji era or rather, to speak extremely, after World War II that the idea become really established in Japan that the monogamous system is morally good.

In Europe Christianity has existed for more than fifteen hundred years and Christian moral ideas have been established in conformity with the Christian religion. Consequently, religion and morality are closely related. Because Christianity arose from Judaism, which emphasizes moral judgement, there is a strong moral principle in Christianity that Buddhism lacks. Therefore, Buddhism did not develop a systematic moral point of view. On the contrary, from the Edo period on Confucianism has provided the moral ideas of the Japanese.

Modernization

The real problem, however, was in the post-Meiji period rather than the Edo period. In the Meiji era the feudal system was abolished and the distinction between the military, agricultural, industrial, and mercantile classes disappeared. Consequently, when Japan, with the introduction of European civilization, began to move towards modernization a new morality

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was required to support and accelerate it.

In Europe, modernization meant that the individual had become conscious of himself as a democratic man. But we in Japan had neither the background to develop such a morality, nor sufficient time to think about it. And since a moral view could not be formed artificially and quickly like ordinary institutions, the Meiji government adopted the principle of "Japanese spirit, European learning." While introducing the institutions and techniques of Western countries, the centralized Meiji government, in order to establish a moral basis for the people, applied to the entire nation without modification the Confucianism which from the Edo period had been mainly the moral basis of the samurai class.

As we see in the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, the government took the family as the moral basis and tried to form a family state. In the religious field, the government made Shinto a state religion and adopted the principle of making the Shinto rites of the Imperial Family a part of the state religion. Japanese modernization may have some contradictions in the financial and other fields, but in the field of religion and morals it started by maintaining a big contradiction. This contradiction is one of the spiritual reasons why Japan was converted into a militaristic country, and was led into the Great War and finally to defeat.

Morality and the Suppression of Christianity

Where did this contradiction come from? Shinto is a rather simple nature religion, whereas Buddhism is very "religious" but has no moral principles such as Christianity has. Rather

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than not having them, Buddhism endeavors to keep truth aloof from moral principles. Though Christianity was introduced in the 16th century, due to suppression by the Tokugawa government it was later abandoned ; but I think this was not the only reason. We can find another reason in the excessive manner in which missionary work was carried on. It was militaristic. It rejected all culture, except Christianity, as barbarous, and it regarded other religions as superstitions or as pseudo-religions.

Christianity was introduced into this country by militaristic, Jesuit missionary methods without a full knowledge of Japanese traditions, history and national character ; and then it disappeared before a century had passed. Perhaps if it had not been abandoned, the monogamous system and other moral ideas introduced in the Edo period would have remained. All this is the remote cause of the contradiction that existed in Japan after the Meiji period.

We cannot readily say what kind of morality and religion should have been adopted after the Meiji Restoration when the new Japan set out toward modernization. As I have already stated above, a new morality can take root in a society only over a long period. It cannot be formed rapidly and artificially. The same is true of religion. Even though Western technical and material culture was introduced after the Restoration, a specified religion such as Christianity could not be forced on all the nation. Therefore, although the social system had changed, the leaders could not find a new way to guide the people.

In Europe, people have confessed the Christian religion for more than fifteen hundred years but, strange as it may seem,

this is not one and the same religion. There are many Christian denominations. Protestantism headed by Luther and Calvin arose from its opposition to the Catholic Church. Thus, the Christian church split and each division developed independently.

As Max Weber says, the Protestant movement was a prelude to the rise of modern capitalism in Europe. However, putting the discussion of this aside, I want to say that the religion of Christ split and developed in such a way that we can say that Christianity has an historical character, which was the result of Christianity's close relationship with morality, for morality itself has an historical character.

Buddhism and Confucianism

As for Buddhism and Confucianism, it can be said that they are lacking in an historical character. As remarked above, Buddhism has a strong tendency toward detachment from the world; that is, it disregards the current of the times, whereas Christianity in Europe attached importance to "time," as can be seen, for example, in the doctrine of eschatology. In the history of the Christian Church the concept of "time" becomes a central question. In Buddhism, however, this sense of time or history is lacking. At the end of the Heian^a period, the "age of decadence" (a pessimistic view which regarded the age as the days of the "Latter Law" of Buddhism, that is, *mappō*^b) was prevalent; but it was not a question of the sense of time. It was used as an expression deploring the state of the confused world. Thus, we may say that in Buddhism the sense of time or of the current of time is lacking.

a. 平安 b. 末法

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Confucianism too has no moral view which can be adapted to the development of history. In the scriptures of Confucianism there are edifying words for us and the parables in them are adaptable notwithstanding the changes of history. This shows that Confucianism is based on the human way of saints or sages, with the point of view that morality does not change in the course of history but rather that it is universal beyond the current of time. Accordingly Confucianism is weak in its historical character. Its morality has no element that develops in history. In Confucianism morality is not what is found in a family, as in the case of the horizontal relations of a husband and a wife in Europe. It is found in a family vertical relationship based on ancestors. This Confucian morality, which is lacking in an historical character, is what took root in Japan.

Post-war Morality

After the war the pre-war moral view based on the family unit, the view of a family-state based on the idea just stated, and the political view in which the Emperor is the father and the people are his children, collapsed completely, and Japan is now recognized as a democratic country. But in order to do this, the first steps in attaining the morality of a democratic country are to become conscious of oneself, to organize as a community, and finally to be personally and voluntarily conscious of the fundamental moral rule of such a community. If the individual and Japanese society do not do this, even though Japan has become a democratic country, we may be put under the control of a dictatorship. Therefore, in order to make

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democracy really develop, we must establish a new moral outlook. On the assumption that we can think things out and solve questions for ourselves, we should know instinctively, voluntarily what we should we do for the better development of society.

In general we feel that morality has the influence of customs and tradition. For instance, to give moral education in a school where education is compulsory gives us the impression that traditions are being restored. The problem we confront is to create a morality suitable to a democratic society, rather than to pay respect to Japanese traditions or custom though, needless to say, we have to develop good traditions. The system of moral education, which was put in force two years ago, should be pushed towards the end of creating a morality for a democratic country. This was my aim as a principal member of the Teaching Materials Committee for Moral Education established by the Ministry of Education.

In promoting morality, however, it is necessary that it be backed by religion. There must be a religious element to sanction the creation of a new morality or to enable it to get firmly rooted, because man cannot always be tense and rely on reason only. He is agitated by passions, instincts, and impulses. Yet because the Japanese people do not hold to one religion, but live in an atmosphere in which there are many religions, this question of a religious backing is the most knotty problem we face in dealing with the question of morality or moral education in Japan. We cannot name a specific religion as necessary to back morality.

In the history of the Christian Church in Europe from the

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end of Middle Ages, the temporal power and the Papal power were in constant strife, and generally speaking, religion became separated from the state. An exception is Denmark where the Protestant faith is the state religion and the ministers are paid by the state as government officers,—but even there Kierkegaard, originator of existentialism, attacked the state church.

In Japan, as Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism were protected by the state, religions became powerless and religious organizations were bound hand and foot by a feudalistic system within their own institutions. This was considered to be one of the remote reasons why religions were powerless during the recent war-confused period, and why religionists could not take the lead in the spiritual formation of new Japan. Therefore, I think the self-reform of religions is required of religionist today.

After the war freedom of belief was given to us. This means not only that we can hold any religion whatever we like, but it also signifies the necessity of establishing faith in freedom as a support for freedom of faith. After all, for the development of a democratic society the independent freedom of individuals must be taken as a basis, and a new moral point of view and faith in religion supported by our independent freedom must be established. To attain this end, religionists should regain their independence within their denominations and should reform themselves.

When I talk with foreigners, they often wonder why the Japanese intellectual class inclines to the left so easily in everything. When Mr. Koestler came of Japan, he published a statement against the attitude of the Pen Club here, which

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caused much trouble. I admit that Japanese intellectuals have generally been this way since the Meiji period. As Western culture was accepted they have, consciously or unconsciously, fallen into nihilistic tendencies. In consequence, it happens that they go for Marxism or anarchism. Yet I must admit that they fall into the depth of nihilistic sentiment as far as moral and religious problems are concerned. There are several causes for their fallacy, which I cannot discuss here. One of the main causes is that morality and religions in Japan have not the capacity to penetrate actively into the heart of the intellectual class.

Therefore, in Japan a new democratic morality should start now. If a new morality should be created, religions too supported by the new freedom should also start again. If these religions become the support of a new morality, then in the future, a democratic morality can take root. To this end, religions should examine themselves and reform. Religions and morality today are in a transitional period regarding such questions, and we may say that in the near future morality or religion in a true and independent sense will be formed.

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