

# RELIGION AND MODERN LIFE II

Prepared by Yoshiro Tamura

(A report of three Round Table Conferences)

(Continued from Vol. II No. 1)

**Note:** The designations used to identify the religious traditions of the participants are as follows: B—Buddhist, (Tendai [t], Shingon [sg], Jōdo [j], Zen [z], Shin [s], Nichiren [n]), C—Christian (Catholic [c], Protestant [p]), SS—Shrine Shintō, S—Shintō sects (Fusō-kyō [f], Misogi-kyō [m]), O—others (Konkō-kyō [k], Tenri-kyō [t], World Messianity [m], Seicho-no-Ie [s]).

## VI. Social Consciousness

*In the discussion of religion and modernization, the subject of social consciousness was taken up as a feature of the modern spirit, and it was said that religion should not only work for individual salvation but should also seek to awaken a social consciousness that would wrestle with social reform. This was said to be one type of modernization. Against this position, however, it was argued that religion should pick the individual out of society and give him a sense of importance.*

*What is the relation between the individual and society, and how should religion confront society?*

### The Individual and Society

C<sub>c</sub> Concerning the problem of religion and society, I think that this is a question of the present-day status of religion. For example, in ancient times social relations were mainly between individuals. This was especially so in rural villages. All social problems were considered as involving only personal

relations. Thus, religion was very meaningful as a regulator of human relations. In present-day society, however, while individual relations are, of course, important, at the same time, social phenomena arise that are quite beyond individual effort. How should religion confront society when individual effort can not control it? This is, indeed, a serious problem.

**S<sub>f</sub>** As one who has practical contacts with believers, I think that a group movement takes place only through the independent movement of individuals. Therefore, all movements concern the individual.

**C<sub>p</sub>** What should be the attitude of the Korean Christian churches in regard to the problem of North Korean repatriation? Or what attitude should the Christian churches in America take toward the negro problem? These problems have social, political, racial, or national implications. Therefore, I think that religious leaders should take them into consideration.

**S<sub>f</sub>** You are quite right. But I think that many problems of the individual are overlooked; and I am giving instructions to each individual about his own problems.

**SS** The fact that society has become something that mere individual effort cannot control, seems to me to show that individual human beings are violated by society. Therefore, I think that one of the roles of modern religion is to be found in the recovery of each individual.

**S<sub>m</sub>** I, too, think that the beginning of faith lies in the individual's awakening, from that a new life-view regarding society arises.

**B<sub>z</sub>** Religion should aim at self-realization. All problems can

be reduced to a consideration of the individual. This can not, however, produce direct answers to concrete social problems. Therefore, it would be better to make no comments about them. But unfortunately religious leaders, who are regarded as authorities, do make irrelevant comments which sometimes are very retrogressive and pre-modern.

**B;** The most important thing for religion is to probe deeply into the real self. On this basis social activities will arise of themselves. A deeper probing into oneself would broaden the foundation for social functions.

Prof. Shin'ichi Hisamatsu\* advocates what he calls "FAS Zen." The true ego is the "Formless Self." When one awakens to the "Formless Self," one takes the position of "All Mankind," transcending not only one's own selfish idea but also the egoism of society, state, and race. When one awakens to the "Formless Self," one lives in history transcending history, that is, one attains an attitude of "Super-historical history." This is Prof. Hisamatsu's "FAS Zen." The Zen of the past, maintaining only the "Formless Self" in tradition, did not seem to develop to the standpoint of "All Mankind" or of living in history transcending history.

Now, man is the creator of history, but he is also bound by history. This way of creating history is not correct. I think that we should transcend history by awakening to the "Formless Self" and should create history through transcending history.

---

\* 久松真一, Priest of a Rinzai sect and formerly professor of philosophy at Kyōto University, professor of the Kyōto Fine Arts University.

B<sub>11</sub> Nichiren\* established five categories: teachings (*kyō*<sup>a</sup>), faculties (*ki*<sup>b</sup>), time (*ji*<sup>c</sup>), country (*ko*<sup>d</sup>), and orders (*jo*<sup>e</sup>). He taught that when propaganda is not carried on along this line, Buddhism becomes good for nothing. These categories emphasize that the movement of the times and social tendencies should be carefully considered.

Nichiren spent his whole life in the movement for "The Establishment of Righteousness and the Security of the Country" (*Kisshō Ankoku*<sup>f</sup>). He keenly felt not only the necessity for the spiritual peace and enlightenment of individuals, but also for the salvation of society and the country. He fostered insight into the condition of society and of the country in his time. As evidence we can mention his prophecy of the Mongolian invasion and the "February agitation"† (The Rebel Tokisuke‡).

The Great Teacher Tendai (Tendai Daishi\*\*) posited three kinds of illusions (*san-waku*<sup>g</sup>), that is, false views and thinking (*kenji*<sup>h</sup>), innumerable things unknown (*jinja*<sup>i</sup>), and fundamental ignorance (*mumyō*<sup>j</sup>). Among these the "innumerable things unknown" are called "obstacles for bodhisattvas to guide the people" (*bosatsukedō-shō*<sup>k</sup>). This means ignorance of various social phenomena. For him, therefore, ignorance of social problems was a reason for the disqualification of religious leaders.

a. 教 b. 機 c. 時 d. 国 e. 序 f. 立正安国 g. 三惑 h. 見思 i. 塵沙 j. 無明 k. 菩薩化障

\* 日蓮 (1222~1282), the founder of Nichiren Buddhism.

† Nigatsu Sōdō 二月騒動

‡ Tokisuke no Ran 時輔の乱

\*\* Tendai Daishi 天台大師 (538~597) was the founder of Tendai 天台 Buddhism.

**C<sub>p</sub>** Social problems are being treated in a scientific way today. Do you mean that the Great Teacher Tendai had such socio-scientific idea?

**B<sub>t</sub>** He had no such ideas. In this sense we may say that he got no further than the principle. Anyway, I think that he was much interested in actual society.

**SS** To which side did Nichiren attach importance, personal peace and enlightenment or social salvation?

**B<sub>n</sub>** Spiritual peace and enlightenment is fundamental to Buddhism. Without it Buddhism would no longer be Buddhism. In the case of Nichiren, however, he also emphasized social salvation as well. This was one of his characteristics. As for us, it is necessary to take up the movement for The Establishment of Righteousness and Security of the Country in a modern way.

**Chairman** Do you say that historically the Nichiren sects have had a social character?

**B<sub>n</sub>** I think that originally they had such a tendency, but that they lost it later. They are, however, standing together in a world peace movement.

**Chairman** When Zen is compared with the Nichiren way of doing things, quite apart from doctrine, the latter seems to have an historical tradition in respect to society.

**B<sub>z</sub>** The Shingon sects have a *mandala* which is concerned with the social aspects of life. Various sainted beings are shown grouped around the Great Sun Buddha. (*Dainichi-Nyorai*<sup>1</sup>). This means that each of them constructs the whole of society, each fulfilling his function at his own post.

a. 大日如来 (*Mahāvairocana*.)

C<sub>p</sub> Does "at his own post" mean "suitable to one's status?"

Under the feudal system, to live within one's means or to know one's own place in life was social commonsense. Is the meaning of the *maṅḍala* the same?

B<sub>sg</sub> It does not mean to depict society as it actually is. Shingon Buddhism also reached an affirmation through the negation of life by the "uncertainty-view" of life. It is not lacking in negativeness. On the first page of a work\* of the Great Teacher Kōbō†, it is written, "Man is ignorant of the origin of birth even though he has been born so repeatedly, and he is also ignorant of the end, death, after dying so frequently."

B<sub>s</sub> The true character of religion, in a word, should be the pursuit of the original ego and its reconstruction. Therefore, the religious standpoint would be to return to the origin of individuals who form society, without dealing directly with social phenomena or social problems; then, having done that, to re-examine society.

In the formation of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism the desperation of society itself was an important factor. Furthermore, when it was deepened by despair in one's own self, Shinran's‡ Jōdo Shin Buddhism came into existence.

C<sub>p</sub> According to what you have just said, Pure Land Buddhism seems to concentrate on the problems of the individual, focusing on the individual's sin and its solution. I fear, however, though I may be putting it too strongly, that this

\* *Hizō-hōyaku* 秘藏宝瑜

† Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, also called Kūkai 空海 (774~835), was the founder of Shingon 真言 Buddhism.

‡ Shinran 親鸞 (1173~1262) was the founder of Jōdo Shin 淨土真 Buddhism.

idea might go in the direction of holding that social affairs should not be touched, and that the only important matter is one's own salvation. Especially in Japan today, where the social situation is extremely confused, there is danger that a tendency may arise for one to escape from society in order to confine oneself solely to one's own problems, and to rest securely in the consolation of conscience,

It is certain that when a person enters a religion he does so for the purpose of solving his own problems. A person should not seek in religion a solution of the problem of world peace which troubles him, nor a means for unemployment relief. I think that when a person enters a religion, his individual problems, for example, his own sin, should be the motive. After entering a religion, the problem of how he should live in society should next arise. The influence of religion over society will then be sought.

**B<sub>s</sub>** When we probe deeply into social relations, we come to an ultimate problem which cannot be solved only from the standpoint of social relations. If we tried to solve this problem only in terms of social relations, we would make a mistake. In the consciousness that man is a finite being, I think that social relations should be reduced to the problems of individuals. Social relations would be better when they have passed through this process.

**C<sub>p</sub>** In Christianity, according to Kierkegaard, man is grasped as an independent entity, while according to Bultmann and Gogarten man is to be grasped in the Thou and I relationship. Robinson of England also maintains that the self comes into existence only in the group. Now, in Pure Land Bud-

dhism is a man understood as an independent entity?

**B<sub>s</sub>** When the awakening of fundamental self-existence is deepened by a disaster, natural or artificial, and self-existence ceases to maintain itself by any social means, the Buddha Amida's salvation comes into existense. Therefore, it is thought that the Buddha does not come into existence until a relationship between man and man appears.

**C<sub>p</sub>** There is a gap between the way of individual and social salvation, isn't there? According to Robinson, individual salvation means the salvatoin of society. In other words, an organic relation is recognized between the two.

**B<sub>s</sub>** Buddhism also has such an idea. When one is saved, society surrounding him is also saved.

**C<sub>p</sub>** The social application of religion can be understood only when man is considered in the dimension of his relation to God. The Christian Golden Rule, in the first place, is to love God with heart and soul, and, in the second place, to love one's neighbor as oneself. It is important in Christianity to combine God's love and the love of neighbor.

**C<sub>p</sub>** From the Christian viewpoint this world is a stage for the drama of atonement. We are sinful beings and the only course open to us is to answer to God's love. Christians, thus answering to God's love, are always living as members of the whole (group). This is shown by the Old Testament as well as the New. For example, it is said that the Hebrews regarded a tree primarily as a part of the woods. Christians always look within themselves for the relationship of self, society, and God.

**C<sub>c</sub>** Catholicism, insisting that man is basically a social being,

teaches that the social nature of man is based on the fact that man exists as a personality. Personality naturally seeks association with other personalities and develops with them. In this sense, without society there is no individual existence. At the same time, however, personality as the image of God is an end in itself. Therefore, it should not be reduced to a means. In this sense, society must not treat the individual personality as a means. On the contrary, the main purpose of society should be to support, develop, and perfect personality.

From this viewpoint, Catholicism attaches importance to social problems. In other words, it criticizes a society which does not support, develop and perfect personality and it demands a correction of this.

- C<sub>c</sub> It is the individual man and not society that is given moral free will by God. However, an individual can neither maintain his life, develop his nature, cultivate his intelligence nor refine his emotions without society. Because man is not self-sufficient, there is a dependent relationship between himself and society. In other words, the good of society as a whole should be regulated by true human nature under the command of God, and society should be regulated in accordance with fundamental human rights and the attainment of the good of the whole. The formation of the ideal world, the human mission given by God, has its starting point here.
- C<sub>p</sub> Christianity has a social character, because Christian faith can become mature through the efforts of Christians to realize God's kingdom in this world. It means that people should not remain at the level of a personal, mystic experience of

God, but should have an awareness of the church and society. This is, of course, a society in which man is regarded as in relation with God, that is, a society which supports personality and responsibility. Christianity resists present-day society where personality and responsibility are endangered, and demands its improvement.

The social application of religion is not a compromise with the times and society but a confrontation of them. In this sense, the present time should be recognized from an eschatological viewpoint.

**O<sub>m</sub>** In our faith, we do not observe specific practices or prayers but regard our daily life as religious training. Because we are a new religion, we are always in contact with actual everyday life. We insist that when an individual is converted and attains some stage of training, he should carry this into his home life. The aim of the home is the establishment of a home paradise. Attaching importance to home life seems to be the merit of the Japanese family system. When a home has become a paradise, its influence should extend to society ; for example, to one's place of work, and to relatives, acquaintances, and friends. Furthermore, the country and the world should be made a paradise. This is our ideal.

**B<sub>n</sub>** If religious leaders were to stay within the sphere of the individual and think that this is the only sphere of the religious world, they would be left behind by society.

In our religion propaganda activities have changed in comparison with five or six years ago. For example, in the beginning we dealt with personal troubles, but recently we

have felt that it is not correct to stop with personal problems in disregard of social conditions which have become very complicated. So we are now taking into consideration various social problems.

**S<sub>m</sub>** Man cannot live alone. He is dependent in some manner upon others. The relation of oneself to others, is, in fact, an aspect of divine favor or divine *nikoiomochi*.\* Our religion teaches that we should be aware that society, as it confronts us, is the divine favor or divine *mikotomochi*, and that we should express thanksgiving to society in compliance with the divine will.

I should like to emphasize, from this point of view, the harmony of "church" and state. In present-day Japan the principle of the separation of religion and government is adopted as a religious policy. I do not think, however, that this principle absolutely denies harmony between religion and government. Among the poorer classes there are persons who cannot find employment, despite their desire to work, while, on the other hand, there are persons who have no desire to work though favored with employment. The former is caused by political poverty, the latter by human poverty. In this sense I think that in order to elevate the standard of human culture and social life, religion and state should not be indifferent to each other.

**O<sub>t</sub>** Our religion teaches that the deity created human beings in order that they might enjoy seeing them lead a happy life.

---

\* 国司 *Mikotomochi* originally meant the local official of the government (*kokushi* or *kuni-no-tsukasa* 国司) who ruled the provinces by Imperial ordinance.

However, the deity thought that to create them capable of acting only as he willed, would not be interesting. Therefore, he allowed them to act freely in one respect only. He first gave them hearts and then lent them bodies on the security of their hearts.

Now, in the beginning, human beings were obedient to the deity but later they began to act wilfully because their hearts were free. They began to injure their bodies which were borrowed from the deity, and caused obstacles such as disease. Then the deity lent them society in the next age for the purpose of controlling their hearts. Nevertheless, society too has come to run counter to the deity's will and has brought on war. The basis of our religious organization, therefore, lies in the idea that we should endeavor to return to the hope with which the deity created human beings and society, that is, the hope of peaceful, happy living (*Yōki-gurashi<sup>a</sup>*).

### The People and the State

SS It goes without saying that religion and society have a close and inseparable relation. The problem is what this relationship should be.

Shrine Shinto regards society as the total communal body of the people. Therefore, it can be said that Shrine Shinto and society have an inseparable relationship. In other words, any Japanese, as a member of a community, has something to do with Shrine Shinto, whether he likes it or not, and whether he recognizes it or not.

---

a. 陽氣ぐらし

In the ancient group life of the clan there used to be a relationship between the clan kami (*uji-gami<sup>a</sup>*) and the clansmen (*uji-ko<sup>b</sup>*). With the change to a local\* society, this relationship developed into one between the guardian kami of the place (*ubusuna-gami<sup>c</sup>*) and the people living in that area (*ubu-ko<sup>d</sup>*). Thus, there existed a kinship, teaching, and regional relation. As a concrete symbol of this we may note the many shrines with Shrine Shinto as their common base. Shrine Shinto exists as a coalescence of the people, the state, and society.

Therefore, an individual is always regarded as one of the people, and as a member of the state or the community.

**C<sub>p</sub>** As world communications have so greatly increased, I think that Shrine Shinto should become a little broader.

**SS** I agree with you. However, we should not forget that religions exist in specific places. A religion should be available to the world; but if the kinship, teaching, and regional relations do not exist, it would be rootless.

**E<sub>s</sub>** What does Shinto think about the idea that government and economics should be based upon religion?

**SS** We regard even a sheet of paper or a drop of water as a product of the kami and as something in which a divine partial spirit (*bunrei<sup>e</sup>*) dwells. Therefore, the thanksgiving festival for new crops, observed on November 23, for example, means not only giving thanks to the farmers for their toil but also to the divine partial spirits which dwell in each

a. 氏神 b. 氏子 c. 産土神 d. 産子 e. 分霊

\* The reference here is to a local or regional society in which the people of various clans and areas are intermingled.

grain of rice as gifts of the kami. We say in Japanese *gohan wo taberu*<sup>a</sup> (to eat rice). In this<sup>4</sup> case, *taberu* (to eat) means etymologically *tamawaru*<sup>b</sup> (given by the kami).

**SS** Shrine Shinto believes that all living beings and even all inanimate objects come from the kami, work for the kami, and return to the kami. Kami in Shrine Shinto is a genuine, great power which makes all things as they are, gives them their proper place, makes them alive, and at the same time unifies and penetrates all things, producing harmony and order. This is called *musubi*<sup>c</sup> (the spirit of birth and becoming). Ethics or morals is not only based upon some value within the human world but is a realization of the eternal *musubi*.

The peace of mankind and the independence of a people, which has become of great importance at present, is a manifestation of the communal idea. Shrine Shinto emphasizes that such a communal idea can be realized through a festival or service filled with awe and gratitude to the kami. The festivals of Shrine Shinto basically mean a communal assembly before the kami, and so Shinto Shrines are the communal center of the towns and villages.

On the other hand, in social life the fundamental attitude toward human life should be investigated. In Shinto this is to be found in the "way of the true heart" (*makoto*<sup>d</sup>). It is a pure, clear heart which brings about reconciliation and has nothing to conceal. This changes egoistic attachment and hatred toward others into benevolence, and sorrow into delight.

---

a. 御飯を食べる b. 賜わる c. 産靈 d. 誠

C<sub>p</sub> Shrine Shinto seems to give us the impression that it makes natural society religious without any improvement. In some sense isn't this a weak point in Shinto? Is there any practice in Shinto such as being for a time separated from natural or conventional society and then entering the religious world?

SS There is no such idea. Generally speaking, all the village or community is included. I think that this is an ideal form for Shinto and is not a weak point. As to the communal body, the communal body based on kinship has changed into a regional communal body, and at present even the latter is being weakened. Anyway, Shinto regards communal unity as an ideal.

E<sub>z</sub> The Grand Shrine of Ise has had the large communal body of the state as its background, connecting all of us as a nation. What is the present state of affairs? Does Shinto regard the standpoint of the individual and that of the nation as the same thing?

SS An individual cannot exist in disregard of the nation. Since one is a Japanese national, it is quite natural for one to respect Japan. I think that it is also natural for the Japanese to worship the Grand Shrine of Ise where the Japanese ancestress is enshrined.

C<sub>p</sub> I think that the communal body or the country had a pseudo-religious character in Japan; hence danger arose. Therefore, it is necessary for each individual to separate himself once from the communal body and to be converted voluntarily. Even today, contributions for shrine festivals are being collected in the villages and, if any one refuses, he is

sometime ostracized by the villagers. What do you think about this?

**SS** Old customs remain. Money collection is made on the basis that each individual is a parishioner (*ujiko*<sup>a</sup>) rather than a believer. This should be changed. Shrine Shinto is not necessarily dependent upon this parishioner system.

**B<sub>s</sub>** Are you going to develop Shrine Shinto as in the past along the line of faith in the kami in the form of a nationally developed community, or do you intend to develop Shinto on the basis of metaphysical doctrine?

**SS** We cannot say which is proper. We think of the two as fused into one.

**Chairman** It is a fact that in the past Shinto, the racial communal society, was something like a church. The problem is how Shinto will develop in the future.

**Chairman** Christianity often speaks of individualism or universalism, but from the practical point of view we cannot do this. The problems of racial or regional characteristics do not concern only Shinto. These are also major problems for other religions.

**C<sub>p</sub>** I think that the present world tendency is for the state to take the place of religion. In other words, the state is going to guarantee even ultimate human happiness. The responsibility for this may be on the side of religion, for it gave up worldliness, although it should have preached holiness in a worldly society. If religion had been functioning more actively in worldly society, such a tendency would not have taken place. This can be said from a consideration of

---

a. 氏子

Christian history. I think that the reason why European states have come to assume the role of religion lies in the fact that Christianity has lost its vitality in worldly society and has, so to speak, enclosed itself within the sphere of the individual conscience.

O<sub>s</sub> All religions should aim at the spiritual peace and enlightenment of mankind. Therefore, they naturally should not be indifferent to society, the country, or world peace, because these things have to do with human fate. Concerning the way to look at man, it should be recognized that "man" is the general name for human beings, the state, and the kami.

C<sub>p</sub> I think that you should add nature to a diagram of the kami, the state and human beings. The problem lies in the fact that the state is a part of it. This seems to mean that the kami manifest themselves as the state. If so, wouldn't it be difficult for a religion to become independent from the state and would not the principle of the separation of "church" and state be also broken? I fear that the state may play the role of religion.

O<sub>s</sub> I speak from the viewpoint of the state as an idea instead of as a political organ.

O<sub>t</sub> How about the modern view of the state that a contract is made which guarantees human rights equally, regardless of race, blood, or class?

O<sub>s</sub> The fundamental character of truth should be such that it satisfies universality at the same time. It should be acknowledged that both the people and the state have particularity and at the same time universality as manifestations of the

life of the kami.

**C<sub>p</sub>** Do you mean that all states, as a reflection of this idea, are right? Or, do you recognize the fact that, if a mirror reflecting an idea is cloudy, the reflection itself is also cloudy?

**O<sub>s</sub>** Of course, I do.

### **Society and the Church**

**C<sub>p</sub>** Concerning the problem of the specific elements with which religion is concerned in society, in Christianity can be mentioned (1) the individual, (2) small unorganized groups, and (3) organized groups, that is, churches. In Christianity the church is regarded as a place where man created by God returns to Him through Christ. This is also regarded as a new society.

**C<sub>c</sub>** Society can be divided into supernatural society, that is, the church, and natural society, which includes the family, professional groups, the political world, international society, and so forth. The characteristic of Catholicism lies in regarding the Church as a complete society. The Church exists as an object to help God lead mankind to the ultimate good and bring supernatural goodness to mankind. However natural society is formed by human beings. This is not only the place where human beings maintain their life, but also the place where human intelligence and sentiment are developed. The role of Catholicism in natural society lies in respecting the independence and proper functions of various organizations from a very fair and impartial standpoint, and pouring the spirit of justice and love into them. Catholicism takes the position that social life in its true sense cannot be

carried on until the Church and natural society collaborate and depend on each other, each keeping to its proper purpose and independence. Catholics desire a realization of the ideal society with the fulfillment of humanity and Christ's fulfillment as well. This means that one must not fall into either a one-sided denial of this world or into mere admiration of it.

**B<sub>s</sub>** Please explain a little further about the relation between natural society and the Church.

**C<sub>c</sub>** Some things are attainable through man's own effort and others are beyond his attainment. The latter are possible through God's help. The former is natural society and the latter is the Church. It is thought, however, that these two are not completely separate but that their collaboration results in the realization of a peaceful, ideal society. Supernatural society becomes the Church which is the ideal and the fulfilled form of natural society.

**B<sub>z</sub>** How about those who do not desire a supernatural society but are satisfied with only natural society?

**C<sub>c</sub>** I think that those who live rightly, in natural society will never fail to go to the Church and approach God.

**O<sub>t</sub>** Did God give the society centering in the church first; or was natural society created first?

**C<sub>p</sub>** I think that regarding this point Catholicism and Protestantism have the same view. In the beginning man lived in obedience to God. Therefore, there was no need for the Church. However, man betrayed God and thus for the first time natural society came into existence and the church was established for the purpose of emancipating man in natural society.