

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND*

Tōru Yasumoto

I

To begin this study let us examine the religious consciousness of the Japanese people: Buddhists as well as those of other religions. Recently a survey of religious interest was made which received 80 percent returns from 3,600 persons over 20 years of age. Among the questions asked were: 1. Have you a religious faith? 2. If your answer is "Yes," do you have a Buddhist faith? 3. Even if you are a non-believer, do you think a religious interest is important?

As a result it was found that 35 percent were believers in some religion and 65 percent were non-believers. There was practically no difference between the men and women. Among those in their fifties or over, the number of believers and non-believers was about equal. Accordingly from these statistics it would appear that most Japanese are not very serious about religion.

To the question: "What do you think about life after death?" 20 percent affirmed belief in such a life, 59 percent expressed disbelief, 9 percent had no opinion, and 12 percent did not reply. In this connection it is of interest to note that in the United States, a Christian country, whereas three quarters of the population say that they "think little of religion," as many as 76 percent confess to a belief in life after death. In England it is reported

* Translated from *Kōza Kindai Bukkyō 講座近代仏教 (Lectures on Modern Buddhism)*, Vol. 6, Kyoto: Hōzō Kan 法藏館 1961.

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

that more than 80 percent of the population believe that after death man is rewarded or punished by God. Recently in Christian countries the number of regular churchgoers is decreasing. At present it comes to an average short of 30 percent of the population. For example, in the United States it is reported that the pious spiritual climate which was prevalent in earlier days has changed by degrees with a tendency toward secularization, and that Christian continence and other virtues are disappearing. In spite of such a transition, however, it is especially to be noted that there are far more people who believe in life after death in the United States than in Japan. This comparison shows more than anything else, a characteristic of the Japanese religious consciousness. It might be said that of all nations Japan is by far the most advanced as far as the secular character of the mind is concerned, although there may be a difference between Buddhists and Christians.

Let us now examine a still more detailed study of the actual condition of the religious life of the Japanese. In a survey recently conducted by Mr. Hiroo Takagi^a interesting data is given regarding the people in general. The phrase, "people in general," is used in a broad sense as referring to all those who live exclusively in the world of direct mutual contact in their daily life, the same as everyone else, regardless of their profession, social position, or intellectual level.

What is the religious climate of people in general? As has been frequently pointed out, it is a sort of syncretism, or a multiplex faith. To put it concretely the people are at once beset with multitudinous religious objects, such as, for example,

a. 高木宏夫

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, ancestral graves, Buddhist and Shinto household altars, and various kinds of small shrines.

What is the religious attitude of the general public toward these? According to the survey, a majority take such religious objects, regardless of what they are, as a matter of course, as something for worldly gain or as a magical charm. Therefore, it is clear that acute mental concern or decisiveness is lacking in their religious consciousness. It is a well-known fact that in the mind of the Japanese the distinction between Buddhist and Shinto deities as religious concepts, and man in this present life is extremely vague. The way of thinking in which the concepts of kami and Buddha are not infrequently used interchangeably without any distinction whatsoever between them as to function, and the idea of man able to become either a kami or a buddha are quite typical of the religious consciousness of people in general. Such an indiscriminate way of thinking may be applied to the Buddhist home. There is little distinction in the minds of the people between ancestors, a buddha, and the deceased. As Ruth Benedict has pointed out, even among the Buddhist countries of the world, such a phenomenon is unique to Japan.

Consequently, as Mr. Takagi says, the core of what is called Buddhism in Japan is "nothing but a conglomeration of ancestors, buddhas, and the deceased as these exist in the minds of the people." In this sense, it can be said that a majority of the people, while belonging to various Buddhist sects, show little interest in the system or doctrine of such sects, and that they regard temples and priests as little more than agents for performing religious rites, while they themselves remain devoid

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

of any deep faith. What is important for them is the family graves and the Buddhist altar which is closely connected with their ancestors. Buddhist annual functions, such as memorial services, the equinoctial festivals, and the summer festival for the dead are, in reality, all for the maintenance of the family order in the name of the ancestors. Each occasion serves as an opportunity for close relatives to get together, which incidentally proves to be its *raison d'être* as a social function. It follows, therefore, that the ordinary Japanese are taking various religious objects merely in terms of the present world, instead of the life after death.

II

As is apparent from what has been said above, a majority of modern Japanese regard Buddhism at least with a threefold attitude, that is, in terms of convention, worldly gain, and magic; and within these limits they relate themselves to Buddhism. The Japanese people in general do not recognize Buddhism as having any other significance. Looking at this situation, thinking people denounce established Buddhism for its impotence and degeneration, or laugh at the degraded religious mind and vulgar materialism of the Japanese. That modern Buddhism undoubtedly well deserves this censure is evident from the definite impression of this sort that it has given to serious foreign students of Buddhism in Japan, especially after World War II. Without exception, most of them have felt disappointment.

With regard to historical, social, and economic circumstances that brought about such a state of affairs in Japanese

Buddhism, rigorous reflection occurred after the war, and some remarkable results have appeared. In addition, the way of thinking and the existential consciousness typical of the Japanese in the midst of such circumstances also have been clarified. However, we shall not dwell upon them here. But it seems to be necessary to briefly review the characteristics of traditional Japanese Buddhism, because it is very likely that a clue may be found that will enable us to know in what respects Buddhism, which still lives in the minds of many modern people is connected with traditional Buddhism.

It is said that since the introduction of Buddhism the Japanese have transformed original Buddhism into a type of Buddhism peculiar to Japan. Moreover, if we look at the actual condition of Japanese Buddhism from the viewpoint of "original" Buddhism as explained by Dr. Shōkō Watanabe^a in his "Japanese Buddhism" (*Nippon no Bukkyō*)^b its characteristics may be summed up under the following: 1. nationalism, 2. shamanism, 3. rites for the dead, 4. the compromising spirit, and 5. formalism. In the light of what Dr. Watanabe writes let us discuss the above-mentioned points.

As the recipients of Buddhism in the beginning happened to be the ruling class, Buddhism started in Japan in the uppermost strata of society. And since the ruler and the nation under him tended to be identified, prayers for the good fortune of the country opened the way for its alignment with nationalism. It was quite natural that the rulers should establish temples and educate priests in order to secure their own happiness and to have their ancestral graves duly looked after. In

a. 渡辺照宏 b. 日本の仏教

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

a way Japanese Buddhism was received as a political principle or as a phase of cultural activities, rather than as a religion in its pure form. Very often the ordination of priests was not motivated by their own spontaneous desire for salvation. Nevertheless, the priests proved to be excellent carriers of the novel culture at that time.

Buddhism, which was more congenial to the ruling class, was gradually received by the people in general and it was inevitable that in their interest there should have been some compromise with their animistic demands, because they could not accept Buddhism as a philosophy. Therefore, throughout the Nara^a and the Heian^b periods, it consisted chiefly of such elements as prayers and animistic practices for the purpose of worldly gain. Moreover, it goes without saying that the rituals for the deceased were closely related to the family system and the idea of ancestor worship. It was the Edo^c government policy that made the rituals for the deceased widespread and caused them to be perpetuated until the present time.

In regard to the spirit of compromise, this is not necessarily a characteristic peculiar to Japanese Buddhism, but can be recognized in traditional Buddhist thought in general. Indeed, while the spirit of compromise itself is regarded as a merit, it is at the same time a defect in the sense that it is evidence of a deficiency in earnestness or seriousness in respect to the faith. It was inevitable, however, that Buddhism should to some extent lack in earnestness as long as it was more or less tinged with atheism or pantheism, as distinct from monotheism such as Christianity. In the history of Japanese Bud-

a. 奈良 b. 平安 c. 江戸

dhism there appeared, for example, a priest like Nichiren^a who preached his faith in an ardent, exclusive, and intolerant manner. But this exceptional case may be largely ascribed to the intense nature of Nichiren himself, who in a typical way selected the *Lotus Sutra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarikasūtra*^b) from among innumerable sutras as the only basis for his faith. Formalism was, to a large extent a relic of whatever was Chinese, and it was a degraded and empty form of Mahayanism which attached importance to content or substance.

Having summed up the character of traditional Japanese Buddhism in this way, there remain some problems to be discussed as to the great change which occurred prior to, during, and after the Meiji^c Restoration. One such problem is the influence of Western civilization on Japanese society and economy in connection with Japan's modernization. Another problem which should not be overlooked is the contrast existing between Buddhism before and after World War II.

Since this book is mainly intended to clarify the progress of contemporary Buddhism after the Meiji Restoration, it should be possible for us to probe the evidence of Japanese psychology in Buddhism historically but let us confine ourselves to the present situation, and consider the above-mentioned three characteristic attitudes in the mind of the people.

Since World War II an increasing number of attempts have been made to probe the character of the Japanese from a freer and more critical viewpoint than in any other period in the past. Some of these have been focused on showing foreigners what the Japanese people are really like, and others on how

a. 日蓮 b. Hoke-kyō (Jap.) 法華經 c. 明治

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

to improve the Japanese themselves by calling attention to the position of Japan in world history or by pointing the direction in which Japan should orient herself in the future. However, whenever an attempt is made to understand the Japanese, it is not possible to neglect Buddhism which has been inseparably related to Japanese culture. Therefore, it is natural that attempts should be made to understand the character of the Japanese by analyzing the way in which Buddhism was received, its development in Japan, and the reaction of the Japanese to it. Insofar as Japanese Buddhism is concerned, however, the natural environment of Japan should never be overlooked and, as far as the "religious mind" of the Japanese themselves is concerned, especially careful consideration seems to be required. It is quite easy to criticize degeneration and corruption, but in religion it is the individual that determines what degeneration is and what the ideal is. Consequently, this is no simple question. Indeed, strictly speaking, such an idea itself as "religiousness" or "religious" is not necessarily very clear.

III

We have already referred to Buddhism in the mind of the people in general. Let us, then, consider how Buddhism is grasped by the so-called intellectuals or cultured people. Of course, as we have stated before, the intellectuals or the cultured people in some respects do belong to the general public but, since they are highly educated in the Western fashion of learning, they can be considered to be a group distinct from the rest. Furthermore, they make a practice of appearing on the scene as severe critics of the religious mind

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

of ordinary people or of the Buddhist faith as grasped by them.

On the whole it can be said that the intellectuals are much more interested in Buddhism as doctrine or philosophy than as religion. Apart from highly complicated doctrinal discussions, there is no lack of cases in which the brilliant wisdom relative to the cosmic- or life-philosophy contained in Buddhist thought serves as a motive for enlightening them. In some cases it is the brilliance of original Buddhism, and in others that of Japanese Buddhism. There are quite a few such cases. What they ordinarily see or hear, however, is Buddhism as it is manifested in the actual form of worldly benefits, or Buddhism as it is perceived by the intellectuals on the same level as ordinary people. It is a form of Buddhism on a par with the religious activities of the masses.

Is there any "religious" quality at all in this form of Buddhism that can be satisfying and awe-inspiring enough for the intellectuals when all that exists is convention, worldly gains, and magic? It is no wonder that they should be disillusioned. The sense of disillusionment is all the more intense, for those with some knowledge of it, especially those who are more or less interested in Buddhist philosophy, and for those who pin their hope on Buddhism. Among others, such as those in whom the critical spirit is vigorous, the present state of affairs can be regarded as unbearably obnoxious. Hence, the flood of reproaches heaped on the degeneration or impotency of established Buddhism, as well as on its sectarianism and self-complacency. All of which goes to show that, however fine and elaborate the doctrinal system may be, the actual

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

activities of the priests, who are supposed to be exponents of religious practices, is no different from that of undertakers. Sometimes what they do is nothing but secular business called sight-seeing. Even if worldly gains are advocated, such as health and security, the welfare of the family, success in business, etc., as a means of propaganda, these things would appear as nothing more than a sort of distorted faith or superstition, being in themselves a degenerate form of religion.

In this way the actuality of Buddhism, as it exists in the mind of the general public, is held responsible for driving an increasing number of intellectuals away from the faith. The religious consciousness of the people in general is always evaluated by them intellectually on the assumption that it rests on a lower level of intelligence. In this sense, for instance, the new religious sects, and cults constitute the best example for them to use in applying the major premise that religion is opium. Very often the Japanese intellectuals confine themselves within the sphere of non-religion or anti-religion. Such a practice not infrequently bespeaks their reproach of the established Buddhist order. Non-religion, however, does not mean that they are not concerned with any kind of religion.

In any case it is an undeniable fact that a majority of modern intellectuals, consciously or not, has a tendency toward non- or anti-religion. This is a natural consequence of the influence of so-called Western rationalism, following Japan's adoption of Western culture after the Meiji Restoration. And in the interest of raising the standard of everyday human life, this orientation might well be a matter for rejoicing because science is equipped with more power than religion to enhance

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

the worldly and physical happiness of a larger number of people. This fact can be substantiated by the mere mention of the benefits in our daily life which are derived from Western rationalism.

In the eyes of Western rationalism, therefore, the indiscriminate co-existence of various religions in Japan appears anachronistic, and the various Buddhist functions conducted without deep reflection do not fail to reveal the indolence and impotence of the priests. There is no Buddhism in them which enables people to live in contentment and to have a strong faith in their hearts. There is only a Buddhism which enables the priests themselves to survive. Is it too much to say that they are, so to speak, white ants living on the remains of feudalism? Parallel with the modernization of Japan, movements to outgrow the old have been started by a thinking minority but they are only a part of the total situation. Isn't it a fact that some of them often find the old legacy unbearable to carry, switching finally to preserving it blindly as a business?

What, then, is the religious attitude of the intellectuals who pose in this manner as the critics of religion? What is the psychological basis of this attitude?

The way of life of intellectuals is, indeed, non-religious or anti-religious, but if it is asked whether they really stick to this kind of an attitude through and through on all occasions, the answer is not necessarily in the affirmative. Sceptical or critical as their attitude may be as individuals, they very often allow themselves to be dragged along by traditional customs, especially on occasions of social or family concern, such as

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

the coming of age ceremonies, marriages, funerals, ancestral rites, and memorial services. In the midst of the family relationships, as a matter of common sense, peace and order are apt to be made the standard of value. Toughness of mind is rare which rejects a compromising attitude and puts oneself into a position contrary to the social convention. There is neither decision nor choice. There is only escape, resignation, or simply conventional adjustment to old customs. It is surprising enough that there should be few who attempt seriously to give thought to the gap between one's philosophy or religion and one's concrete way of life. And, if they have any, it is as much as they can do to go on suffering from an inconsistency within their own minds. This could be called a prevalent phenomenon for all people, conservative or progressive, who today are called intellectuals.

Do such intellectuals, then, show a rigorous and critical attitude in their own specialized fields? As a matter of fact, no thoroughgoing critical attitude is necessarily revealed by them. Aside from their incessant aspiration for Western knowledge, a serious confrontation with Christianity which constitutes its background, is rarely to be seen, and most of them reportedly often appear to have halfway compromised with it. Therefore, it seems that even the intellectuals who are commonly acknowledged to be the carriers of the Western knowledge have not always a right understanding of Western culture. One of the most challenging problems that intrigues their interest today is none other than the alternatives such as "science or religion?" or "Marxism or existentialism?" Apart from the desirability of this way of putting questions,

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

there is bound to be conflict or opposition so long as such questions concern the reality of our life.

No doubt it may be the task of intellectuals to evaluate the merit of each hypothesis after inquiring into its validity, and to point out the way in which society should be improved, while at the same time showing the new and ideal type of man. But, unfortunately, it is often a case in which their way of doing this results in producing a hybrid typical of the Japanese, and they themselves are reluctant to be involved in the vortex of the conflict. Curiously enough, such a phenomenon is even to be seen in which they themselves make little serious effort while being fond of speaking about this discrepancy, and they even look as if they were self-intoxicated with a mood of insecurity they themselves created by clamorously shouting about the discrepancy. It seems that the discrepancy causes no suffering, but is simply an object of their curiosity. Consequently it must be said that such intellectuals themselves remain as old-fashioned as ever despite their awareness of a mission to overcome the shortcomings of the Japanese by means of Western knowledge. What is there is only the Japanese intellect in the guise of Western knowledge, and not genuine Western knowledge itself.

The shortcomings of such Japanese intellectuals have often been pointed out, and a detailed probe is being made as to their causes. On the one hand, Japan's natural environment and the national character are mentioned in most cases. On the other, the view has been offered that Buddhist tradition has made little contribution toward nurturing the spirit of freedom which enables decisions to be made. In this case,

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

however, it is pointless to demand a thoroughgoing absolutism in Buddhism, such as is to be seen in Christian doctrine, that all is nothing before the transcendent God. With the exception of Hinayana Buddhist thought, isn't it rather natural that a violent demand for freedom should be absent in original Buddhist thought the teaching of which is that anyone can become a Buddha, and that whosoever has experienced the truth is a Buddha?

It is because it was won at the expense of bloodshed that the spirit of freedom is as tough as anything, but in the history of Buddhism there has never been any experience of bloodshed in order to recover man's autonomy from the repression of God. "Repression of God" here means, in fact, the repression of man against man by the authority of God. Western rationalism is none other than the trophy which was won as a result of violent conflicts between man's rationality and irrationality, represented by the Christian dogma which ruled Europe for several centuries.

On the other hand, Buddhism has been quite rational from the outset. Buddhist teaching is to pacify the violent struggling mind and hatred in order to see all things calmly as they are. It is never sentimental, but appeals to one's intellect.

As has already been stated, the Japanese intellectuals often eschew making a decision even in regard to problems in their own specialized fields. They seem to be looking at current problems as a third person, and as such they dare to criticize, and at times, they console themselves with clever raillery. Moreover most of them seem to have fallen into a state of nihilism. (A typical Japanese brand of nihilism!) Thus they

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

are bound to move away from religion as it actually exists, and to strike inward. And yet they can never have their whole existence dependent upon what is called simple faith or common belief, for their pride in being a man of intelligence holds them back. It looks as if they themselves were groping for one philosophy after another, while abusing living faiths with their eyes turned away from them, and they are unable to find the resting place of their own existence except in the precarious state of mind in which they incessantly struggle to be scientific and intellectual. They are always in fear and trembling with the heavy burden of nihilism, which seems to produce fear and at the same time provides a place of refuge. They would say that just because it is nihilism, the infinite subjective will and act spring therefrom. It might be that the destiny of the intellectual is that they can put their real existence nowhere except in that which is paradoxical. It will be possible to surmise that the intellectuals' nihilistic tendency is derived from the fact that they have never experienced any imminent crisis, such as facing an over-all existential catastrophe or confronting the crossroads of life and death. But to a certain extent an inclination to nihilism would appear to be inevitable for them so long as, above all else, a positive sceptical spirit is deemed necessary in order to be scientific and intellectual.

In the above we have described though roughly, Buddhism in the eyes of intellectuals, the compromising tendency in their minds, and a part of their agony. All intellectuals should continue to seek for whatever is intellectual and scientific. This, indeed, is their mission. But what is important for them is that

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

they should not rest upon their intelligence, for there is a danger that their self-complacency may expose their own feeling or self-interest. This may look as if it were worthy of intelligence, but it lacks in the right use of intelligence. Vulgar and debased as the religious consciousness of ordinary people may be, it should never be lightly evaluated merely from the viewpoint of one's own intellect or existential agony. One should judge what to revive and what to destroy, rightly discriminating with calm insight between right and wrong, or good and evil. Only in such a way will the criticism of intellectuals serve to raise the quality of religion. The basis for right judgment in this case, however, would be a keen insight into what is human and what is inhuman in individuals as well as in society. A brilliant scientist would never be convinced that science is omnipotent; for so long as he is human, it would be impossible for him to be completely free from what affects him at an unconscious level. Any scientist without such a sensitive insight into man will be simply a science dilettante and not capable of scientific achievements. Neither will he be capable of applying science in the right way. It might be said that the essence of a scientist consists in an attitude in which he is prepared, while humbly recognizing his own limits, to make steady progress in overcoming his limitations. Therein is seen a sublime religious attitude bearing a close resemblance to that of seekers of a religious way.

IV

Let us now return to the primary subject once again. Buddhism in the consciousness of the people has been characterized

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

as being of three types: the conventional, that which seeks worldly gains, and that which emphasizes magic. The last, that is, the emphasis on magic, is to be seen in most cases in the popular beliefs or the new religious movements, and in a way is nothing but the negative aspect of worldly gain in the sense that it is based on belief in harmful effects or in "curses," and it aims at warding them off. Therefore, such an attitude can be summed up in the expression "worldly benefits." It will follow, therefore, that the religious consciousness of a majority of the Japanese is characterized by a two-fold attitude: the maintenance of convention and a seeking after worldly benefits, which may be unified under the single objective of contributing to everyday life.

To point out, in the first place, some of the historical and social causes for these attitudes, the emphasis on the conventional parishoner system (*danka seido*^a) may be mentioned. In this system, it is not that the people have chosen Buddhism as individuals, but that most of them are just following Buddhism because it is already the religion of the their families. Fundamentally the union of the temple and parishoner families was not necessarily based on faith. Consequently there was little possibility for an ardent religious mind to arise. As to worldly benefits, the cause for the rise of such a tendency is considered to be the worldly way of thinking of the Japanese in primitive Shinto, according to which any Japanese is regarded as a descendant of the kami. As Shinto was devoid of deep reflection on the spiritual or on death, it was impossible to overthrow it completely, even though Buddhism was introduced.

a. 檀家制度

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

On the contrary, Buddhism was obliged to transform itself into this kind of a secular cult. Careful attention, however, should be paid to the fact that the two elements, convention and worldly benefits, are co-existent and unified under the objective of *contributing to actual life*. No doubt these are in a sense a mean and vulgar materialism without any realization of the respectability of religion, and a sort of opportunism or utilitarianism which allows multifarious cults to co-exist. It may be that they are too utilitarian and too ego-centered. But isn't there any special motive for such a phenomenon other than the fact that the interest of the people is focused on the simple objective of contributing to daily life? Or will it be that for all its vulgarity something serious is there that we cannot lightly laugh away?

Fundamentally speaking, the general public thinks in terms of *actual life*. They are used to passing judgments according to the utility of things near at hand. In reality at present, as well as in the past, what matters most to a majority of the Japanese is *life*. Therefore, even though given the knowledge of Buddhism, they are not much interested in a deep philosophy. Instead they make a selection of all things from the standpoint of living human existence. It is true that the Japanese are gradually transforming themselves by science, philosophy, religion, etc., introduced by intellectuals, but ordinary people placed amidst conflicts and contradictions absorb them in proportion to their *usefulness in actual life*. To that extent Buddhism, too, is utilized, absorbed, and assimilated into their own flesh and blood. In this case it can be said that their daily life still remains central. Accordingly, so long

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

as Buddhism does not directly affect their actual life, however seriously intellectuals may deplore the lack of intelligence in them, and however deep a philosophy the established Buddhism may possess, it will be kept at a respectful distance by the masses and regarded as something apart from them that belongs only to the upper classes. For them it is something that matters to "big people" only, and is not their business.

After the Meiji Restoration, especially after World War II, it was none other than the new religious movements that made their appearance, bringing with them the tidings that their doctrines were in accord with the utilitarianism of the masses, and satisfying to them. Most of them, while provoking numerous discussions, are steadily expanding their activities and are winning large numbers of ardent followers. Established Buddhism, on the other hand, is deep in its doctrine, and for this very reason is estranged from society and far removed from meeting the bare human needs. Besides, the actual life of priests has been professionalized. Sometimes one is confused into thinking that temples and priests are nourished by the people and not the other way around. Nobody will ever be able to expect an institution, to which one is related only through ancient customs, to be able to actually solve social and economic fear. It is only natural that one should be dissatisfied with an institution that has nothing but the speculative art of escape from reality. It was the new religious movements that deeply grasped the mind of the people by meeting such demands of theirs with actual benefits as well as by giving practical and straightforward solutions to their problems. A majority of the established Buddhist orders has a downward

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

movement tendency, so to speak, with the leaders or rulers at the top; while most of the new religious movements have an upward tendency which has been born out of a deep life-experience of most of the founders who found themselves among the masses. People found affinity in the fact that these founders belonged to the same class as they, and the earnestness of their faith was also bound to attract the sympathy of a number of people. Of course, some went too far and the vulgarity and shallowness of their doctrines and intelligence were undeniable. And yet merely on this basis it seems to be difficult to pass judgment on the essence and nature of their teachings.

The teachings regarding money-making and healing, which often go with the new religious movements are frequently denounced. It may be well that this is so, but an imprudent denouncement of them without any deep consideration is very likely to make the point ambiguous. Those who find themselves in poverty, who have nothing to do with position, fame, or power, and who have no confidence in their educational career, often tend to take to money-making in order to meet their actual needs as human beings. Originally the hoarding of property was not regarded as blameworthy, and this was admitted even in early Buddhism. Therefore, in this case the vital problem must be how to tackle the changes in economic life which affects the people most directly. It goes without saying that in parallel with the progress of modern science, healing came to be dealt with scientifically. There may be little room here for superstition to assert itself. But isn't there a reality which forces people to depend more on inexpensive religions, because of the expenses required of them by traditional medical healing.

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

So long as human beings are in charge of scientific treatment, they are burdened with many kinds of problems. For example, the difference between medicine and healing is bound to be important. There is no denying, further, that elevation of the spirit often serves to cure a person. So long as this fact remains valid, it may be that healing in the new sects and cults should not be lightly dismissed as superstition. It is the author's opinion that these new sects and cults as such should not necessarily be approved. We should not either approve or disapprove of them readily. But before denouncing them we should closely show their *raison d'être* and their essence from every possible angle. And we should realize that in present-day society it is impossible to consider the concrete and actual situation of religions apart from the problems of economic or political philosophies.

Traditionally Japanese Buddhism played its role to the fullest extent in molding Japanese culture. But it was concerned only with the pre-Meiji eras. What contribution has it made since then with the progress of modernization in Japan? Indeed, modern Buddhology has produced a number of brilliant achievements that have been stored up as the common property of Japanese thinking and have enlightened numberless people. The image of Sakyamuni Buddha as a human existence endeared himself to the people and helped the people to rediscover Buddhism. But how about Buddhism for the masses as centered in the temples? Priests in the past, as most cultured men, held respectable social positions and general respect worthy of their ability, and their livelihood was assured. At present, however, except for a minority, the priests who maintain a

BUDDHISM AND THE JAPANESE MIND

number of temples do not look as capable socially or personally as before. It is because a majority of very talented heirs of chief priests of the temples have all but left their temples. The reason for this may be that their interest cannot possibly be attached to conditions in which there is little hope of a guaranteed livelihood and without either cultural attraction or any hope of winning secular fame and position. With the exception of the new Buddhist movements undertaken by a countable few, most of the established Buddhist orders have somehow or other maintained their following up to the present time although they were immersed in old customs. It should be noted, however, in a different sense that a majority of temples still keep contact with the people by means of customs and worldly benefits, and that, quite aside from the question of their ability, the temples are maintained at present by priests who depend on such means. What is required of such priests is that they should acquire self-confidence in a proper sense, however hard it may be. It is quite natural that one should find it hard to feel a strong emotion or interest in whatever has been conventionalized. But, on the other hand, convention is a kind of attachment. Therefore, it is not impossible to transform the attachment, and thereby recover fresh life and power.

Recently an increasing number of well known temples have concentrated their efforts on the sightseeing business, and this tendency is being deplored by a thinking minority. For most of the people concerned, however, it is an expression of their desperate effort to preserve their old treasures, and this phenomenon may rather be welcomed in view of the fact that the

sightseeing business on the part of temples may serve the general public by setting free for the benefit of the public old cultural properties, which were once possessed by either the ruling class or by men of influence. Nay, since in the beginning the temples were not the private property of individual priests, it would serve the original spirit of Buddhism to throw the spacious temple grounds open to the public to be used for welfare institutions and other public uses.

It looks as though, with a few exceptions, the so-called "religiousness" in established Buddhism has become stagnant and half-decayed in the muddy-field of old tradition and convention, and that it is being replaced by the fresh life and vigorous power of the new sects and cults. It is high time for the established orders seriously to tackle this critical situation and to renounce their self-complacency and sectarianism.

— 終 —