

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

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(A Report of the Sixth Round Table Conference)

Note : This conference was held at Konkō Machi, Okayama prefecture in October, 1960, with the following participants: Ōmoto (Kenji Utsunomiya), Shugendō (Hitashi Miyake), Fuju Fuse-ha (Tadanao Noritake), Protestant (Akira Nishihara), Zen (Ichinyō Takahara), Shrine Shinto (Makoto Suda). The Chairman was Dr. Yoshirō Tamura, and the Adviser was William P. Woodard, both of this Institute.

What is the general public's idea of religion ?

Ōmoto

In Japan people do not raise the question : What is religion ? They are unconscious of selecting any one religion as their own and of having faith in it. In rural areas they go to shrines to pray for recovery from illness and suffering, and to the temples for funerals. The shrines are called *Ogamiya-san* (pray-ers) and the temples *Otomuraiya-san* (funeral directors). In the cities the shrines and temples are merged into the daily life and customs of the people. Weddings and ceremonies commemorating the birth of a child are conducted at shrines ; funerals and services for the ancestors are held at temples. Moreover, we can observe shrine festivals which are expressions of the communal life of the people.

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The new sects, despite their shortcomings, are worthy of attention because of the effective way in which they conduct religious functions that attract the masses.

Nevertheless, the Japanese people are generally indifferent to religion. Buddhism is nothing more than ancestor worship, that is, a family faith. Shrine Shinto is concerned with the ordinary events of daily life. Even if some people have a personal faith in a new sect, their faith is vague and common. They do not consciously discriminate between true faith and superstition. Most of the intellectuals in these new sects criticize religion in general as being conservative, self-righteous, exclusive, and detrimental to social progress. At various conferences I attended in Japan and abroad it was often pointed out that the future of religion will depend upon how religion meets the tests posed by the present historic crisis of mankind. Two years ago we established a Council for Interfaith Cooperation in this prefecture and sought to solicit support for the above opinion on the part of every religion and religious organization.

DISCUSSION

Shrine Shinto Will you elaborate on your statement that the new popular faiths should be rated high for the religious functions they perform?

Ōmoto The new sects are rated high because the masses that have not been saved by the established religions are being saved by these new sects.

Zen It is questionable whether the salvation talked about by the new sects is salvation in the true sense of the word. Their salvation is too earthly and utilitarian.

Ōmoto I believe that there are various stages in salvation. Theirs should be recognized as a first step toward true

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salvation.

Chairman The new sects ask the long established Buddhist sects not to criticize them too bluntly but to reflect on the fact that so many new believers are attracted to them. Buddhist leaders, however, contend that the so-called salvation of the new sects is of no avail if the believers are misled. This involves the distinction between right belief and superstition. What attitude does the Council for Interfaith Cooperation of your prefecture take in regard to this?

Ōmoto The Council, which comprises all faiths except Sōka Gakkai, does not deal with this subject. What it stresses is cooperation and collaboration.

Konkō How do you distinguish between superstition and true belief?

Ōmoto It depends upon whether the object of worship is right or wrong. Our object of worship is God the Creator but he is somewhat different from the God of Christianity. Ours is a God who, as the Source of Creation, manifests Himself in all things in the universe, which are so-to-speak fragments or expressions of God. The works of God cover everything, and these may be called by divine names such as the eight myriad kami (yaoyorozu no kami) of Shinto.

Konkō What sort of a person do you regard as having thoroughly received divine inspiration?

Ōmoto He is one who conforms to the will of God, which consists in bringing about the happiness of mankind and the peace of the world. The proper way of life for man is thus to be active in society by living God's will as his own.

Chairman Does Ōmoto hold that not only primitive faiths like animism, but other faiths also, that do not consider God as a Creator, are not true beliefs?

Ōmoto I believe the whole aspect of God can be expressed

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truly only when monotheism, polytheism, and pantheism are considered as one. Explanations given by the various religions cannot but be one-sided; but they cannot be denounced as superstition, although the worship of such objects as a badger, fox, stone, and so forth, must definitely be said to be superstition.

Chairman What have the Buddhists to say about Ōmoto's position of holding up the worship of God as Creator as the most essential?

Zen Buddhism regards every human being as inherently a buddha, that is, everyone is endowed with the buddha nature.

Protestant Does the worship of the Buddha mean becoming conscious of one's possessing the buddha nature?

Zen Yes, it does.

Chairman May I hear the Christian view?

Protestant The statement about the world being composed of fragments of God to which divine names can be given, so that it is possible to have eight myriads of kami, cannot be accepted. That is nothing but pantheism. Christianity makes a clear distinction between God and man. Man can never become God.

Zen What about the power to receive God?

Protestant It is regarded as being given by God.

Zen Jōdo Shin speaks of faith being given by Amida Buddha.

Shugendō Esoteric Buddhism upholds Dainichi (Mahā-Vairocana) as the central object of worship. All phenomena of the universe are regarded as expressions of Dainichi and the various buddhas and bodisattvas are considered to be emanations. A buddha is not an existence apart from man, but a state which can also be attained by man.

Konkō-kyō Konkō-kyō's God can be said to be both transcendent and immanent.

Kurozumi-kyō The same can be said of Kurozumi-kyō. Besides the chief object of worship, Amaterasu Ōmikami, who is similar in a sense to the God of Christisnity, eight myriads of kami are also worshipped, which makes it possible for us to accept the idea of the buddha nature, too.

Shrine Shinto Transcendence and immanence can also be considered in respect to Shrine Shinto as the blood and the local (communal) relationship. The former is a vertical link such as exists between parent and child, and the latter a horizontal one, such as exists between a man and his village, town, and nation.

Ōmoto The thinking of all the participants except Christianity seems to be pantheistic. When the water of a great ocean is put into a glass, it is no more the great ocean itself. God and man may be distinguished in this sense, but the essence is the same. I cannot understand why Christianity insists on separating the two.

Protestant Konkō-kyō speaks of the immanence of God. If that is stressed too much, man either becomes absorbed into God, or absorbs God.

Konkō-kyō What I want to point out is that this prosaic way of thinking which separates God and man is open to question. If God, the Absolute, is a being that simply stands before man, He is a relative being and not an absolute. I believe the relation between God and man is of a vertical and dynamic nature, and that, therefore, God is both transcendent and immanent.

Zen How does Konkō-kyō explain this relationship concretely?

Konkō-kyō Our God is called Tenchi Kane-no-Kami, and our founder is called Ikigami Konkō Daijin.

Zen Can the latter be regarded the same as the former?

Konkō-kyō The latter name was given by Tenchi Kane-no

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Kami, so it is the name not only of the founder, but also of the Kami born in him.

Zen Can all the believers become a Kami?

Konkō-kyō The founder said that this is possible.

Zen Is man not a kami from the beginning?

Konkō-kyō The Kami is born in one as one's state of mind progresses. That is, he gradually becomes a kami.

Fuju Fuse-kyō Buddhism believes that man becomes a buddha when his innate buddha nature is developed through training. In Konkō-kyō does the Kami come from the outside?

Konkō-kyō As the Kami is born in man, something like the buddha nature may be said to have been in man from the beginning.

Protestant Doesn't that birth take place because God of His own accord enters into man?

Konkō-kyō No. That would lead to the idea of a merely transcendent god. A Konkō-kyō expression says, "Both Kami and parishioner (*ujiko*) are mutually sustained." The two are not regarded as entirely separate beings.

Chairman Now let us discuss the believers. What is their attitude in embracing religious faith?

Shrine Shinto There is a vague religious atmosphere in popular functions, such as enjoying the moonlight, which belongs neither to Buddhism nor to Shinto. The characteristic religious attitude of the Japanese people in general seems to lie in this.

Fuju Fuse-ha I believe many Japanese embrace religious faith in connection with their habit of consoling the souls of their ancestors.

Ōmoto The prevailing trend, I believe, is to seek favors (*okage*).

Protestant That is related to the problem of secular benefits

and sojery.

Kurozumi-kyō Most people seem to turn to religion to solve worries and difficulties arising out of their daily life.

Chairman Ōmoto says that one should not stop at the stage of "seeking favors." Why?

Ōmoto We say that man is rooted in his ancestors, and the ancestors in the kami. Faith should be elevated to a stage where man is linked directly with the kami. The substance of the kami being love and truth, true faith should manifest itself in practising love and seeking truth.

Has religion changed with the times, or has it remain unchanged?

SHUGENDŌ

Shugendō is an ancient popular belief about mountains systematized into a religious form under the influence of foreign religions such as Buddhism and Taoism. The development of Shugendō can be explained as follows:

In ancient times people believed that the spirit of a man went to a mountain and became the *mountain's* kami, then in the spring it came down to the rice fields and became *their* kami. Thus they held festivals twice a year, that is, a festival of meeting this kami in the spring and of sending the kami away in the autumn.

In the Nara period (710-784) one who trained in the mountains was thought to have attained magical power, and able to make effective incantations.

In the Heian period (794-1192) the esoteric, who considered a mountain as a kind of *maṇḍala*, trained in the mountains in order to make his magical power more effective.

In the Kamakura period (1192-1333) people imagined the

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Pure Land to be in the mountains, especially in Kumano in Wakayama Prefecture, and tried to enter the Pure Land of Amida with their actual body by going to the mountains. In the Muromachi period (1392-1573) it was taught that the buddha nature, which man had originally, could be caught through training in a mountain.

In the Edo period (1600-1867), besides the power of making incantations and prayers by magical power which was attained through training in the mountains, such people distributed the talisman of mountain temples and shrines.

In the present age people endeavor to lead an undefiled daily life by making the most of the enlightened state of the mind attained through training in mountains.

It can be seen, then, that the attitude of the people has changed with the times. The first change can be seen in the religious interpretation of the nature of mountains, such as the places where the spirit of a deceased person lives, places where people get magical power, the place of a *maṇḍala*, or the Pure Land. The second was in the manner of training or in ritual forms. The third was in the way the practitioners became adapted to the needs of the people in general. But we can also note that the following points have remained unchanged : mountains are sacred places ; man has the possibility of developing magical power, that is, the buddha nature ; and training in a mountain makes a man awaken to his buddha nature.

DISCUSSION

Zen How is this mountain faith related to Shinto?

Shugendō Before En-no Ozunu, with whom the history of Shugendō began, it probably was related to ancient Shinto.

Protestant When did it become linked with Buddhism?

Shugendō Mainly in the Heian period. But already in the Nara period it was connected with the faith of *dharani* in esoteric Buddhism.

Ōmoto Are the acts performed as a result of training regarded as a kind of miracle?

Shugendō The masses so regard them. The belief that a person coming down from a mountain possesses miraculous power remains even today at Ōmine and its neighborhood.

Protestant Are supplications and prayers also offered?

Shugendō The primary thing is to awaken the buddha nature, but supplications and prayers are performed secondarily.

Chairman In what way did Taoism exert its influence?

Shugendō In popular aspects such as by means of amulets.

Protestant Has the object of worship magical power?

Shugendō It may be regarded as a symbol.

Protestant Is there no case in which such a symbol becomes the entity itself (*jittai*)?

Shugendō Yes, many people so regard the object of worship but originally it was the ideal image through which man completed his personality.

Konkō-kyō You imply that people today try to cultivate the ability to live in an ethical manner. Is this not a result of a self-examination in respect to magical practices?

Shugendō It certainly is. I believe progress in that direction is appropriate in the present age.

Konkō-kyō Can leading a secluded life in the mountains be regarded as an expression of belief in sorcery?

Shugendō It may be said to be so, because the masses expect magical power from persons who have trained themselves in the mountains.

Konkō-kyō When belief in sorcery is eliminated, does it not lead to the idea that it is not imperative to go into the

mountains?

Shugendō Anything having the character of magic should be removed in the future. I would like to bring about a shift in the direction of attaching significance to the awakening of the buddha nature itself through hard training in the mountains.

Chairman Is there special meaning in going into the mountains?

Shugendō Simply because it is suitable for training.

Protestant May training be done at home or anywhere else?

Shugendō The significance of training there is found in climbing the steep paths step by step.

Chairman Did Shugendō believers in the past think that mountains possessed special spiritual power?

Shugendō Yes. Sometimes a mountain was regarded as holy because of a specific phenomenon. Mount Ishizuchi in Shikoku is a case in point. Even at present once or twice a month an image of the Buddha is said to appear there in the sky at sunrise.

Chairman What about other religions? Have they changed?

Zen Buddhism may be said to have changed when we look at the large number of sects that have emerged, but the essence has remained unchanged. What changed was the manner of acceptance, its expression, and training.

Chairman Do you think memorial services, rituals, the supporter (*danka*) system, and sutras may change, or ought to change?

Zen Those things ought to change. Even the sutras should adopt expressions suitable for the times. In this sense the founder of every sect may be said to have created very suitable sutras.

Fuju Fuse-ha Nichiren advocated the Lotus Sutra as the only sutra capable of saving the people in the Latter Days of the

Law.

Zen The sutras, including the Lotus Sutra, are expressions of the same truth adapted to various times and capabilities.

Fuju Fuse-ha The truth as clarified in the Lotus Sutra is regarded as absolute and whole, while that of other sutras is relative and partial.

Konkō-kyō Can Buddhism such as Shin-shū, which emphasizes the Other Power, be said to have retained the fundamental spirit of Sakyamuni despite differences in expression?

Zen I believe that the fundamental spirit of Sakyamuni underlies it unchanged. Teachings and sutras are, as it were, fingers pointing to the moon, that is, the fundamental truth.

Konkō-kyō What do you think of the antagonism and strife among various sects?

Zen Each sect maintains that it is the best, but the goal of all is one.

Fuju Fuse-ha I think their goals are different. That is why they oppose one another.

Zen Refuge in the Three Treasures — the Buddha, Dharma and Saṃgha — may be cited as the most fundamental common element.

Shrine Shinto In Buddhism is Sakya the object of worship, or is he regarded just as the ideal image of attainment?

Zen Sakyamuni is the one who has manifested the dharma. He is, for us, an image of the ideal.

Protestant The Buddha may be compared to the Christ, the dharma to the words and works of Christ, and the saṃgha to the churches and denominations. Christ and his explanations and deeds, including his miracles, are historical facts that have been handed down through the Bible unchanged.

Konkō-kyō Do you recognize that expressions or interpretations of historical facts change according to the times?

Protestant Yes, I do.

Konkō-kyō If expressions or interpretation change, the essence of a doctrine changes too, doesn't it? I think the expression of creation has changed according to the times, and it indicates that the very idea of creation has changed.

Shrine Shinto Shrine Shinto was formerly merged with Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Revival Shinto, formulated by Motoori Norinaga in the Tokugawa era, tried to return to its original, pure Japanese form.

Chairman During the war Shrine Shinto became State Shinto, and then it was considered quite proper for the Japanese people to worship at Ise Shrine, regardless of their individual faiths. Do you think it should be so even today?

Shrine Shinto That was an imposed worship. Today it should be abolished.

Chairman What do you mean by "imposed worship"?

Shrine Shinto Formerly there was a strong feeling that it was imposed from above. For example, at the time of festivals, an Imperial messenger used to visit the shrines to make offerings to the kami.

Ōmoto Ōmoto preaches that religion changes according to the times, the place, and circumstances, and that Ōmoto emerged as the religion of this age. A difference between the changeable and unchangeable, however, is secondarily recognized. The fundamental teaching and spirit of the founder are deemed to be unchangeable, while his successors are expected to preach variously according to the time, the place, and circumstances.

Kurozumi-kyō It is the same with Kurozumi-kyō. The teaching left by the founder is unchangeable, but the propaganda method and interpretation will undergo changes.

Chairman Is it Konkō-kyō's opinion that the spirit and essence

of a religion may also change, if expressions change according to times, place, and circumstances?

Konkō-kyō The founder of Konkō-kyō said Ikigami Konkō Daijin makes progress day by day. Konkō-kyō, therefore, does not distinguish the essence from its expression, and regards the doctrine itself as developing with the times.

Chairman *Namu Amida Butsu* in Jōdo faiths, *Namu Myōhō Rengo Kyō* in the Nichiren Sect, and the proper names for the kami in various orders, are also a kind of expression of faith. May these change, too?

Shugendō As long as it is the teaching of the founder, it will be unchangeable.

Shrine Shinto In Shrine Shinto there have been cases in the past in which a kami came to be called by three or four different names.

Kurozumi-kyō The founder of Kurozumi-kyō did not stick to the name of Amaterasu Ōmikami exclusively.

Konkō-kyō Konkō-kyō does not advocate the practice of incantations for seeking benefits through the invocation of a specific name of the kami.

Protestant Christianity needs no specific name, because God is the only One and Absolute. Jehovah means master and is not a specific name. Things that arise as phenomena may change as a matter of course.

Chairman Buddhism has many sutras, while Christianity has but one scripture. What does Konkō-kyō think of this?

Konkō-kyō New translations in various languages, according to the times and place, may be regarded as so many new bibles.

Chairman Can Buddhist sutras be regarded as new adaptations of the spirit of Sakyamuni according to the successive ages?

Shugendō They may be regarded as the products of the at-

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tempts to convey the true spirit of the Buddha according to the times and capabilities of the people.

Chairman Does Zen think various sutras have their raison d'être?

Zen I believe they may exist as they are.

Chairman Fujū Fuse-ha upholds the Lotus Sutra only?

Zen I wonder if Nichiren really said all sutras except the Lotus Sutra are wrong.

This is my religion (1).

Fujū Fuse-ha

The Lotus Sutra has always been the spiritual support for me as a follower of the Fuse school of Nichiren Buddhism. From this standpoint I think that religion teaches us the way of establishing the ideal society where all people can live happily and peacefully. The spirit of the Lotus Sutra can be found in this. Buddhism in Japan today, however, remains at the level of ancestor worship or funeral services. Even if there are those who do have a personal faith in Buddhism, it is only in respect to life after death. In other words, Buddhism has been reduced to a religion for death, and has ceased to be meaningful for living in this life. For example, reading a Chinese text without translating it into Japanese is perfect jargon for us. I feel that Buddhism retains too much of the old and original materials. I eagerly look forward to the emergence of young religious leaders with a strong faith who will seek to catch the true meaning of religion and to build up a new society.

DISCUSSION

Protestant What does your school of Buddhism do for social

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welfare?

Fuju Fuse-ha I feel that our school of Buddhism at present is conservative, backward-looking, and does not provide a vital guiding principle for the people.

Protestant Do you also pay attention to such matters as the evils of the capitalistic structure in Japan that hurt human nature?

Fuju Fuse-ha I believe the defects of capitalistic society have to be rectified, but Buddhism avoids confrontation with the political aspect of modern society and seeks refuge in the individual peace of mind. Unless Buddhism goes forward in the direction of leading the masses in achieving social reform, it will lose its *raison d'être* as a religion.

Ōmoto Do you definitely think that religious activities in general ought to have socialistic elements in them?

Fuju Fuse-ha Yes. In the past the Fuju Fuse school was extremely anti-feudalistic. The words "fuju fuse," literally, "not receiving, not giving," mean to reject the unreasonable gift. It was banned for that reason and produced many martyrs; but it lost sight of its original form and degraded itself into the status of a conservative sect similar to other groups.

Zen Although I agree on some points, I hold that as far as religion itself is concerned the salvation of the individual should be central.

This is my religion (2).

KUROZUMI-KYŌ

Kurozumi-kyō holds one's daily home and social life to be the place for individual training, and stresses the need of living a life of gratitude and thanksgiving by detaching oneself from

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the ego and egoistic desires and becoming one with the kami. This, in short, is my religion.

One of Kurozumi-kyō's characteristics is the worship of the sun, through which the founder Munetada attained the spiritual realization of the oneness of the kami and man. Another characteristic is a method of breathing called *goyōki shugyō*, whereby gloominess is dispelled and vitality is absorbed into the body.

As to its concrete doctrines, there are Five Teachings and Seven Commandments. The Five Teachings are: Don't lose sincerity; Entrust yourself to heaven; Detach yourself from the ego; Be joyous; and Become alive. The Seven Commandments are: Remember that you were born in the world of Kami and don't lose faith; Don't get angry or concerned with trifles; Don't look down upon others with self-conceit; Don't increase your evil according to others' evil; Don't neglect your business when you are not ill; Remember that you are in the way of sincerity and don't lose your mind's sincerity; Don't forget to be consciously grateful every day.

Moreover, the founder, Munetada, Performed miracles which he said were not his wonders, but the wonders of heaven and earth. The teaching of Kurozumi-kyō can be concluded by saying that one should have the consciousness that he is the son of heaven and earth, and spend his daily life with gratitude and joyfulness through the teachings and miracles of heaven and earth.

DISCUSSION

Zen You spoke of worshipping the sun. Is the sun a kami?
Kurozumi-kyō Munetada sometimes called the sun Kami, and and sometimes Tenchi (Heaven and Earth).

Shugendō Do you think there were other persons who also

attained the realization of the oneness of the kami and man?

Kurozumi-kyō Yes. Munetada left a letter to that effect in which he said that Sakya, Confucius, and Christ preached teachings that were nothing but the virtuous manifestation of Tenchi.

Shugendō What role do ethics and morality play in your order?

Kurozumi-kyō Ethical and moral systems serve as forms of training for making man become conscious of his being the child of the kami.

Shugendō Does the worship of the sun and the practice of *goyōki shugyō* constitute, then, the daily moral life?

Kurozumi-kyō Yes. It emerges from that.

Ōmoto Is the founder's teaching accepted as a revelation?

Kurozumi-kyō Yes. Kurozumi-kyō grasps the Kami and Tenchi in various ways. The traditional Japanese say "Amaterasu Ōmikami," while the younger generation regard it as "Tenchi."

Chairman Was there any special reason in choosing Amaterasu Ōmikami?

Kurozumi-kyō Being born amidst the Japanese race, and confronted with various restraints, especially in the Meiji era, Kurozumi-kyō has been upholding Amaterasu Ōmikami as its object of worship. But the personality of Munetada is central.

Protestant Do you mean the Kurozumi-kyō is a religious group established through the special personality of the founder, something like the Lutherans?

Kurozumi-kyō I mean that the various religions are the manifestations of the one truth according to the time, place and personality. So we recognize the value of Christianity, Buddhism, etc.

Ōmoto Does the birth of Kurozumi-kyō, despite its recognition of Christianity and other religions, mean that the older religions have had their day, so that a new one had to replace them?

Kurozumi-kyō The founder did not say that much, but it will boil down to that.

Protestant Is Kurozumi-kyō, then, going to be replaced by another religion?

Kurozumi-kyō It is possible. Kurozumi-kyō is very broad-minded. The founder even said one should not confine oneself in the "bag" of Kurozumi. It goes so far as being willing to risk the life of the order, if only all people can lead a happy and peaceful life in the awareness of being the children of the kami.

Shugendō What are the motives for embracing the faith?

Kurozumi-kyō Sickness in most cases, followed by family troubles and mental suffering.

Shugendō How do you guide the sick?

Kurozumi-kyō A sick person is taught to be grateful because sickness is a means of receiving divine teaching, and he is sometimes given a treatment called *teate*, whereby the invalid is touched and the invigorating breath of the teacher is breathed upon him.

Ōmoto What actually grips the believer seems to be the founder rather than the kami. Isn't that so?

Kurozumi-kyō Yes, the charming humanity of the founder.

Konkō-kyō Do not the followers believe that Munetada himself had and still has, magical power?

Shugendō Is such a power regarded as being inherited by his offspring?

Kurozumi-kyō No. The disciples to whom the founder's teaching was transmitted are regarded as having inherited

the power.

Shrine Shinto I want to ask this of Fujū Fuse-kyō. Is social salvation linked with the religious activities in Nichiren Buddhism?

Fujū Fuse-ha Nichiren Buddhism considers that there is no personal salvation without social salvation, and admonitions should be given to a statesman in order to realize social salvation.

Chairman In that case is the purpose to make the politicians believe in the *dharma*, or is the admonition given in an attempt to bring about a reform of the social structure and political set-up?

Fujū Fuse-ha The change of social set-up is not its direct aim. We hope to see society improved as a result of the politicians' change of mind. It should be noted, however, that our sect dared to affirm in the feudal age that the feudal lord's territory was not his personal possession but that it belonged to all people.

Chairman What social structure and political form does Nichiren Buddhism deem ideal? For instance, what do you think of the Emperor system?

Fujū Fuse-ha From the point of view of the Lotus Sutra faith, the set-up of social ranks and classes, such as the Emperor system and the monopoly of property and profit, should be reformed.

Chairman Should religion be individual-centered, or is it necessary to think of social salvation?

Fujū Fuse-ha The salvation of society is as necessary as is individual salvation.

Konkō-kyō Konkō-kyō regards the individual and society as linked inseparably with each other, and offers criticism of social institutions. It does not, however, engage in forming

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political associations or in seeking seats in the Diet.

Chairman Even if it has no Diet members, if it announces what it favors in principle, does it not become involved in politics?

Konkō-kyō Such a principle is not announced. It cannot, because our followers include diverse groups. However, religion should be able to promote social truthfulness, transcending ideologies and isms.

Ōmoto I believe religion should tackle practical social problems. Our order regards movements, like that for the banning of atomic and hydrogen bombs, as something that should be promoted by the order rather than by individuals.

Chairman It is said in some quarters that the newly arisen sects would disappear of their own accord if and when sickness, poverty, and other social ills are removed, and if women become more independent and emancipated. What do you think of this?

Ōmoto Human worries and afflictions are bound to arise even if political and economic stability is achieved through, for instance, the establishment of a World Federal State. So religion will be needed forever.

Zen Even if the social structure improves, the problem of death cannot be solved thereby. But faith for the sake of benefits, such as the healing of illness and the acquisition of profit, is not a sound one. Religion ought to cultivate the power to overcome illness and poverty.

Protestant I agree. People embracing Christianity seem to seek such power. I believe religion should show the ultimate foundation on which man ought to live.

Adviser Are there people who embrace a religion when they are healthy, wealthy, and happy?

Protestant They will find significance in being brought in

touch with the Ultimate.

Ōmoto Our order has stressed the reformation of the world and society under the slogan of *tatekae, tatenaoishi*. Our followers are, therefore, composed mostly of patriotic persons.

Chairman There are religions that positively uphold the efficacy of prayer and supplication. How is it with Shugendō?

Shugendō Illness is regarded as curable when the invalid has confidence that recovery is possible and has a strong faith that the Buddha can cure him, which depends on whether the Shugen priest acts from a strong sense of compassion.

Zen I doubt if a prayer or a talisman has any inherent power. I don't think there is any significance in a prayer or a talisman itself, it is only in the *confidence* that illness can be gotten over through a prayer or a talisman.

Chairman Does Zen Buddhism say prayers or give talisman?

Zen There are some Zen temples which do, but the purpose is the cultivation of self-confidence.

Chairman How about Shrine Shinto?

Shrine Shinto Shrine Shinto often speaks of the abundance of things and the richness of the mind, and is thus very realistic.

Chairman Is this derived from their racial consciousness as Japanese?

Protestant A Christian playing a very important role at a church once told me enthusiastically about the divine beauty of the Ise Grand Shrine. His mind seemed to have a solemn feeling not only for the Only God taught by Christianity but also for the nature kami of Japan.

Chairman Foreigners visiting Japan seem to be impressed deeply by the serene atmosphere of Shinto shrines.

Adviser I am also impressed with some shrines.

Shrine Shinto Japanese people seem to feel attracted to Shinto

shrines after middle age, regardless of whether they have religious faith or not.

Chairman Is there in Western countries a longing to return to one's native faith?

Adviser This will depend on the individuals concerned. In any case it is not the same as in Japan where racial consciousness is so strong.

Protestant Shinto seems to foster a quiet union with nature. I myself, a Christian minister, was struck and inspired by the beauty of nature displayed at Kokedera (the Moss Temple) though it is a Buddhist temple.

Adviser The Christianity that entered Japan is Western in its atmosphere. I believe that there is some truth in the assertion that Christianity does not take deep root in Japan because of its Western shell. It should shed this shell and confront Japan with its essence.

Chairman It is often said that Christianity should acclimatize itself to Japan and that, then, Christians would go naturally to Shinto shrines and bow their heads.

Protestant From the view-point of Christianity nature is a thing created by God, the Creator. However, Shinto regards existences such as nature, man, or animal, as kami. We, Christians cannot accept this concept of God, so we must reject worship at Shrines.

Fuju Fuse-ha We also do not worship there. Our sect regards itself as absolute, and denies all others as heretical religions.

Chairman That is a very strong position. Is there some special circumstance behind it?

Fuju Fuse-ha It derives from the spirit of denying heretical religions. This is called *shakubuku*.

Adviser But the mandala includes Amaterasu Ōmikami and Hachiman Dai Bosatsu.

Fuju Fuse-ha Saint Nichiren adopted them as guardians of the Lotus Sutra. I believe he did this as an expedient because he had to propagate his doctrine in the midst of the established religions on which he depended to some extent.

Zen Is there no idea that visits to Shinto shrines are unnecessary since Amaterasu Ōmikami is worshipped through the *mandala*?

Chairman There are people who so contend. There are also others who say such visits are useless, because the kami no longer reside in Shinto shrines. According to them Japan lost the True Law and the kami, the guardians of the True Law, left for a heavenly abode. During World War II Sōka Gakkai refused to receive the charm of Ise Shrine (*taima*) and for that reason was persecuted. They do not visit Shinto shrines even at present. Shin Buddhism also does not visit Shinto shrines. Shin Buddhism insists that the kami as the guardian of the Buddha Amida, rejoice in the *nembutsu*. In the Tokugawa era, Motoori, Norinaga attacked these two sects in his book, *Shinteki Nishū Ron* (“On Two Sects as the Enemy of the Kami”).

Ōmoto Our order regards everything, including Shinto shrines, as divine and allows us to worship them if we so desire.

Chairman In Kurozumi-kyō and Konkō-kyō is it a problem whether or not one should worship at Shinto shrines?

Konkō-kyō We don't say our believers should not worship there.

Shugendō Shugendō people, of course, visit and worship at Shinto shrines.

Chairman How do Shrine Shintoist regard shrines?

Shrine Shinto Many people argue that Shinto shrines should not be treated on the same level as other religions, while others approve equal treatment because it will contribute to

its development beyond being a mere racial religion. I feel Ōmoto's idea of a World Federal State is a modern version of *Hakkō Ichiu*, that is, "eight corners under one roof." We feel like adopting such a way of thinking ourselves.

Chairman Are Shinto priests hoping for a return to State Shinto linked with the Emperor system under state protection?

Shrine Shinto People of my age will be of the same opinion as I. Ise shrine, however, seems to have been handled too severely by the law. The places where the Emperor worships should be returned to the state.

Chairman Finally, I would like to have you talk about whether or not people embracing a faith for mundane benefits are larger in number than those seeking no such benefits, and how the new believers are handled by various orders.

Zen In the country the supporter system (*danka*) is prevalent. Sickness and poverty do not play an important role in our order.

Chairman What do you think about the fact that younger people have become interested in practicing *zazen*?

Zen They seem to practice *zazen* for the purpose of recovering mental (spiritual) support which has been lost in the midst of modern mass-communications.

Ōmoto In our group the number of people suffering from illness and worries is comparatively large, yet there are many people who want to assist us in the divine work as preached by us. Fulfilled prophecies support their faith in this sense. The prophecies concern a universal community or *hakkō ichu*. The unintelligent believers of the past took this to mean that the Emperor of Japan or Wanisaburō Deguchi would rule over the world. According to its fundamental doctrine, however, Ōmoto is opposed to the Emperor system.

Konkō-kyō In Konkō-kyō illness, financial difficulties, and family troubles are the major motives for entering the faith. The present tendency is to seek solutions through improvements in man-to-man, man-to-society relations instead of asking for direct divine favors.

Shugendō People come to Shugendō through village groups, through mountain climbing pilgrims associations, through prayers and incantations, and through counseling by means of a *miko* (medium).

Chairman Which channel is predominant?

Shugendō Prayers and incantations. Women of middle age are in the majority.

Konkō-kyō Women predominate in our group, too.

Omoto A majority of our believers are farmers.

Kurozumi-kyō Kurozumi-kyō works through a village group called *Tenshin-kō*, literally, Heaven Mind Association, through our teachers capable of healing illness, through two shrines in Kyōto and Okayama, and through local believers who attract people by their exemplary conduct.

Protestant Worries arising out of human relations would seem to be a major factor in Christianity. Christianity from the beginning has found a strong response among the intellectuals of Japan.

Fuju Fuse-ha In Fuju Fuse-ha the believers are fixed and there are almost no new converts. It has become a religion of the household.

Shrine Shinto In Shrine Shinto it is not doctrine but tradition that results in all newborn children being regarded as parishioners (*ujiko*) of the shrine of the area where they live.

Chairman Contributions to shrine festivals, which were taken for granted in the past, seem sometimes to be made reluctantly, or not made at all for religious reasons. Is this

so?

Shrine Shinto There are some such cases, but they are of no importance.

May religion be different according to different people?

Konkō-kyō

This theme is concerned with a comparison of religions. I think it is meaningless to compare religions with each other and to discuss their relative value. Accordingly my answer is: "It should not be flatly stated that religions ought not be different for different people."

However, I don't accept the common view that all religions lead to the top of the mountain, and so one may have faith in any religion. To such an opinion, I dare say that I have chosen Konkō-kyō out of many religions and have put my faith in it. I have confidence that I could not be saved but for Konkō-kyō.

The founder of Konkō-kyō heightened Konjin, an object of worship in the folk belief at the time, to *Tenchi Kane no Kami* and put his faith in Him; but he did not force people to follow his faith. He advised them to have faith in Konkō-kyō.

DISCUSSION

Zen Please elaborate on the experience of your founder.

Konkō-kyō The belief in Konjin concerned lucky days (*higara*) and directions (*hōi*). It held that no misfortune would happen if the *higara* and *hōi* one chose were correct. But our founder was attacked by a fatal illness even though he observed the rules. After much reflection he transcended the ordinary beliefs. It was then that a deity called Tenchi

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Kane-no Kami made His appearance.

Shugendō Please elaborate on the difference between Konjin and Tenchi Kane-no Kami.

Konkō-kyō Konjin is an object of belief in wordly benefits, but Tenchi Kane no Kami is an object of worship which appears in the transcendency of the belief of give-and-take, that is, wordly benefit.

Chairman Do you criticize other religions ?

Konkō-kyō We can say that Konkō-kyō does not discuss the problem of heresy.

Christianity

This theme can be considered from two standpoints, that is, the individual and society. A faith should be selected by each person's active decision and resolution, not by outside compulsion. Therefore, one should have confidence that his faith is the best. At the same time one should respect those who have chosen to accept other religions. From the viewpoint of society, that is, when we consider religion as a social phenomenon, it should be recognized that religion may be different according to different people. For instance, it is wrong to try to compel the Japanese people to have faith in Shrine Shinto for the reason that it is the religion of the Japanese race.

DISCUSSION

Chairman Do Christians actively endeavor to destroy heretical religions ?

Protestant It would be better to say evangelize rather than destroy. In the crusade we find a tendency to destroy, but I believe that such a movement does not recognize the freedom of the other party. Evangelism, on the contrary,

is to introduce the gospel of Christ to others and to entrust the problem of their faith to God, not to compel them to have faith in Christianity by way of the sword.

Zen God, in Christianity, however, seems to be very strict toward human beings.

Protestant Yes, He is very strict. But God allows other religions or evil things which go against him to be in this world. In other words, those things have been created by God. This means that God gave human beings free will.

Ōmoto I cannot understand how God created things which could go against him. I believe God essentially possesses both aspects of good and evil, the positive and the negative, spirit and body; and that good or evil inevitably emerge as a self-development of such qualities. It is good when the spirit leads the body, and bad when the body leads the spirit.

Protestant I can't understand such logic. Man would not be free then, and would evoke no respect for his individual personality.

Ōmoto Probably because of the difference in the conception of God, our ways of thinking run parallel. Ōmoto interprets creation as a self-development of truth. From a root which is neither good nor bad emerges what becomes good and bad, and both become integrated in the form of a dialectic development. We regard man as a highly awakened being, full of free-will to go in the direction of either good or bad.

Chairman Summarizing, what has been said, there appear to be three religions groups. One, like Sōka Gakkai, denounces all other religions as heretical. A second group tries to cooperate with others by finding common points. A third group says there may be various religions according to different capabilities. Please discuss further along these lines.

Protestant I rather welcome the first group. To try to defeat

(*shakubuku*) others without compromise is desirable. I find the second group troublesome for the future of religions in Japan, because it represents too artificial a way of thinking. Further, a religion which maintains that people belonging to a community of local and blood relationship should accept the kami of such a community impedes the modernization of Japan.

Adviser Protestant says that he welcomes *shakubuku*, but ordinary church-goers are not educated enough to conduct such a discussion with people of other faiths.

Protestant I welcome it for the believers, too. It will be a good test. What I want to emphasize is the need of loyalty deep enough to repulse heretics. I believe such loyalty is lacking among the Japanese.

Chairman Sōka Gakkai at present does not try to impose upon others in a high-handed manner, but tries to persuade by maintaining that there is only one truth.

Protestant I admire the strength of religions confidence such as is seen in Sōka Gakkai, but if, this strength means the complete destruction of other religions, it becomes questionable.

Chairman You mean that there are two ways of expressing the conviction that there is but one truth?

Protestant The Bible definitely recognizes the existence of a world not believing in Christianity.

Chairman Most religions tend to think that theirs is the only truth. Is there any religion which thinks differently?

Shrine Shinto Shinto is different.

Kurozumi-kyō Kurozumi-kyō is also different.

Chairman Nichiren Buddhism is very different from the other forms of Buddhism. It says that in the Latter Days the capability of all people degenerates into the worst type, so that they cannot be saved except by the Lotus Sutra.

Zen Shinran and Dōgen did not attack others so severely.

Kurozumi-kyō We regard all religions as the "Way."

Ōmoto That is similar to our Ōmoto way of thinking. There is no reason why all religions should not be able to cooperate with one another, for all of them aim at achieving world peace and human happiness.

Chairman In relation to this problem, will you now discuss the characteristics of the Japanese.

Shrine Shinto I believe the Japanese people are characterized by their tolerance or broad-mindedness.

Fuju Fuse-ha The Japanese are not broad-minded, but impatient and fussy and go astray as a result.

Konkō-kyō That is manifested in their syncretism of having three or four faiths at the same time.

Zen The intermixture of various religions has naturally become a Japanese characteristic. This may mean a lack of the spirit of resistance.

Kurozumi-kyō Kurozumi-kyō regards Christianity, Buddhism, Shinto, etc. as manifestations of the "Way."

Chairman In Japan, kami and buddha (*Kami-botoke*) are always linked with each other, and it is taken for granted that Buddhists bow their heads in front of Shinto shrines.

Konkō-kyō Most Konkō-kyō followers do so also.

Shugendō The kami, as conceived by the Japanese people in general, are functional. There are specialized deities such as a kami for healing the eyes, a kami for improving the brain, and so forth.

Shrine Shinto All our kami have something to do with the actual world. The question is what influence the modern awakening of the self will exert on the future of religions in Japan. Instead of a racial or family belief, as in the past, the Japanese people have to have a personal faith through

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the awakening of the individual ego ; but, since the individual in the West has come to be buried in the mechanical mass civilization, such an awakening by Western methods must be said to have been a failure and unacceptable to us. Let me add here that the blood relationship and the local relationship spoken of in Shinto means a religious relationship, so that it does not try to bind those who have merely sociological relationships to one (Shinto) belief. How should religion be in the future?

Religion in the future. (1)

Zen

Down to the Middle Ages religion had authority superior to science, politics, etc., but in modern times science has become independent of religion and has developed freely. Human beings, furthermore, have a tendency to sever their connection with religion, and have come to look for their happiness and peace in terms of their own way of thinking, not through the will of the kami.

It is true that the development of science has improved the material aspects of human life. On the other hand, the higher development of science has produced contempt for human life and the human spirit, and brought about moral decline and decadence. Thus it is clear that science alone cannot insure the peace and happiness of human beings. Accordingly the need for religion in the crisis of our day is clearly evident. Religion is the fundamental way of making human beings truly and happily alive.

As to religion in the future, it should become fit for science through shearing off the desire for secular benefits and miracles

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criticized by science, and at the same time it should be a religion that teaches how science can be used properly for man, that vitalizes morality, and that imbues politics with the ideal of establishing a peaceful state. Thus science, morality, and religion would become integrated as one in man.

DISCUSSION

Konkō-kyō What do you think of the opinion that religion today should pay attention to social problems and evils and attempt to improve society?

Zen Religion should concentrate on the development of the human mind, but that does not mean that the improvement of society should be neglected. Religion should consider it also. For example, to produce a high quality of politician should be one of religion's concerns.

Ōmoto Does Zen completely oppose faiths which emphasize material benefits (*okage shrinkō*)?

Zen In the future, I suppose, such faiths will gradually disappear, for the development of science will make it impossible for them to continue to exist. Such faiths may continue to be supported by the weak-mindedness of people in general. However, I oppose such faiths from the fundamental standpoint of religion.

Shugendō I believe *okage shrinkō* may be recognized as a stepping-stone to a higher religious faith.

Religion in the Future (2)

Shrine Shinto

First, I want to consider the problem of whether or not the self-consciousness developed in the West and the self-conscious-

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ness developed in Japan are of the same kind. I think Western life is based on the objective recognition of the self or the human being, but the Japanese life is based on the subjective apprehension of the self. The spirit of Shinto is representative of this Japanese characteristic, that is, the intuitive experience of the vivid life. Next, Shinto is based on nature. Shinto can be said to be the worship of nature.

I believe Shinto has significance for other religions as a road leveler, and should be taken into consideration as such in trying to give an answer to the question "How should religion be in the future?"

DISCUSSION

Protestant Being a racial religion, Shinto, unlike Buddhism and Christianity, cannot be regarded as a religion capable of making contributions to the world.

Chairman Isn't this what the Shinto side wishes to say: Buddhism, although a universal religion, spread in Japan in a form sympathetic to the emperor and the state, and that Christianity should follow the same course?

Shrine Shinto Yes. For instance, capitalism in Japan is not the capitalism as born in Europe, but one that accords with the Japanese conditions.

Chairman I now suggest that we summarize the discussions from a general standpoint. Zen said the religion of the future should pay attention to the loss of humanity (*ningen sōshitsu*) in the present age.

Protestant Modern science and politics produce a loss of humanity. Socialism suffers from the fate of the inability to vivify the individual, and labor unions have already become organizations that try to order people about exclusively through directives.

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Chairman What does the loss of humanity mean concretely?

Some say it is forgetting the soul, others say it arises from forgetting one's relationship with God, or that it means the mechanization of man, that is, the loss of autonomous individuality as a result of modern mechanical civilization.

Konkō-kyō The loss of humanity can be replaced by the term "estrangement of the self" (*jikō sogai*).

Kurozumi-kyō Lack of awareness of being a child of the kami or of having the Buddha nature produces a loss of the sense of humanity.

Konko-kyō I believe Konkō-kyō has progressed in the past by utilizing the capitalistic structure, but that from now on the leaders should endeavor to link the salvation of the individual with the social structure.

Protestant That is taken for granted in Christianity because the love it preaches is social to the fullest extent. It is for this reason that Christianity was able to play a big role at the turning points of history.

Konko-kyō How to put the roots deep down in Japan seems to be a problem for Christianity.

Protestant The problem for Christianity in Japan is that it has failed to grasp man as living in the midst of nature. Another problem is that it has become a religion of a class. Historically, Christianity has taught man how to fight nature. I hope Shrine Shinto people will work through the storms of the world instead of indulging in sentimental philosophizing.

Shrine Shinto The term "to fight" is disliked very much in our circles.

Chairman Therein may lie the difference between Christianity and the religions of Japan.

CONCLUDING IMPRESSIONS

Ōmoto I am grateful for having discovered how vastly different the manner of thinking of the different religions are. I feel the need for mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation all the more.

Shugendō I am glad to have found a number of similarities and differences, gained a practical knowledge of other religions, and been given an opportunity of reflecting on my own Shugendō faith.

Fuju Fuse-ha As far as the salvation of the individual is concerned, I feel that what is lacking in our Fuju Fuse sect is spiritual counseling in solving various problems arising out of daily life, such as is given in Konkō-kyō through *otortugi*.

Kurozumi-kyō I am happy to have participated in this meeting because of the prevalence of a sympathetic and understanding atmosphere. I feel that all of us should join hands in the construction of the road of universal peace by purifying the individual, home, society and state.

Konkō-kyō Three points attracted my attention. First, the difference between our Konkō-kyō and Christianity in interpreting the relationship between God and man. Second, the discussions were rather too superficial, that is, not thoroughgoing enough. Third, the big difference between religions as developed in the Oriental climate and the religion of the West.

Protestant It was revealing for me to discover that all the participants except me hold that God is something inherent in man or nature, while Christianity holds Him to be the transcendental Absolute Other. What I want to question,

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however, is whether the various religions of Japan can refute the criticism of the Marxists. Buddhism seems to be strong in introspection but weak in working upon and modifying the material world. Traditional Shintoistic religions lack severe introspection. There is no reformatory way of life aimed at progress emerging from them. For my part, I feel that our future problem will be how to spread the gospel through the sieve of the Japanese way of thinking. I was made to reflect that the lack of this was the reason why Christianity has not become a religion of the masses.

Zen I was impressed first of all by the zeal with which the leaders of new religions seem to conduct their propaganda activities; and secondly, by the difference between the established religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, and the newly risen religious sects. The former, although different in basis, have many similarities in their essence as religion, while the latter are characterized by earthly utilitarianism.

Shrine Shinto At the last round table conference I clarified Shrine Shinto as a "religion of relationship" by explaining the blood relationship and the local community relationship in the Shinto faith. A problem for us now is how to adjust Shrine Shinto theology as a whole to the individual theology of the separate shrines. The kami of the each shrine is a partial deity, according to the latter. The discussion made me feel, among other things, that it is necessary for Shrine Shinto go a step further from being a religion of the group and evolve a faith for the individual.