

Nanzan Symposium VI

## Theory and Practice in Religion: Tendai Buddhism and Christianity

[16–18 March 1987]

Jan VAN BRAGT

It is a felicitous occasion that brings us together today: the fact that this year Tendai's headquarters, Mount Hiei, celebrates the 1200th anniversary (787–1987) of its founding by Saichō or Dengyō Daishi — a celebration which will have its highlight in a “Religious Summit” to be held on August 3–4. It is in connection with this summit that Yamada Etai, the ninety-two years old Chief Abbot of Mount Hiei, has recently spoken these significant words: “Mount Hiei is not simply a mountain temple of the Tendai School. It is the cradle of Japanese Buddhism, the mountain where the founders and many eminent monks of the various Japanese sects, such as Hōnen, Shinran, Eisai, Dōgen, Ippen, Kōya, received their religious training . . .”

This text, taken from the opening talk of the Symposium, sufficiently indicates why the Nanzan Institute this time chose Tendai Buddhism as partner and theme of its biannual dialogue symposium. The institute saw a chance therein to make up for its complicity in the worldwide neglect of this important Buddhist tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Since, however, Tendai, especially in its Japanese form — which adopted the tantric tradition (in this case called *taimitsu* 台密) and many elements of Japanese native religiosity — is too rich a phenomenon to tackle all at once, we felt obliged to work with a limiting definition and to focus our attention on Tendai as “the school of Mahāyāna Buddhism centered on the *Lotus Sūtra*, founded by T'ien-t'ai Ta-shi, Chih-i 天台大師智顛, as it is common to Chinese T'ien-t'ai and Japanese Tendai;” in other words, on the “Lotus message” as interpreted by Chih-i and his followers. This limiting framework did not permit us to delve into admittedly very important questions such as the exact differences between

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<sup>1</sup> Some thirteen years ago the Japanese scholar, Tamura Yoshirō, could write: “In comparison with doctrinal studies on other schools, research on Tendai doctrine lags far behind . . . This glorious mother of Japanese Buddhism and Japanese culture is completely forgotten.” *Zettai no shinri: Tendai* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1973), p. 2.

Chinese and Japanese Tendai, the role of *taimitsu* esotericism in Japanese Tendai, the influence of Tendai on Japanese religiosity in general, etc. It was felt, however, that we would gain in depth what we lost thereby in breadth.

As usual, a sub-theme was chosen as a kind of guiding thread for the discussions: a viewpoint from where the similarities and dissimilarities between two religions can be gauged. Among the factors which led to the selection this time of "Theory and Practice in Religion" as the sub-theme, the following may be worth mentioning: the fact that this theme was certainly one of Chih-i's preoccupations; the allegation by some scholars that Tendai survived only as a theory and not as a praxis; curiosity concerning the kind of praxis out of which the *Lotus Sūtra* (and possibly Mahāyāna in general) originated; and the suspicion that the apparently "philosophical" character of Tendai and other Mahāyāna schools may give us the wrong impression about what really happened in the development of Buddhism as a religion.

Of the five papers delivered, however, only one was directly inspired by the sub-theme. The others rather aimed at a rounded presentation of Tendai doctrine according to the traditional scheme: Buddha-Mind-Sentient Beings.

A good look at the following list of panelists will show the reader immediately that our Buddhist dialogue partners were practically all members of the teaching staff of Taishō University. Indeed, this year's symposium could be seen as a joint venture of the Nanzan Institute and the *Sōgō Bukkyō Kenkyūsho* (綜合仏教研究所, Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism) of Taishō University. As to the Christian representatives, it may strike one first that not a single Japanese name is to be found among them — a regrettable fact not due to lack of trying on the part of the organizing body. On the other hand, the Christian delegation was especially international this time and composed of specialists in Buddhist studies, with the exception — again regrettably — of this reporter.

#### PANELISTS

##### *Tendai Representatives:*

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| ICHISHIMA S. Masao<br>一島正真 | Tendai Priest and Professor of Religion at Taishō University, Tokyo             |
| SAKAMOTO Kōhaku<br>坂本広博    | Tendai Priest and Assistant Professor of Tendai Doctrine at Eizan College, Ōtsu |
| SHIOIRI Ryōdō<br>塩入良道      | Tendai Priest and Professor of Chinese T'ien-t'ai Doctrine at Taishō University |
| TADA Kōshō<br>多田孝正         | Tendai Priest and Professor of Tendai Doctrine at Taishō University             |
| YAMANOI Daiji<br>山ノ井太治     | Tendai Priest and Professor of Buddhist Folklore at Taishō University.          |

*Representatives of the Christian Tradition:*

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| Hubert DURT      | Belgian born director of the <i>Hōbōgirin</i> Franco-Japanese Institute of Buddhist Studies |
| Ruben HABITO     | Filipino Jesuit and Associate Professor of Buddhist philosophy at Sophia University, Tokyo  |
| Jean-Noel ROBERT | French Research Fellow of the <i>Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques</i> at Paris   |
| Paul SWANSON     | American Ph. D. in Buddhist Studies and Associate Research Fellow of the Nanzan Institute.  |
| Jan VAN BRAGT    | Belgian C. I. C. M. priest and director of the Nanzan Institute                             |

*First Session: Shioiri Ryōdō, "The Buddha in Tendai"*

On the premise that the founder of Tendai Buddhism, Chih-i, intended to build a synthesis of all Indian and Chinese Buddhism up to his time, Professor Shioiri presented us first with an overview of the evolution of the doctrine on the Buddha, especially the proliferation into the "myriad Buddhas" and the various *buddha-kāya* (Buddha body) theories—overview that played havoc with our neat categories of monotheism, polytheism, and pantheism.

Next, the speaker endeavored to explain the characteristics of the view of the Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra* and in Tendai. The *Lotus Sūtra* intimates that the Buddha who testifies to its doctrine is a very ancient and enduring one and, moreover, one that adapts to our intentions. While working with the idea of many Buddhas, the sūtra gives the impression of unifying them all in the teacher of the Dharma, Śākyamuni Buddha. The "ever-abiding" (*kuon* 久遠) Buddha is the fundamental Buddha, and a multitude of Buddhas emanate from him as "participation bodies" (*bunshin* 分身). In a sense, this can be seen as a return to the singular, to a "mono-buddhism".

Coming then to Chih-i's interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, in other words, to Tendai's view of the Buddha, Shiori explained how Tendai uses the *tri-kāya* (three bodies) doctrine but insists that the three bodies are mutually identical and form one "uncreated, abiding *honzon* 本尊," wherein all Buddhas are one and non-differentiated. The main point he made, however, was that, for Chih-i, Buddha, mind, and sentient beings are not separate realities and the Buddha is thus always seen in his relationship to the minds of "wayfarers" towards him. The Buddha is then first and foremost the dynamic intentionality of the Buddhist practitioner or the goal he aspires to. When Tendai proffers the doctrine of a fourfold Buddha body, it does so in view of a progressive practice-realization process in accordance with its doctrine of the Four Dharmas of Conversion: the Storehouse Teaching (*zōkyō* 藏教), the Pervasive Teaching (*tsūgyō* 通教), the Separate Teaching (*bekkyō* 別教), and the Rounded Teaching (*engyō* 円教).

In his response, Hubert Durt delved into his deep knowledge of the Buddhist tradition to offer us many interesting insights, but lack of space obliges me to choose only those most relevant to the ensuing discussion. In his effort at comprehensive unification of Buddhism—effort which found an historical stimulus in the contemporary unification of the scholarly southern Buddhism and the practice-oriented Buddhism of the North under the Sui dynasty—Chih-i wisely used the *Lotus Sūtra*, which itself embraces many divergent trends. This kind of synthesis of singular and plural, unity and distinction, among Buddhist doctrines reminds one of similar ideas in modern science. At the least four reasons can be adduced for the multiplication of Buddhas. The “ancient Buddhas” provide Śākyamuni, who cannot base his authority on a teacher or on the Veda tradition, with a legitimizing genealogy in a culture where this is a prime requisite. The multiplicity of worlds in the Indian cosmology requires many Buddhas to fill these worlds with their presence. Then there are the stupa cult and the “divinization” of the Buddha, possibly under influence of Hindu polytheism and/or Persian monotheism.

The ensuing discussion mainly turned around four interrelated questions, all of which can be considered important in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The first one clearly originated in a Christian perspective and foreshadowed already the topic of the second session: Does not, in fact, the history of the Buddha theories constitute an evolution from a clear non-theistic standpoint to a progressive absolutization of the Buddha, and does not this imply in turn the adoption into Buddhism of the idea of salvation “from above”? The Buddhist panelists tended to concede this point as far as Chinese and Japanese Buddhism are concerned, and asked themselves whether the development of complicated Buddha theories does not involve elements of decadence.

The next question then introduced a theme that would surface many a time in the course of the symposium. One of the mainstays of Buddhist polemics against Christianity in Japan, and one that goes all the way back to the 16th century, is the following: Buddhism is superior to Christianity since it permits one the highest possible status, that of a (the?) Buddha, while in Christianity the human cannot dream of becoming God. The question is, however, whether and in what sense a Buddhism that came to exalt the Buddha so highly can still really maintain that we can become a Buddha, the equal of the Buddha. Does a Tendai Buddhist really believe that he can reach the same (omniscient) *satori* as Śākyamuni Buddha? The frank answer given to this query was that—no matter how things are presented as *tatema* (front)—we certainly cannot intend to become a Buddha in the sense of the historical Buddha. For us, becoming a Buddha means really to exert all our efforts in that direction. In that “being on the way” we are one with the Buddha in that his power and ours are in “empathic osmosis” (*kannō dōkō* 感応道交).

It was then remarked that what distinguishes the Buddha from *pratyekabuddhas* (*engaku* 縁覚) is, basically, only the fact that Śākyamuni preached the Dharma out of compassion for all sentient beings. This consideration turned the

conversation towards a discussion of the role and significance of mercy in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the bodhisattva path, the paradoxical unity of wisdom and mercy becomes indeed pivotal; the wisdom of expedient means or *upāya*, in a sense, obtains a higher rank than “absolute wisdom;” and in Tendai the “preaching bodies” of the Buddha are more central than the Dharma body. On this point, all panelists appeared to agree again that all this implies some idea of “salvation.”

The last question treated was: What is the significance of the fact that, in the latter part of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Śākyamuni is no longer the teacher who already “disappeared” into nirvana but is revealed as the “ever-abiding Buddha?” The terms used in this connection — *kuon butsu* 久遠仏 (eonian Buddha) and *jōjū* 常住 (ever-abiding) — came in for scrutiny. Does not the use of this *jō* (permanence, self-nature), which is also found in Mahāyāna descriptions of nirvana, run counter to the original *mujō* 無常 (impermanence, transience) of all things? Can *kuon* be understood as “infinite”? But what is then the difference between infinite and eternal? One Tendai panelist formulated things as follows: “In the strict sense of the word, only the Dharma can be called ‘eternal;’ the word cannot be used for the Buddha, ‘he who comes out.’ As to the future the Buddha might be called eternal, but in the past, no matter how long ago, there is a beginning, a ‘becoming a Buddha.’ However, the Dharma comes alive only by being understood through the Buddha; therein lies the meaning of the term, ‘Dharma body.’” But the final word appeared to be that the Śākyamuni of the *Lotus Sūtra* is not the Dharma body but rather the preaching Buddha, and that the ever-abiding Buddha is born from the idea that whenever and wherever anybody meets with the Dharma he is in fact listening to the preaching voice of the Buddha.

*Session Two: Ruben Habito, “The View of Salvation  
in Buddhism and Christianity”*

In his presentation, Ruben Habito explained his view of the evolution of the Buddha idea and brought the outcome together with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation under the viewpoint of salvation.

Right at the beginning the speaker laid heavy stress on a point to which he came back all through the proceedings: The interreligious dialogue should not end in scholarly elucubrations on possible similarities and differences, but should become a *locus* for creative reassumption of our respective traditions in view of our task in present-day society. This presupposes, of course, that we read the “religious text” of our tradition not simply as a document of the past, but as illuminating our present situation and calling to relevant action.

He then outlined the Christian vision of universal salvation: The Incarnation as the crossroad of the transhistorical and the historical; God’s love taking the human misery upon himself; God’s “breath” (Spirit) entering history to make everything new. Herewith the historical is not swallowed up into the transhistori-

cal but, on the contrary, human history given its real seriousness. Illumined by that transhistorical dimension, that breaks into every moment, the believer must discern and take up his or her historical task. "Love one another as I loved you."

Next, Habito presented us with the view of the evolution of the Buddha idea to which 15 years of specialized study of the subject had brought him. In accordance with the development of Buddhism from a message of individual liberation by strenuous efforts to a religion that proclaims the salvation of all sentient beings, Habito recognizes a twofold direction in the Buddha body doctrines. There is first the "ascending line" (*kōjō* 向上), which stresses the stages whereby the human climbs up to the Buddha realm, and secondly a "descending line" (*kōge* 向下), which becomes dominant with the *tathāgata-garbha* (Buddha womb) doctrine. Here the Dharma-kāya is completely central; as absolute reality it penetrates everything, so that all beings possess it. It does not confine itself to its transhistorical level but, as *nirmanika-kāya*, it enters the history of suffering humanity to take away everything that covers the original Buddha reality of sentient beings. As such, its working is clearly a salvific one. The parable in the *Lotus Sūtra* wherein the Buddha appears as the father who saves his children from the *burning house* may be the sūtra text wherein the Buddhist idea of salvation is shown in its most direct form.

In his conclusion, Habito returned to the lesson of his opening remarks. The burning house is not a nice tale of the past; it is the description of the present world with its big ecological and social problems. Its call is the same as that of the Incarnation: the call to throw ourselves into the midst of the historical situation.

Approaching the question from a sociological perspective, the respondent, professor Yamanoi, drew our attention to the fact that all new religions need a cult of the founder for the stabilization of the religious organization. It is around this idealized figure that people come together. It is not surprising then that also in Buddhism there is always to be found a Buddha-centered trend besides the Dharma-centered religion as apparently intended by the founder himself. In the framework of the positive study of religious phenomena, too, the idea of the presence of the supra-historical in history is acceptable, since rituals are often described as means of communication between these two, and sacred times and places seen as frontiers or crossroads of the sacred and the profane. The respondent's most important contribution may have been, however, his penetrating questions with regard to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation: Who exactly is the subject of the Incarnation? Why does it have to be the Son? Why must it be historical and *einmalig*? Does Incarnation happen in us? What kind of development is there from the Incarnation to the Cross? I fear that we, Christian panelists were very deficient in our answers to these questions.

Right from the beginning of the discussion, Professor Shiori made it a point to state unambiguously the Buddhist standpoint over against some possible Christian interpretations: "Seen from the general flow of Buddhist doctrine, one thing is clear: Śākyamuni attained Buddhahood as a result of long praxis and all

further development into Buddha body theories, including especially the Dharma body, build on that foundation. Thus, it can be said that the ascending pattern is the common trend of all Buddhism.” He then formulated his view of the difference between Christianity and Buddhism on this point in a thought-provoking statement: “Is not the unconditional existence of God the presupposition upon which Christianity is built? In the case of Buddhism it is not an unconditional but something discovered as a result, and in the background, of a pursuit. The central thing is not the Buddha by himself but the point of contact, the attainment of the Buddha in the self.”

Herewith the ball was again squarely in the Christian court, where it provoked mainly two impromptu reactions. First, although the fundamental pattern of Christianity is a descending one, ascending elements are also there. Is it then not imaginable that in the broad spectrum of Buddhist schools of thought strong descending lines are present, the general ascending pattern notwithstanding? Secondly, is not also in Christianity the contact point of God and man, the experience of God, the decisive thing? Seen from the individual, the certainty or unconditionality of God’s existence goes back to the experience of God in history, as crystallized mainly in the Bible; while God himself (rather than the “existence” of God) must *become* an existential reality in his or her own personal experience.

The remainder of the discussion then revolved around the surmise, voiced by one of the panelists, that the *Lotus Sūtra* would reflect “popular religion:” the Buddha-centered and salvation seeking religiosity of “householders” who had been left out in the cold by the spirituality of the monks. Not surprisingly, this hypothesis, in its bare brashness, was experienced as rather iconoclastic by the people of the Tendai tradition. *Via* the question about the significance of the celestial bodhisattvas who dominate the final chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the conversation then turned for a moment to the tradition of living Buddhas in Japan and in Tibet, but the true opinion of the Tendai panelists may have been best summarized by a pronouncement of one of them: “There certainly is, in present Japanese Buddhism also, a big gap between the doctrine preached by the monks and the understanding of these doctrines by the people. In a somewhat similar way, we may distinguish in the *Lotus Sūtra* between the substance of the doctrine preached and the *upāya* used to make it acceptable to the people.”

The session ended with a word of explanation on the Eucharist wherein Christ’s body “melts into” our body and we “participate in the Incarnation.”

### *Session Three: Tada Kōshō, “The Mind in Tendai Doctrine”*

The speaker first remarked that he wanted to present faithfully Chih-i’s thought on the matter, which is not necessarily identical with present-day Tendai doctrine.

In Chih-i, then, the term “mind” (*shin* 心) should not be understood in the *yogācāra* sense of the word, but in the sense of “I,” my reality which, just like

every other sentient being, contains in itself the ten worlds (*shōgu setsu* 性具説). In this respect, the *isshin sangan* 一心三觀, the simultaneous insight into the emptiness of things (*kū* 空 negation of phenomenal reality), into the provisional reality of things (*ke* 仮 enlightened affirmation of reality), and into the “middle” (*chū* 中 insight into the identity of the former two) is very important. This is not the reduction of everything to a single reality (let us say, the mind), but an insight into the unity of things as a reciprocal interpenetration of distinct realities. The mind is the mind and the Buddha is the Buddha, but the mind exists through the Buddha and the Buddha exists through the mind.

It should be remarked that the unity of the three truths is not simply a theoretical given, but must be put into motion by a positive working of the mind, i.e., by religious practice. Together with the Buddha and sentient beings I must strive for that unity, not as a hungry ghost but in the right spirit of *bodhicitta*: directed toward and guided by the idea of buddhahood (*shukō bukka* 趣向仏果).

I cannot elicit this spirit by myself but only in *kannō dōkō* (感応道交 “empathic osmosis”) between myself and the Buddha (who has already reached the goal), whereby my subjectivity is established by my relationship to the Buddha like that of a child through its relationship to the father. It is in the conviction of being a Buddha child, through the insight that in the *ichinen sanzen* the Buddha world penetrates me, that the power to strive for Buddhahood originates.

Paul Swanson, in the role of respondent, first told us how Tada’s remarks on the parent-child relationship had reminded him of the English saying: “The child is the father of the man” and also of the unity of Father and Son in the Trinity. He then drew attention to the following two points.

1. Over against realism which puts the stress on the object “outside the mind,” there is the *yuishinron* 唯心論 (mind-only theory) which puts the stress on the working of the mind. But there appear to be two kinds of *yuishinron*. The first, a “strong idealism,” to which the consciousness-only theory of the *hossō* school can be said to belong, recognizes only the working of the mind as reality; the second, a “weak idealism,” does not deny the existence of the object but stresses the point that it exists for us only as grasped and determined by the mind. Tendai might then be said to be a mind-only theory of the latter variety, since it certainly puts a strong stress on the mind, while maintaining on the other hand that the object (*kyō* 境) is not therefore nothing.

2. Next, he pointed out that Tendai is not so much interested in the mind *in abstracto*, but rather in the centrality of the mind in religious praxis. Since the movements of the mind — and especially the “bad ones,” the stirrings of the passions of greed and ire — are always with us, they were singled out as privileged objects of meditation by Chih-i, who remarks thereby that this practice can lead to pacification of the passions through right insight into them, and that this form of meditation can be practiced under whatever circumstances. Would not these traits make this particular Tendai praxis very relevant for modern busy life, and especially for lay people?



The respondent's characterization of Tendai as a kind of "idealism" provoked a spirited reaction from professor Tada. Tendai is a realism rather than an idealism. In history, Tendai's "true reality" (*jissō* 実相) theory has always been contradistinguished from the mind-only theory, according to which everything originates as a reflection of the mind. Tendai only insists that the mind is important, since we must remove the "hides" which it naturally grows, in order to see reality as it is. Tendai is also fundamentally different from the Yogācāra "consciousness only" theory, which sends an expedition team into the mind to look for true reality. Tendai stops that from the beginning, to give attention to our relationship with things according to the threefold scheme: mind-Buddha-sentient beings. The other Tendai panelists, however, showed a greater understanding for Swanson's problem, by pointing out that, after all, Buddhism centered its attention on the mind from the beginning and insists that objects "exist" in the forms seen by the mind; and by indicating that also in Tendai it is customary to say that "we go on fabricating all things from the mind." The Western term, idealism, then, may not fit, but Buddhism's outlook on reality certainly cannot be equated with the common-sense realistic one.

In response to the question about a Tendai practice open to lay people, Tada then explained his personal view of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Its real theme and intention is the father-son relationship. The starting point of all practice lies in the awakening to one's everyday reality as parent and child. He who lives that relationship fully naturally marches in the direction of the Buddha.

By way of a question about Shinran's reason for leaving Mount Hiei, the discussion turned to the tension that often occurs between a religious organization, prone to turn back on itself away from the real needs, and the personal religiosity of the most fervent members. A Tendai panelist remarked that many who had grasped the Tendai doctrine most existentially had felt obliged to leave Mount Hiei. Still, reformers who leave a parent organization often give birth to an organization that soon proves to be even less flexible than the original one. Thus, present day Tendai may be more malleable than several of its offspring. To the question whether Nichiren is considered by Tendai as a black sheep that jumped the fence, the answer came that for Tendai even devils are still bodhisattvas. Asked then whether this means unconditional recognition even of social evil (quite apart from Nichiren this time), a Tendai monk answered that the spirit is such but nevertheless even Saichō himself foresaw checks and censures, e.g., in cases where monks flaunted the monastic discipline.

A rather detailed explanation was then given of the training required to become a Tendai priest. As to the meditational practices, it was admitted that the Tendai practices (*shikan* 止観) had not been well transmitted and were mostly replaced by tantric practices (*ajikan* 阿字観, *goma kuyō* 護摩供養, etc.) It was stressed that even Chih-i did not really offer a concrete system of practice, but even in his *Mo-ho chih-kuan* 摩訶止観 presented only a theory of practice. Tendai does not have either a standard whereby one's progress is measured or an official recognition (like Zen's *inka* 印可) of one's awakening or one's reach-

ing the “state of non-retrogression.” This fact was then associated with the big role that the idea and practice of repentance (*sange* 懺悔) plays in Tendai. Although one speaks of the “one moment of *bodhicitta*,” in fact it is not considered to be a unique, once-and-for-all event. It always remains a *bodhicitta* in each new moment, since one always relapses from it and must return to it *via* repentance. Repentance itself thus becomes *bodhicitta*, a constant check on one’s daily life. That is the true Tendai practice. Pressed by a Christian panelist on whether the confession of one’s sinfulness to the Buddha implies the idea of sin against the Buddha, the Tendai priests unanimously answered that that idea is not really there.

*Session Four: Jean-Noel Robert, “‘Theoria’ as Contemplation”*

The speaker, who studied for many years the scholastic and highly ritualized *disputationes* in Tendai and brings to this study a wide erudition in Western scholastic ideas and practices, shared with us his views on the relationship between the two separate but indissociable—like the two wings of a bird or the two wheels of a cart—parts of Tendai: The Gate of Doctrine (*kyōmon* 教門) and the Gate of Contemplation (*kanmon* 觀門). To quote him directly: “The purpose of this paper is to assert the value of the *kyōmon* in itself as being already a type of contemplative practice and not only the pure working of dialectical reason.”

He reminded us first of the original meaning of “*theorein*” in the Greek tradition: Contemplation of transcendent, or at the least cosmic, reality. “Theoretical life” thus meant the religious practice of the contemplative life. He then proceeded to retrieve the contemplative elements of the Tendai Gate of Doctrine or theory. First, the doctrinal frame itself of the Four Dharmas of Conversion (*kehō no shikyō* 化法四教) shows a “procession” from the provisional to the perfect, from the coarse to the wondrous, conducive to a contemplative soaring of the mind. Secondly, the Tendai exegesis, not unlike Western medieval Bible exegesis, shows a constant gradation from a literal understanding to an intuitive, “mystical” understanding, so that exegesis naturally becomes contemplation upon scripture. Thirdly, in the *shakkyōka* (didactic poetry, 釈教歌) purely doctrinal tenets pass into poetry: Their quintessence is transformed into poetical images which then become privileged objects of contemplation.

In conclusion, Robert remarked that one should not speak of “philosophy” in connection with religious doctrine, since this doctrine, no matter how logically arranged, is an integral part of religion and pervaded by religious experience.

The respondent, professor Ichishima, then put three questions on the table. Why then does Tendai make the division into the two gates? Which relationship does Chih-i’s *chih-kuan* 止觀 (“concentration and contemplation”) have with the Indian *śamatha-vipaśyanā*? Is there in Christianity anything that would correspond to Tendai’s *shikan*?

The elements of answers given in the ensuing discussion can be summarized as follows.

1. The division into two gates is certainly there and one even came to classify Chih-i's works in these two categories. There are socio-historical reasons for that as well in Japan as in China. But the two should never be separated. The Eightfold Path of practice of primitive Buddhism contains, after all, "right seeing." A division of labor existed already in ancient India between the preachers of the doctrine (*dharmabhāṣaka*) and persons who exclusively practiced meditation in the woods (*āraṇyaka*). A concentration on *zazen* with neglect of the doctrine led to a long period of decadence in Korean Zen.

2. As to *shikan* in Christianity, it was pointed out that Christianity knows several methods of meditation (e.g., the Ignatian exercises) wherein one can also distinguish between a *via purgativa* (*shi*) and a *via contemplativa* (*kan*), but that, strangely enough, in the religious order deemed to be one of the most contemplative, the Benedictines, no special time is allotted to meditation, while *lectio divina* (contemplative reading?) has its place on the daily schedule. A Saint Thomas, too, did not see doctrine and contemplation as parallel but as in continuity. It may be that meditation in Christianity is nearer to *shikan* than to *zazen*, since it does not exclude reason or doctrinal objects.

It was then remarked that it is rather difficult to translate the two Tendai Gates into the usual "theory" and "practice." Would it be that Tendai recognizes a category of "practice" (*gyō* 行) besides "contemplation" (*kan* 觀)? The answer was that in Tendai all practice is comprised under the name "*kan*" and fundamentally means: going in the direction of the Buddha. On the Christian side, this equation did not seem to work, since in Christianity there is the, after all decisive, practice of love besides contemplation (or, broader, prayer), and it is hard, not only practically but also theoretically, to bring these two to a synthesis.

Further points discussed were: Why and in what sense does Tendai always hark back to the provisional doctrines while recognizing only the perfect doctrine (*engyō* 円教) as really true? Does the perfect doctrine constitute a kind of mysticism? How is the "Original Enlightenment" (*hongaku* 本覚) theory considered in present-day Tendai? With regard to this last point, much of the historical *hongaku* thought was judged to be an unbridled pullulation of theory by itself and the time considered ripe for a return to the sources—meaning, finally, Śākyamuni. This then evoked the reflection that the time has come for all religionists to rethink creatively their religious practice in accordance with the needs of the times as well as with their sources.

#### *Session Five: Sakamoto Kōhaku, "Sentient beings and Nature"*

With this lecture we came to the final member of the Tendai trio: Mind-Buddha-Sentient Beings. Although the term literally means "animate beings endowed with feeling" (*ujō* 有情), it stands here for everything in the world beside the self and thus comprises also the *kokudo seken* (国土世間), which we translate here as nature or the natural world. In Christian terms, it might be rendered as "creatures" (neighbor and nature). Of the rich and sometimes highly technical con-

tents of professor Sakamoto's talk only the general trend can be presented in this summary.

The first half of the paper was devoted to a demonstration of the different ways wherein Tendai brings the Buddha and sentient beings in as close a proximity as possible. Buddha and sentient beings are of the same nature. In the perfect doctrine (*engyō*) there is nothing that is not the Buddha world, nothing that is not pure in its nature. Thus the reality (substance) itself of the world is wondrous (*myō* 妙).

If this sounds idealistic, Tendai is, on the other hand, very realistic about the human possibilities. We may be bodhisattvas but we cannot really imitate the Buddha. "Becoming a Buddha" really means for us: To elicit the *bodhicitta*; to desire buddhahood and to be on the way towards it. In that desire our human passions change their nature. When looking for what the bodhisattva can really do like the Buddha, we can come up with one thing, namely "preaching the Dharma." In the *Lotus Sūtra* this preaching is central. The whole existence of the bodhisattva consists in evoking the Buddha mind in others.

In the second part of his talk, Sakamoto acquainted us with a Tendai doctrine that is important for the view of nature: The recognition of the possibility of attaining buddhahood for insentient, even inanimate beings ("grass and trees, even the land itself"). Already in India (the *Amida Sūtra*, etc.) the idea is there that plants and animals continuously preach the Dharma. It is however in China that this becomes an explicit issue. Especially the eighth patriarch of T'ien-t'ai, Chan-jan (湛然 711-782) and the *konbeiron* (金鉉論) treat this question in detail and adduce the reasons for this belief. To quote only a few: The omnipresence of the Dharma body of the Buddha; mind and environment correspond to one another; animate and inanimate things turn into one another. Most basically, as the "single vehicle" doctrine, Tendai tends not to admit the discrimination of sentient and insentient, just as it does not admit a discrimination in sentient beings between those with Buddha nature and those without (*icchantika*). This tendency became even stronger in Japan and, while in China the sentient beings stay central (it is through the *mind* of sentient beings that insentient beings obtain buddhahood), in Japan the insentient beings themselves are said to practise the Dharma and thus to obtain buddhahood by themselves. The special Japanese feeling for nature has been at work there, but...do present-day Japanese still really possess that sense of nature?

In his response, the present reporter broached the following three questions.

1. Religious motivation for a respectful treatment of nature has become very important in this age of pollution and destruction of nature. Although Christianity originally saw nature and humans intimately connected as "creatures" in God's plan for the world, it lost much of this pathos in the strongly anthropocentric Western modernity. Since Tendai may have much to teach us on this point, some further elaboration on the dignity of nature in Tendai would be most welcome.

2. In connection with the big role the "neighbor" plays in Christianity, the question of the nature of the working of the bodhisattva becomes important for

our dialogue. Why is this altruistic working (*keta* 化他 or *rita* 利他) so often directly defined as “teaching” (*kyōke* 教化)? Does not this limit the action for others to the spiritual or religious realm? Is there then in Tendai a motive for social action?

3. While the distinction, monks-lay people, plays a big role in Buddhist history, Mahāyāna is often said to be a lay Buddhism. Are there especially significant elements in Tendai doctrine in this regard?

To the first question, the answer came that, indeed, in Tendai the human and nature are seen as totally interdependent. This appears, e.g., in the doctrine of the “three thousand worlds in one thought-moment” (*ichinen sanzen* 一念三千), wherein the inseparability of the three realms (I, sentient beings, land or environment) is stressed; and in the way karmic results on the subject itself (*shōhō* 正法) and on the environment (*ehō* 依報) are always seen together.

On the other hand, Buddhism in China and especially Japan shows very little positive “interference” in nature or tackling of environmental problems. At work here may be the influence of the Taoist idea of non-action, non-interference, and also the idea that objective circumstances are not important since the mind creates its own world. Still, there were among the early generations of monks in Japan many “bodhisattvas:” Monks who walked around helping people by building bridges, digging ponds, etc. They certainly “interfered” in nature. However, Buddhism does not see a rosy future for humankind and Buddhist religiosity resides rather in making other people’s suffering one’s own than in doing away with suffering. Buddhism thus would not fit in the picture of positive movements to stop destruction of nature.

A Christian panelist then made a remark which brought us fully into the problematics of the second question: As a Christian I feel compelled to participate in social movements for preservation of nature, for social justice for the third world, etc. While Buddhist wisdom consists in seeing human misery as it is, does not Buddhist compassion compel one to try to do something about it? The elements of an answer given by the Tendai participants can be summarized as follows. Like most Buddhist sects, Tendai too started a “social movement:” the “Light up one Corner” movement. The stress, however, is on individually heaping up good deeds, the idea being the same as in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, namely, that this will automatically change the environment for the better. Traditionally the Buddhist churches are not good at social or welfare action, and the basic reason may be that Buddhism is originally a rejection of the world. We use the expression, “adorning the Buddha Land,” but concretely think thereby of purifying our own minds and maybe our temple grounds.

It was then suggested that there might be two fundamental differences between Christianity (or the West?) and Buddhism on the problem of social action. One, a difference in time span: While Buddhism works with eons, Christianity centers on the actual need *now*. Secondly, while Buddhists believe that society and nature can be changed by a change of hearts of individuals, Christians came to the conviction that specific social action is needed for that purpose.

Session Six: General Discussion

The discussion here first of all picked up a leftover from the previous session: The cleric-lay distinction in both religions. It was first pointed out how Tendai doctrine does not have room for this distinction, since the bodhisattva ideal is that of the lotus flower in the midst of a fire, there is no place for it in the progression of the *roku soku* (六即 Six Stages of Non-duality), and both Buddha wisdom and karma represent the same upward dynamics. In China, the concrete application of the bodhisattva ideal found all kinds of obstacles on its path, but in Japan Buddhism was able to advance farther in that line: From a recluse, the monk comes to be seen as a “pastor” of the faithful (*sankai no daidōshi* 三界の大導師). Thus, in a way, the ground was prepared for Shinran’s taking a consort.

From these more practical considerations, the discussion then made a quantum leap into the higher realms of philosophico-theological speculation, in search of the fundamental difference between Buddhism and Christianity. To begin with, a point of similarity was found between Nichiren’s viewing himself as inside the Buddha bodies and the Christian idea of participating in the dynamic relationship of the divine persons through the Holy Spirit. This evoked the question whether the Buddhist idea of the Buddha nature in all sentient beings would basically denote the same thing. Two elements of difference were then indicated: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is intimately connected with the horizontal line of our responsibility in the world and contains a strong eschatological ingredient.

At this point, a Tendai panelist presented his view that there is, after all, an unbridgeable difference between Buddhism and Christianity in their respective conceptions of time and of the crossroad of the historical and supra-historical. The “eternal now” is central for all Buddhism while Christian logic can not really come to grips with the idea. In Christianity there is always first God, and I find my existence therein; in Buddhism there is first the fact that I am here now, and all things in past and future are concentrated in this present now. We have only to think of Tendai’s *ichinen sanzen*. Thus, while striving for the goal of buddhahood, we carry this goal from the beginning in us. The Buddha of the past is present in me now, and I was present in the Buddha of the past. This present self may contain an infinite set of circumstances (*pratītya-samutpāda*), but Tendai stops at this as at an inexplicable mystery without going back beyond the present moment to a creator like Christianity or to an all-embracing Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 like Shingon. The Buddha rejected the Brahman-ātman idea of Hinduism because he felt that thereby only Brahman is affirmed.

The reaction to this on the Christian side was rather hesitant. It was said that the idea of a transcendence of past-present-future is also to be found in Christianity, and in a very radical way in the Qu’ran. Also in Christianity the creation idea, rather than an explanation, is a naming of the mystery of life, of existence itself. In this recognition of the mystery, Christian theism and Buddhist “atheism” appear to come together. To this the Tendai panelist replied: “Indeed, in Tendai we can be either theist or atheist.”

The discussion was then opened to the floor. A first interlocutor, a Shinto priest, asked for more information on the difference between Chinese T'ien-t'ai and Japanese Tendai. Is not the influence of Japanese (Shinto) religiosity felt in the Tendai stress on the original purity of human nature? In his answer, the Tendai representative stressed the point that, in the Buddha nature idea, the human is pure when seen from the Buddha, but full of impurity when seen from its own nature.

Next, a Protestant minister had a few questions for the Buddhists. Did not Buddhism, at its beginning in Japan, face the same problems of translation as Christianity still faces today? The answer to this was negative: Buddhism had an easy time in Japan because Japan imported Chinese terminology at the same time as Buddhism — which could also mean that Buddhism was not translated into Japanese. To his second question, about the strong tie-up of Japanese Buddhism with ancestor worship, it was remarked that the link had been partly forged already in Confucianist China, and that in Japan itself it was the Sōtō Zen sect which first specialized in funerals and rites for the dead as a means of propagation.

The third voice from the floor — the voice of a sociologist of religion — was one of protest against the heavy stress that had been put on the task and responsibility of religion in social life, at least by some of the panelists. In short: In history, the social activity of the religions was often misguided and noxious, since this is not the field of religion but the realm of politicians. Does a religion lose its value if it puts itself completely on the standpoint of the individual and thus is socially passive? Moreover, models from South America cannot as such be applied to Japan. A Christian representative answered that what he hoped for in Japan was not an imitation of Christian liberation theology but a movement born out of Buddhist motives, in the line of, e.g., Miyazawa Kenji; and that the judgment on social situations does not come directly from religion as such but from the poor, on whose side religion is called to place itself. Could not Shinran be seen as having done exactly this?

A fourth questioner wanted further explanation on the relationship between insight in the inexpressible mystery (*mufunbetsu chi* 無分別智) and discriminating knowledge needed in daily life (*funbetsu chi* 分別知). To this the answer came that, in the “rounded doctrine,” Tendai insists that religion must return from the inexpressible to the world of discrimination, from emptiness to form. The human must “knock the inexpressible” by his desire for it. The inexpressible can be really known only by experience. For us, however, that experience exists only in Śākyamuni, so that we must take his word for it. That is why Buddhism is a religion.

To a last question, from a Protestant academician, on whether social engagement is specifically the task of the lay people or whether clerics can have a role there too, the answer was given that the priest could have a task there, because he is not simply a specialist in ritual but the *servus servorum* of the faithful in the whole of religious life.