

CONTENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN-BUDDHIST DIALOGUE

by Joseph J. Spae

The meaning, method and contents of the Christian-Buddhist dialogue are as varied as the possible range of encounters between Christian and Buddhist groups or individuals. Whether we meet as officials or as friends is not irrelevant to the outcome of the dialogue. Equally important is the objective which brings us together.

Generally speaking, the dialogue could be theoretical and/or practical. (1) The theoretical or academic dialogue explores areas of doctrine, organization, or style of life. It is, in other words, an analytical face-to-face encounter of "comparative dogmatics" through which the participants intend to discover what the other persons believe. (2) The practical or social dialogue emphasizes action over knowledge and cooperation over personal understanding.

Actually both aspects of the dialogue converge when a side-by-side mutual exploration of truth aims at a deeper understanding, not merely of the other tradition, but of truth itself. In such an ideal case, participants expect to change through their experience, and they enter into the dialogue with this thought uppermost in mind.

Accounts of actual dialogues usually refer to the bonds of friendship which they forged. And friendship, we all know, is an exquisite form of change. Add to friendship the fire of emotion, and you have love — *jñhi* or *agape*.

Obviously, whichever the form of dialogue, we must do what we can to strike a balance between the academic and the practical. We must foster, therefore, apart from dialogue between experts, the grass-roots dialogue among people of every walk of life which is the normal condition for real involvement in social problems.

One final observation, based on experience in the ecumenical field. The interaction between the theoretical and the practical suggests an important role for multilateral dialogues over against bilateral dialogues. In the former, Christians — Catholics and Protestants together — meet with Buddhists of different sects; in the latter, an independent Christian group meets with an independent Buddhist group. Circumstances will determine which type is chosen. But on the Christian side, there is no excuse for doing separately what we can do together. Experience proves that, when the necessary level of mutual trust is reached, Buddhists invariably show high respect for the Christian participation, quite oblivious of our sectarian divisions. As a matter of fact, the seven Christian-Buddhist dialogues which I have analyzed below were all multilateral as far as the Christian side was concerned, while only two were multilateral on the Buddhist side; in five, only Zen scholars took part.

With the above distinctions in mind one is somewhat surprised that there is as yet no systematic description of the contents of the academic

dialogue, i. e., those areas of belief, ethics, piety and ritual, both Christian and Buddhist, which invite comparison and mutual enlightenment.

In an effort to discover what topics have so far been discussed and described by Japanese scholars themselves, I have sampled here a few books and articles on this subject. Although the results of this analysis are meagre, they show at least where, according to the background of these authors, priorities lie.

1. JAPANESE CHRISTIANS ON CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM

There are three small and dated works written by Japanese Catholics evidently with an apologetic intent. Yamaguchi Shikazō (1870—1953) studies the historical relations between Mahayana and Catholicism. He compares their ethics, views of life, ancestor worship, the swastika and the cross¹. Bishop WAKITA TōMA (1881—1965) had a fine grasp of Buddhism; he discusses its basic doctrines, belief in the absolute, morality and cosmology. Against the backdrop of his Thomistic philosophy, he finds Buddhism wanting on all these counts². There is a 41-p. essay by a former Sōtō-zen monk, YOSHII TEKISUI (1882—1957), in which he explains the reasons for his conversion to Catholicism. Yoshii compares the Buddhist and Christian relevance to Japanese society, their concept of salvation, sacred books, morality and goals of life. The booklet was well received and reprinted, due to its style more than to its contents³.

Another convert to Christianity, this time from Shin, is KAMEGAI RYŌUN (1888—), now a Kyōdan minister. He is the author of a very interesting book, mainly describing the history of his conversion against the background of Buddhist and biblical texts⁴. Kamegai shows great respect and affection for Buddhism. He calls it “an Old Testament, fulfilled in Christianity”. In the light of this position, he centers upon the convergences between the two religions to a degree which drew objections from either side⁵.

¹ YAMAGUCHI SHIKAZŌ, *Katorikkukyō to bukkuyō* (Beppu: Hikari no shito shimai-kai, 1939).

² WAKITA TŌMA, *Bukkyō-gairon* (Don Bosco-sha, 1951). For more details on this book, see J. L. VAN HECKEN, “Le problème du dialogue chrétien avec les bouddhistes au Japon”, *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 1967, p. 129—132).

³ YOSHII TEKISUI, *Watakushi wa naze Katorikku wo shinzuru ka* (Enderle, 1956), with a preface by this author who led Yoshii into the Church.

⁴ KAMEGAI RYŌUN, *Bukkyō kara Kirisutokyō e* (Fukuinkan-shoten, 4th ed., 1957). There is also a 75-p. booklet of the same name, authored by KAMEGAI and other converts from Buddhism to Christianity (Seibunsha, 1962). — On Kamegai's conversion, see *Deai*, Nov. 1966, p. 42—52.

⁵ KAMEGAI was criticized by two outstanding Christians, KAGAWA TOYOHICO and HIYANE ANTEI. A Buddhist scholar, NOYORI SHŪSHI, has a 10-p. outburst against the “*nembutsu kara amen to narareta okata*, the gentlemen who turned

from *nembutsu* to amen". *Bukkyō ka Kirisutokyō ka* (Jitsugyō no sekai-sha, 1956), p. 136—147.

Of a very different caliber is TAKIZAWA's *Buddhism and Christianity*⁶. Takizawa is the highly respected Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Kyushu University, Fukuoka. NISHIDA KITARŌ directed him to BARTH, under whom he studied from 1933—35, rather than to HEIDEGGER, because, as Nishida said, "Heidegger's philosophy lacks what is indispensable, that is, God"⁷.

Basically, Takizawa's book is a discussion and refutation of an essay by the famous Zen scholar HISAMATSU SHIN'ICHI on Christian theism and Buddhism. This gentle clash of ideas is a luminous example of the difficulties which beset the academic dialogue, particularly with Zen. Hence no apology is offered for the fairly extensive analysis of Takizawa's book.

Takizawa's summation of NISHIDA's thought is couched in western terms highly impregnated with the mind of Zen. "The point where the individual and the universal meet is not in a special place... But in the very place where the individual has been put, and only there... The unity in the strict distinction between the individual and the universal, between the material (*Hyletischen*) and the categorical, is already there where the subject of judgment itself has been directly defined by its absolute contrary"⁸.

Introducing Dr. Hisamatsu's argument, Takizawa first remarks that there is a decisive difference between the concept of the individual in modern Europe and that of Zen. European (understand, Christian) thought simply presupposes "the individual" as he is; the concept itself is not radically called in question; attention goes to human activities and their results. Zen, on the contrary, doubts whether man's life is not ultimately void; it demands that we take seriously the problems of death and sin, and of religion — until we finally become a lump of doubt. The effort to solve these problems is a new phenomenon of our times. As Hisamatsu writes, "Today's revival of deep interest in existentialism, nihilism and, finally, in religion well explains this situation" (p. 145). In reference to man's deliverance from death and sin, the author states, "Christianity insists that it can only come from the other side, infinitely

⁶ TAKIZAWA KATSUMI, *Bukkyō to Kirisutokyō* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1964). Page numbers in the text refer to this book. — Takizawa summed up his main argument in a lecture delivered at the Free University of Berlin, July 15, 1965, entitled "Zen Buddhism and Christianity in Contemporary Japan", *The North-east Asia Journal of Theology*, March 1970, p. 106—21. For a critical review of his book by KATAYAMA MASANAO, see *Nihon no shingaku*, 1965, p. 80—86. Takizawa's theological position is partly explained in a series of articles by JOHN O. BARKSDALE, "Bultmann vs Barth in Japan", *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, 1970.

⁷ *The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology*, March 1970, p. 110.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

separated from the actual man that is myself, a position which is akin to that of Jōdoshin. It follows that such a deliverance, coming from yonder side to this side, and not from any self-understanding can only be *God's* revelation. To accept this revelation is a matter of faith, something which ordinary people will refuse to do" (p. 145). On the other hand, it is a matter of experience that man cannot rid himself of death and sin by his own efforts. "Here lies the keenest dilemma of modern man, and self-consciousness⁹ in Zen arises exactly at the point where this dilemma actually dissolves" (p. 146).

Applying this observation to Dr. Hisamatsu's thought on the nature of the self, Takizawa agrees with him that "the true self, *hontō no jiko*, i. e., the infinite self — Zen calls it *musō-jiko*, *das gestaltlose Selbst* — does not live in some far place separated from the present self. He feels that "true consciousness cannot be the self-consciousness of an individual conceived in isolation, but rather it must be the self-consciousness of one who is perfectly at one with the absolute transcendent self", without for that matter ceasing to be the act of this I-myself (*kono watakushi*), limited in time and place (p. 147).

"Many Westerners think of Zen as of a kind of mystical and pantheistic intoxication. They feel that it cannot stand the test of scientific and objective scrutiny. Exactly the opposite is true: Zen, through radical awakening from such intoxication, cuts its very roots and thereby leads man to the truth of his being. This awakening does not force me to go to some other place in order to meet with the object of truth — which the West calls God — and unite with it. As Dr. Hisamatsu stated: It is when I myself become the true self that, in truth and equality, standing with all mankind (*jinrui no tachiba ni tatsu*), I transcend history and, with a heart of deep compassion, work for history's transformation." (p. 148—9)

Hisamatsu's "standing with all mankind" is not an abstraction. I cannot exist apart from others or from the absolute (*zettaiteki shutai*). I need them to be myself. Yet man often lives with the illusion that he is a being unto himself, rather than a being unto God, nature, and other men. In this illusion lies the root of man's despair and the crisis of today's society. Nor Christianity, nor idealism, pragmatism and existentialism have set man free from this illusion (p. 150).

⁹ *Jikaku*, *Selbstbewußtsein*. — TAKIZAWA has no peace with this term, particularly as it appears in HEGEL's philosophy. He makes it clear that "to identify the true self-consciousness in Zen with mysticism in western philosophy is a misunderstanding", the cause of which must, however, be put at the door of Zen. He then resigns himself to this statement: "The 'self' as understood in Zen is so delicate and so foreign to western thought that no matter how carefully we may choose our words in translation, misunderstandings cannot quite be avoided. Hence I ask the readers that they guess what 'self-consciousness' means in Zen, and what it is in actuality from the whole context of my essay." (*Journal*, p. 113, 119).

Takizawa feels that, on this score, Hisamatsu's criticism of Christianity is partly justified, even though it rests upon a misreading of true Christianity. Indeed, he rejoins, Christian "faith through the Holy Spirit" is, in fact, the discovery of Immanuel, God-with-us. It is man's very existential place that Christ has appeared to set him free from sin and death. It is the acceptance or refusal of these good tidings which distinguishes Christians from other men. The criticism of D. T. SUZUKI and Hisamatsu notwithstanding, "true Christianity stands on a common ground with Zen". True Christianity disregards the claim of Modern Humanism which severs man from his connection with God. It opens man's eyes to a new vista of his existence in which he confesses that Jesus, who like all other men died and was buried, is "true God and true man" (p. 151—2).

What then is the basic difference between Christianity and Zen? If I understand Takizawa correctly, he says that it consists in this: The Christian acknowledges with gratitude and repentance that Christ, this true man, who is a man of flesh like all of us, and yet, in radical difference from us, was born of the Holy Spirit, — that it is this true man "who goes in front of me, who stands before me, and who loves me in spite of my sin". But the case of Zen is different. The enlightened Zen follower stands on an equal footing with his master, and Buddha himself is no exception to this rule. The Zenist refuses to worship any being as absolutely superior to himself. "In this sense, Zen comes nearer to modern science than does Christianity" (p. 154).

Yet, in Takizawa's opinion, this strong point of Zen also betrays its weakness. "Man's true self-consciousness does not need the support of anything that happened in the past, be it Jesus of Nazareth. But this does not mean that man's self-consciousness can arise without the effective support of something totally independent from, and absolutely preceding, this awareness." Zen expresses this relationship in the words "formless-self" (*musō-jiko*) and "form-self" (*usō-jiko*), a relationship which is irreversible in the order of being because the self-consciousness of the finite being, no matter how concrete, is nothing else but the splendor of the infinite being which reveals itself in the finite being. The basic fact that God and man are one does not deny the other fact of their difference and interrelationship (p. 154).

While Christians see this God-man relationship as a fact and Christ as the link between its poles, Dr. Hisamatsu speaks about "becoming one's true self" (*hontō no jiko ni naru*) as if it is something which, much like a Hegelian idea, is not yet real (p. 156). That Zen could not satisfy the Japanese mind is evidenced by the appearance of Jōdoshin which puts at the heart of its self-awareness the belief in salvation through Amida and the invocation of his name.

Takizawa makes bold to give this advice to Zen: It should go deeper and make clear the living and operative unity between God and man which comes before any self-consciousness, resting as it does upon the

irreversible order of their relationship. He insists: "What I ask is different from Hisamatsu's 'objective theism' (*taishōteki na yūshinron*) or from his 'heteronomous revealed religion' (*taritsuteki na keijishūkyō*); what I ask does not require a *sacrificium intellectus* (*chisei no gisei*); I merely ask that Zen should unfold its truth about self-consciousness" (p. 158).

In relation to the dialogue, Takizawa thinks that Zen and Christianity can help one another toward a radical demythologization of their beliefs and thereby contribute to the building of a new and better world. He deplores the fact that "not only foreign missionaries, but also Japanese Christians, wholly misunderstand the essence of Buddhism". He feels that "it is essential for us today that we should not exclude or condemn each other, but rather that we should try to break into the inner kernel of both religions through conversation and criticism. Without this, the unity of the Christian churches, as well as that of the Buddhist sects, will never be attained"¹⁰.

In *Bukkyō to Kirisutokyō* Takizawa searches for a Christian, and yet Japanese, or rather Zen-acceptable, interpretation of such Christian concepts as salvation, person, religion, faith, agape and revelation. His main thrust is towards a new language, indeed, towards a new Christianity which tries to clothe in Christian raiment that rapturous feeling which Zen finds in nonduality. What he says about the unity of God and man must be read in this light: the I-and-Thou of their relationship, while respecting their ontological rank — "an irreversible fact", as he calls it — is absorbed within the union of their total be-ing: their true be-ing is their not-being.

Takizawa is correct, I feel, in saying that many of Hisamatsu's difficulties result from an outdated and partly false notion of Christianity. But where he describes his own "Christianity of the future", many Christians will demur: it is too unhistorical, too rhetorical, and far too subjective. This is not Christ's but Takizawa's religion. His book fails to establish the divinity of Christ; it has no reference to the living Church; it draws no inspiration from Paulinian thought. Yet it remains a worthy attempt at mediation between two religious worlds. One can wholeheartedly agree, however, with what Takizawa said at another occasion: "I think that there are many ways in which some Christians are much closer to some Buddhists than some Christians are to each other... Some of us are now wondering if a dialogue with Buddhism might not even help us to resolve our own internal problems"¹¹.

¹⁰ *Journal*, p. 120.

¹¹ From a symposium with NISHITANI KEIJI and others, *Japan Studies*, Autumn 1969, p. 12. — Thoughts akin to those of TAKIZAWA have recently been expressed by Professor HIGASHI SEN'ICHIRO, a philosopher teaching at Kyoto University whose religious affiliation I do not know. His 30-p. article on "Zen and Christianity", draws on KIERKEGAARD and HEIDEGGER, BONHOEFFER and EBELING.

2. JAPANESE BUDDHISTS ON BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

One of the earliest and influential books in English with frequent references to Christianity is *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*, a collection of addresses on religious subjects by SOYEN SHAKU, translated from the Japanese by D. T. SUZUKI¹².

In his "reply to an American Christian critic" (p. 121—5), Shaku explains that "nirvana means extinction of lust, not of love: extinction of evil, not of existence; of egotistic craving, not of life". He answers the allegation that "human life does not breathe, in Buddhism, the atmosphere of divine fatherhood, but groans under the dominion of inexorable laws" with these words:

This same moral law (that underlies the development of human society) . . . we call Dharmakāya, which is eternal, omnipresent, and all-glorious. We represent it under the picture of a father, and it was incarnated not only in Gautama-Buddha, but also in all great men in a higher or lesser degree, foremost among them in Jesus Christ, and, allow me to add, in George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and other great man of your country¹³.

Shaku Sōen, while granting "that Jesus Christ is the greatest master and teacher that appeared in the West after Buddha", fails to see "that mankind can be benefited by believing that Jesus Christ performed miracles", particularly miracles such as "the draft of fishes, which involves a great and useless destruction of life".

Reflecting further upon other Christ events, Shaku feels that "Jesus Christ did not attain to the calmness and dignity of Buddha, for the passion of anger overtook him in the temple, when he drove out with rope in hand those that bargained in the holy place." And he compares this attitude with what Buddha would have done under similar conditions: "Instead of whipping the evil-doers, he would have converted them, for kind words strike deeper than the whip."

I have quoted these passages because, even though written more than half a century ago, they are still repeated today. In fact, as we shall see, Dr Suzuki took them to himself and made them famous.

He too pleads for a further adaptation of Christians thought to the world of Zen: "Zen to Kirisutokyō", *Kōza-Zen*, vol. 8 (Chikuma-shobō, 1968) p. 69—98.

¹² SOYEN SHAKU (Shaku Sōen, 1859—1919) was the first Rinzai Zen master to go to the West. He became Chief Abbot (*kandō*) and *rōshi* of Engakuji, Kamakura, in 1892. During the summer of 1893 he attended the World Conference of Religions in Chicago. On two subsequent visits to the United States, D. T. SUZUKI was his interpreter. More on him in ISSHŪ MIURA and RUTH FULLER SASAKI, *Zen Dust* (Kyoto: the First Zen Institute of America, 1966), p. 224—226.

¹³ The *Dharmakāya* or *hosshin* is the highest aspect of the threefold body of the Buddha. The theistic interpretation of this term is very common in Buddhist literature. SHAKU's book drew this criticism from Ch. ELIOT: "Instead of letting the Buddha speak, the author is anxious to prove that his sayings are agreeable to the latest European theories in science and philosophy." *Japanese Buddhism* (London: Arnold, 1935), p. 188.

Remaining with Zen, I should like to introduce the reader to an interesting study by Professor ANDŌ SHŌEI, "*Zen and Christianity*"¹⁴.

Man is a dialectic unity, characterized by individuality and sociality. "Zen attaches more importance to individuality: it tries to synthesize individuality and sociality in the bottom of the heart because the bottom of the heart is in touch with the Eternal One." The Christian way puts more emphasis on sociality. "Zen expects to achieve spiritual awakening through human effort, based on the firm belief that the original nature of man is beyond good and evil, serene, peaceful, deathless, immortal, self-sufficing and that it is of the same nature and root as the universe itself. Christianity starts from the idea of original sin and emphasizes salvation through Christ (p. 176).

These starting points of Zen and Christianity stand in remarkable contrast to one another. "Zen rests on a deep faith in the identity of roots between the individual's original and real nature and the universe itself... The sole object of Zen is to make this essential Self completely manifest through our daily practice, because thereby we can enjoy perfect liberty and eternal peace, transcending the relative world of life and death" (p. 178—179). In Christianity, "man is obliged to give himself up completely, to submit to God in perfect humility. Then, and only then, he finds himself all of a sudden in a world that is quite different from his former dwelling place, in the world of love, of divine law, and of God's own light". Such an experience (which was that of St Paul on the way to Damascus) is referred to as "sudden conversion" in Christianity: "It seems to correspond to '*tongo*' the sudden spiritual awakening in Zen."

"In Christianity, as in Zen, 'sudden conversion' is not considered to be man's final goal: there is more depth and a more distant perspective." Zen invites man to move from sudden spiritual awakening to complete liberty of mind. It wants him "to realize that the visible world with everything in it is unsubstantial and 'empty', that he in the original Self is absolutely identical with the universe itself, and that he is eternal in the viewpoint of time and indefinite in that of space" (p. 189—192).

Similarly, in Christianity there is a "second stage" beyond sudden conversion. The Christian must "die every day" (1 Cor. 15, 31): he must continually keep in mind the fact of Christ crucified, making himself a hollow funnel through which Providence flows freely, thereby going beyond the relative world of life and death (p. 195).

In conclusion, Andō states that "every great religion is without exception concerned with the problem of death; as regards this point Zen does not differ from Christianity."

¹⁴ ANDŌ SHŌEI, *Zen to Kirisutokyō* (Kōryōsha-shoten, 1966), p. 103—142. For an expanded version of these pages, see *Psychologia*, September 1965, p. 123—134, later reprinted in Andō's *Zen and American Transcendentalism* (Hokuseido, 1970), p. 174—200. Page numbers refer to this text.

But in Christianity, because of its basic idea of Original Sin, its *distrust* of human nature and consequent submission of man to God, the difference in substance between God and man can never be eliminated, whatever efforts man may make to approximate God. Up to his last moment, man is clearly distinguished from God . . . Christianity tends to entertain a hope that can be realized only *in the future*. On the contrary, Zen, based on the firm belief that man's essential Self is identical in root and nature with the universe, strives "to penetrate *the present* to the bottom — to emancipate oneself from the prison of individuality into the universe, and thereby to attain complete liberty of mind at the very present (p. 198).

Zen aims at actuality: it helps man reach his final stage of liberation (*satori* or *gedatsu*) in the present. Christianity (and Other-Power sects such as Jōdo) postpone this moment into a future ever remote. Andō finishes with this momentous conclusion:

If religion is understood to mean man's salvation by God, . . . Christianity is undoubtedly one of the great religions of mankind. *In that sense, Zen is not religion.* In that sense, Zen is that which goes beyond, and contains within itself, religion. In fact, Zen may be said to be a world where man can be completely emancipated from religion (p. 200).

It is not difficult for a Christian to sympathize with Andō's views. He is far less technical than Takizawa; he shows more human warmth. In this author's mind he scores high in his grasp of that vision which relates all truth to a common origin, call it true Self in Zen or God in Christianity.

So much for Andō's book. There is, finally, the sparkling record of an actual dialogue between two friends, one a venerated Zen master who spent several years in the United States as a representative of Sōtō Zen, the other a Christian theologian of note. I refer to "*Zen and Christianity*", co-authored by YAMADA REIRIN RŌSHI and Dr KUWATA HIDE-NOBU¹⁵. These scholars cover a wide range of topics, and the bare enumeration of chapter headings must suffice: Buddha and Christ, transcendence and immanence, man's true dignity, objectivity and subjectivity, original sin and karma, sin and redemption, is Zen philosophy?, doctrine and life, Zen as thought and Zen as life, the true self, union with God, morality and the will of God, God and faith, God and Buddha, self-power and other power, the meaning of life and death, in search of final truth, on Marxism, the preconceptual world, modern man and religion.

As the editors remark in a final note, the Buddhist-Christian dialogue could help us bridge the division between East and West. Here again is a first step in the right direction. But it is a limited step. The book is a juxtaposition of important topics, not their confrontation. Unfortunately, two monologues do not make one dialogue.

I have yet to mention the names of Dr D. T. SUZUKI and of Professor ABE MASAO, two Japanese scholars who, perhaps more than others, have

¹⁵ YAMADA REIRIN / KUWATA HIDE-NOBU, *Zen to Kirisutokyō* (Chōbunsha, 1967).

influenced the dialogue of Christianity with Zen in this country. Their work is so important it would require a separate article.

Turning to Buddhism in general, there is MASUTANI FUMIO's well-known *A Comparative Study of Buddhism and Christianity*¹⁶.

Another book which invites controversy rather than dialogue is "*Buddhism or Christianity?*" by NOYORI SHŪSHI, a Shinshū businessman and author¹⁷. Noyori is seized by fear lest Japan go Christian as a result of the Occupation. He takes up the cudgels against KAGAWA TOYOHICO, Japan's great Christian social worker. But he also expatiates on Buddhist-Christian relations in a way which helps us understand the emotional reasons which make the dialogue so difficult. Among the comparisons Noyori sets forth, these are given special attention: redemption and miracles in Buddhism and Christianity, the meaning and stages of man's life, Buddhism and social movements, the dilemma of monotheism and pantheism, Buddhist and Christian ethics, the Buddha-man and the God-man relation, creation, God and karma, the mercilessness of God, Christianity and suffering, salvation in Buddhism and Christianity, meditation vs prayer, Buddhist and Christian piety, God's providence and man, Christian contradictions related to God and heaven . . . A last chapter discusses the emperor problem as seen by both religions. It is critical of General McArthur, Father Flanagan, Kamegai Ryōun, the Tokyo War Tribunal — and of much more. Noyori's work lacks poise and accuracy. One hopes that his bitterness and prejudices are shared by only a few.

I conclude with some remarks about a recent book by one of the deans of Buddhist studies in Japan, Professor MIZUNO KŌGEN's *Man's Guide through Life*¹⁸, which has some fifty pages on "a comparison of Buddhism and Christianity". Mizuno remarks in an opening paragraph that, between Buddhism and Christianity, there are more differences than similarities. He traces their respective religious ancestry: Brahmanism and Judaism. He finds that both were a reaction to formalism and religions atrophy. This is followed by a discussion on Buddha, Christ and God, in which many clichés return with tiresome regularity. Some of them: Christian intolerance is traced to Christ's birth among the socially deprived, dualism between the just and the unjust, law vs compassion, creation vs natural causality, God's will vs man's freedom, theocentrism vs anthropocentrism, etc. Attention then goes to the nature of salvation obtained, in Christianity, through grace and works, and, in Buddhism, through enlightenment and faith. Their eschaton oppose a Christian heaven to a Buddhist Pure Land, man's fulfillment in a future world to his unspeakable bliss in the pre-

¹⁶ Tokyo: The Young East Association, 1957.

¹⁷ NOYORI SHŪSHI, *Bukkyō ka Kirisutokyō ka*.

¹⁸ MIZUNO KŌGEN, *Jinsei no michishirube* (Kōsei-shuppansha, 1969), p. 175—218. This is vol. 2 in the 11-volume collection *Jinsei to bukkyō*, edited by Professors MIZUNO and NAKAMURA HAJIME.

sent¹⁹. Christianity believes in an eternal hell; Buddhism, on the contrary, acknowledges no eternal damnation. Living beings transmigrate according to their karma through the six worlds of hell, hungry spirits, animals, *shura*, men and deities²⁰. Here is a sample of Mizuno's reasoning:

Although Christians have been given the command to love their enemies they could not overcome the tendency toward discrimination and enmity characteristic of Jewish and European peoples . . . Roman Catholics, moreover, believe in purgatory, an intermediate state between heaven and hell in which people are punished and cleansed from their sins after which they are released and return to the world of man where they can once more receive God's grace . . . This purgatory might perhaps be compared to the Buddhist hell (p. 202).

Mizuno then turns his attention to the notion of original sin which, St AUGUSTINE says, is transmitted through physical generation. Sin thereby becomes a biological fact connected with heredity. He has no trouble refuting this theory which, he knows, is not shared by many theologians. As for Buddhism, it recognizes a similar state called ignorance, *mumyō*, the source of all evil. Christians obtain forgiveness of sin from God through Christ; Buddhists are cured from ignorance through personal effort. Christianity is a religion of divine justice and punishment; Buddhism stands on personal responsibility and mercy. "As Buddhists need not fear punishment by God, their moral sense is no doubt weaker than that of Christians" (p. 208).

Be this as it may, Professor Mizuno is convinced that the Buddhist ethic which does not rest upon "commandments from an outside being" favorably compares with the "industrial ethic" (*shokugyō-rinri*) of Christianity²¹.

The last several pages of Mizuno's essay compare Buddhist *jīhi* with Christian *agape*. God, he says, does not love man unconditionally; he only loves the just but punishes the sinner. Hence the possibility of eternal damnation, something which Buddhism cannot accept. Nor does God love all living beings, such as animals; he only loves men. Christianity countenances the killing of animals because, it holds, they have been

¹⁹ Mizuno uses here the technical expressions *shōji-rinne*, rebirth in birth and death, which are the limits of human existence, and *shōji-soku-nehan*, existence is nirvana, to indicate that, as Mahayana teaches, through *chie* or intuitive knowledge, man can reach a state of peace and happiness even in this world.

²⁰ These six worlds or *rokudō* are: *jigoku* (-dō), *gaki*, *chikusō*, *shura* (called for the four evil worlds, *akudō*), *ningen*, *ten*.

²¹ This is an allusion to MAX WEBER's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) which sought to demonstrate that Protestantism, particularly the Puritan ethic and Calvinism, laid the foundation for the emergence of western capitalism. Underlying MIZUNO's discussion is, of course, the comparative merit of an ethic based on obedience to a supreme lawgiver, as is the case in Christianity, vs an ethic based on man's "free" following of his "true nature", identified with Buddhist enlightenment. See also my *Japanese Religiosity*, p. 122—125.

created for man's sake, a theory which echoes the inborn cruelty of western man who even delights in such things as bullfights. How different from this is the Buddhist *jiki* which is bent on bringing happiness and eradicating suffering. Christianity is a mixture of love and justice; Buddhism only knows love, and a love which extends to all living beings (*issai-ujō*), man and animals, friend and foe. Only in Buddhism does man succeed in identifying himself completely with the other.

3. SEVEN RECENT CHRISTIAN-BUDDHIST DIALOGUES IN JAPAN

Which are the topics most commonly discussed at Christian-Buddhist dialogues in Japan? A limited answer to this question is obtained from the published accounts of seven recent dialogues, five of them chiefly concerned with Zen (no. 1—5), and two with Buddhism in general (no. 6—7)²². The total number of persons involved in those dialogues was not more than 100. Several scholars, particularly Zen monks and Christians, participated in two or more of the dialogues, a fact which points to the very limited number of available personnel.

General contents of 7 Christian-Buddhist dialogues

Topics discussed	Dialogue No. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Christian-Buddhist convergences						+	
compassion	+			+			+
cultural traditions						+	
dualism (subject—object)	+		+	+	+		+
enlightenment	+		+	+			+
ethics				+			

²² (1) Two scholars discuss Zen and Christianity: DAISETZ T. SUZUKI and T. H. CALLAWAY, "Dialogue: Christian and Buddhist", *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. III, No. 1 (June 1970), p. 108—121; no date, no place. (2) A Rinzai Zen Seminar with SHIBAYAMA ZENKEI *rōshi* at Karasaki House, Lake Biwa, September 5—8, 1966: DOI MASATOSHI, "Dialogue Between Living Faiths in Japan", *Japanese Religions*, 6, No. 3 (August 1970), p. 59—61. (3) A Zen-Christianity Dialogue, Oiso, March 27—April 1, 1967, organized by Dr. DOUGLAS V. STEERE with 40 participants (10 Rinzaishū, 10 Sōtōshū, 10 Protestant and 10 Catholic scholars): H. DUMOULIN, "A Dialogue with Zen Buddhists", *Concilium*, Vol. 29, p. 155—173 (New York: Paulist Press, 1967). (4) A Zen-Christian and Buddhist Christian Dialogue, Kyoto and Tokyo, August—October 1967: Dom AELRED GRAHAM, *Conversations: Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968). (5) A Zen-Christian Dialogue, Kyoto, Summer 1968, being a follow-up to (3): Wm. JOHNSTON, "Dialogue with Zen", *Concilium*, Vol. 49, p. 146—153 (1969). (6) A Buddhist-Christian Dialogue among six scholars led by NISHITANI KEIJI and KITAMORI KAZŌ, "A Symposium: On Buddhist-Christian Dialogue", *Japan Studies*, No. 15 (Autumn 1969), p. 1—29. (7) A Buddhist-Christian Philosophical Colloquium, Kyoto, November 15—16, 1969: M. HEINRICHS and A. ASCHOFF, "A Philosophical Symposium at Kyoto: Christ and Buddha", *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, XXIV/2 (March 1970), p. 143—145.

Topics discussed	Dialogue No. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
eschatology		+					
faith and works		+					
God, creator, Absolute	+			+			+
interreligious dialogue			+				
prayer- <i>nembutsu</i>				+			
reality				+	+		+
religion				+			
religious experience			+				
self-non-self, person	+			+			+
social concern		+	+				
spirituality, mysticism			+	+	+	+	
spiritual training		+					
truth				+			
wisdom				+			

It will be seen that the topics which came up for discussion are very few and tend to become stereotyped. Some salient statements, found in these accounts, help us penetrate into the dialogical atmosphere.

Thus SUZUKI told CALLAWAY: "Buddhism has a great deal to learn from Christianity." To which Callaway, a former Baptist missionary in Japan, replied: "As we try to explain Christianity we are using Buddhist terms always, and what you said before is quite true, that though the words seem the same, the meaning is very different." (1) "Christianity has deeper social concern than Buddhism. The Buddhist doctrine of non-discriminative knowledge appears to prevent the Buddhist from making moral decisions and social commitment. In the meantime, we must not ignore the fact that too much moralization or rationalization of Christianity tends to deprive it of depth dimension." (2) "Many participants hoped to see some formula adopted on this point (The 'common ground' in all religions, mentioned by SHIBAYAMA *rōshi*) . . . But this discussion soon came to an end." (3) Graham writes this memorable sentence on the religious encounter: "Any vital religious discussion in today's world must move, not at the peripheral level of Christian ecclesiology, . . . but at the basically existential level of who we are and what human life is all about." (4) On the dialogue with Zen, JOHNSTON remarks: "Dialogue with Zen must be carried on by Christians who have some experience of prayer and contemplation who . . . can speak from the depths of their personal encounter with him in whom they believe." (5) At the end of a dialogue with NISHITANI and KITAMORI, Professor KUYAMA, a Christian participant, recalls how a Protestant minister during the war made up a Christian *nembutsu* formula and used to chant it to the beat of his Buddhist drum. His comment: "I suppose this was one way of achieving a consciousness of the presence of Christ in the routine of one's daily life. But it seems clear from this and the problems that we

have been discussing here today that real contact between Christianity and Buddhism has only just begun." (6) Finally, the general tone of all these dialogues is well expressed in the following statement: "The participants of the symposium were of course not interested in indoctrinating others about their brand of philosophy and spirituality, but rather in a mutual exchange of views concerning matters of the spiritual life. It was in this atmosphere that a genuine dialogue developed."

Evidently, here as in other matters, experience will be the best teacher. This experience, unfortunately, is available only to a few and on a very limited scale. One can only hope and pray that it will increase in depth and frequency.

4. AN OVERVIEW: BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN PARALLELS

In summation, the basic differences and similarities between Christianity and Buddhism, as seen by our authors, lie on a fourfold plane.

1. They differ in their concept of a *supreme being*. Christianity believes in a creator, origin and sustainer of all that is; an Almighty, in supreme control of every secondary cause and effect; he is the totally other and the totally holy in whom man can never be completely absorbed, nor he absorbed in man.

Buddha is a human being who perceived ultimate truth and freedom. The Buddhist universe exists from all time; it remains substantially identical to itself even though it be in constant flux. No being, not even the Buddha, escapes from the law of cause and effect. Buddha is immanent in us — we have the Buddha nature — and yet distinct from us.

2. They have different views on *man*. Christian man is God's creature, made to his likeness, possessed of a soul. Man is lord of the universe and all was made to serve him while he was made to serve God, and participate in God's glory and happiness.

Buddhist man is not a distinct entity endowed with an immortal soul, set off against the rest of the world. But all that exists is one; all is the Buddha nature, *bussbō*.

3. They differ in their analysis of *the human condition*. Christianity insists that man's suffering results from transgression of God's will, from sin. Christ was crucified to set man free from sin and offer salvation to him. If man repents he can be saved by God's grace through faith and love. He who does not believe will be condemned to the measure of his guilt.

Buddhism speaks of sin as ignorance and greed, and of their effects as determined by the law of karma. Man's condition is that of suffering until he awakens onto reality and thereby reaches eternal bliss.

4. They differ in their *symbols, rituals and ethic*. Christianity claims access to objective and historical truth; it is a way of life, related to the existence of a visible community which is the Church; it gathers around some basic rites and acts of piety.

Buddhism values interiority; it is subjective and unhistorical; it is a quest for man's self-awareness and self-salvation; it is an ethic rather than a dogmatic. Buddhism aims at peace and harmony with all that exists.

For all their differences, Buddhism and Christianity have much in common. They often stammer the same truths, and express the same love, although in different ways which are tributary to a different cultural past. Buddhism and Christianity meet in the living man, in his search for beauty, goodness and truth, and in his unquenchable thirst for something or someone beyond himself.