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Buddhism Meets Christianity: Inoue Enryō's View of Christianity in *Shinri kinshin*

1. Introduction

Confrontation with Western culture is one of the main characteristics of Japan's history in the Meiji era (1868-1912), but what this encounter meant for the history of religions in Japan has as yet received little attention. With the introduction of Christianity, a new religion was added to Japan's religious world that did not easily integrate with it. Not only did it claim to possess the single and universal truth, but it also taught strictly defined ethics. In traditional Japanese thinking, ethics and religion were not necessarily linked together. During the Tokugawa era (1603-1868), Japanese ethics had a strong Confucian character, while Buddhism and Shintō were the dominating religions. Confession of Christianity was regarded as being in conflict with Japanese ethics (KISHIMOTO and WAKIMOTO 1954: 3; SUZUKI 1979: iii f). Therefore, it is not surprising that the initial reaction of Japanese religions toward Christianity was hostile. One of the most notable of these reactions was that of Inoue Enryō (井上円了 1858-1919). Using one of Inoue's writings, this paper will consider one way in which Christianity was perceived from a Buddhist perspective and what consequences this encounter had for Buddhist thinking.

Buddhist criticism of Christianity in modern Japan is almost always linked to the name of Inoue Enryō, who was also founder of Tōyō University. His anti-Christian writings were "bestsellers" in the intellectual world of Meiji Japan. Among Buddhists, they were appreciated for their "objective view" and Inoue's commitment to Buddhism. In his commentary on *Shinri kinshin* (真理金針 The Golden Needle of Truth), Takagi Hiroo sees the main reason for the success of Inoue's writings in the fact that he refuted Christianity and proved the modern character of Buddhist teachings by demonstrating their congruence with Western science, especially the natural sciences and philosophy (TAKAGI 1987: 395 f).

As suggested by this judgement, Inoue's thinking was determined not only by a comprehensive understanding of Buddhist philosophy and the firm belief in the superiority of Buddhist theory to Christian theology, but also by his knowledge and admiration of Western philosophy. As far as this mixture

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of Eastern and Western thinking is concerned, he is a typical Meiji Japan intellectual. The encounter with Western thinking and its integration or rejection is a fundamental impulse observed in the history of thought in the Meiji era. The nationalistic motive behind Inoue's writings makes him even more typical of his time.

2. Inoue Enryō 's background and his writings¹

Inoue Enryō was born in 1858 in the province of Echigo (present-day Niigata prefecture) as the son of a priest of the Ōtani-branch of Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗 True Pure Land School). Like his father, he received ordination in this school. After studying English at Takayama and Nagaoka, he entered the training school of his main temple, Higashi Honganji, in 1877. The temple in turn sent him to study at a preparatory school for Tokyo University in 1878, and in 1885 he graduated from Tokyo University in philosophy. After his graduation, he participated in various associations having nationalistic or 'enlightening' goals. He initiated the formation of the Tetsugakkai (哲学会 Study Group for Philosophy) and was a member of the nationalistic group Seikyōsha (政教社 Association for Politics and Religion). In 1887 he founded an institute for the study of philosophy (Tetsugakkan 哲学館) that attained the status of a university in 1904 and was renamed Tōyō Daigaku (University of the Orient) in 1906. Inoue's manifold interests and broad knowledge are documented in his more than 100 writings that cover a wide range of subjects including philosophy, Buddhist Studies, psychology, religion, education and superstition.

The main motives behind Inoue's many and varied activities can be characterized as patriotism and the quest for truth, as expressed in his slogan *gokoku airi* (護国愛里, defense of the nation and love of truth).² Accordingly, his advocacy of Buddhism and refutation of Christianity originated in his nationalism and his concern for truth. He rejects Christianity because in his eyes it embodies the dangers inherent in Japan's westernization and because it doesn't teach the truth:

I refute Christianity, but I don't hate Jesus. I support Buddhism, but I don't love Shakyamuni. Truth is what I love, untruth is what I hate. Because Christianity misunderstands untruth as truth, because it realizes a small part of truth and takes it as the whole truth, I refute it. (IES 265)

On the other hand, Inoue regards Buddhism as having the power to prevent Christian expansion and to maintain Japanese cultural identity. Furthermore,

1 On Inoue's biography and writings see: IKEDA 1976: 227-246; KASAHARA 1989: 193-214; MINESHIMA 1982: 150-178; ŌKUWA 1994: 295 f; SERIKAWA 1989: 34-69; STAGGS 1983: 251-281.

2 For a detailed discussion of the concept of *gokoku airi* see STAGGS 1983: 252-254.

he believes that among all religious teachings, those of Buddhism come closest to the truth, leading him to advocate its preservation and propagation in East and West (IES 124-126).

More than a few of Inoue's writings are devoted to the refutation of Christianity. In 1885 he published *Haja shinron* (破邪新論 A New Discussion of the Destruction of the Evil Teaching) and *Yasokyō no nanmoku* (ヤソ教の難目 Christianity's Weak Points), which were followed by *Shinri kinshin* (真理金針 The Golden Needle of Truth) in 1886/87. His most famous anti-Christian writings are *Shinri kinshin* and the four volumes of *Bukkyō katsuron* (仏教活論 Enlivening Buddhism): the preface *Joron* 序論 (1887); the first volume, *Haja katsuron* 破邪活論, on the destruction of the evil (Christian) teaching (1887); the second, *Kenshō katsuron* 顯正活論, on the establishment of (Buddhist) righteousness (1890); and the last, *Gohō katsuron* 護法活論, on the defense of the Buddhist law (1912).

Shinri kinshin consists of three volumes (*shohen*, *zokuhen* and *zokuzokuhen*) whose contents first appeared in the Buddhist journal *Meikyō shinshi* 明教新誌 between October 1884 and October 1885. They were published as books between 1886 and 1887 (KASAHARA 1989: 199). The first volume deals with the theoretical refutation of Christianity (*Yasokyō o haisuru wa riron ni aru ka* ヤソ教を排するは倫理にあるか), the second with the practical refutation of Christianity (*Yasokyō o haisuru wa jissai ni aru ka* ヤソ教を排するは実際にあるか), and the third with the comparison of Buddhist and Christian ideas and the classification of Buddhist thought using Western philosophical terminology. It is entitled "Why Buddhism is a rational and emotional religion" (whereas Christianity is simply an emotional religion) (*Bukkyō wa chiriyoku jōkan ryōzen no shūkyō naru yuen o ronzu* 仏教は知力情感両全の宗教なるゆえんを論ず). In order to offer a comprehensive understanding of Inoue's view of Christianity, I will present not only his criticism of Christianity, but also his appreciation of it.

3. Inoue's appreciation of Christianity

In contrast to most other anti-Christian Buddhist writers of his time,³ Inoue Enryō does not reject Christianity in general, but rather offers a more nuanced view. He of course regards Christianity as a religion inferior to Buddhism, but he also takes into account what he considers to be its strong points and sees them as a serious challenge to contemporary Buddhism.

3 A survey of different categories of anti-Christian writings of the Meiji era, their authors (e.g. Fujishima Ryōon, Ugai Tetsujō, Katō Totsudō et al.) and the main contents of those writings is given by Sakurai Masashi in: SAKURAI 1971: 107-165. For primary sources see for example the collection of anti-Christian writings in KANZAKI 1893.

This ambiguous view is reflected in the aims pursued by Inoue's argumentation in *Shinri kinshin*: motivated by his concern for a reasonable and balanced judgement of Christianity, he tries to point out areas in which Christianity is a threat to Buddhism as well as the reasons why it doesn't have to be feared. Finally, he tries to explain how institutional Buddhism should be reformed in order to meet the challenge of Christianity (IES 12).

One of Inoue's reasons for appreciating Christianity is the simple fact that it is a religion. Because this is the case, Inoue argues, it shares with Buddhism the same fundamental intention of making people attain "peacefulness of heart" (*anshin ritsumei* 安心立命)⁴ and also the moral impetus of promoting good and condemning evil (*kanzen chōaku* 勧善懲悪). Rejecting Christianity at this basic level would consequently imply the rejection of Buddhism as well. Thus, Inoue argues that not the roots but the "branches and leaves" of Christian doctrines ought to be criticized. Although Inoue energetically refutes these "branches and leaves," he asserts the "brotherhood" of Buddhism and Christianity in the face of the common enemy of anti-religious thinking. In his hierarchy of enemies of Buddhism, Christianity ranks second behind the anti-religious trends in natural sciences or philosophy that equally threaten every religion (IES 16-19).

Inoue also admires Christianity for its historical continuity; although many religious teachings existed in ancient Europe, only Christianity has survived and become the dominant religion in the civilized countries of Europe and America. Inoue regards this process as proof of the ability of Christianity to adapt to cultural evolution. He insists that good knowledge of the foundation of this successful development is a prerequisite for an appropriate refutation of Christianity. Therefore, thorough study of the religion and its history are advocated as a must for anybody who wants to criticize Christianity. This point is in part a reproof of Inoue's fellow-Buddhists. In his eyes, their anti-Christian thought is too often based on superficial knowledge of the object being refuted (IES 13 f).

Inoue's own portrayal of Christian history aims at illustrating the strength of Christianity and leads him to five reasons he believes are responsible for the spread and persistence of this religion.

1) Christians have always practiced efficient evangelization (IES 201).

2) It is a rule that the more tragic a religion's history is, the more it flourishes. Sorrow and pain touch people's emotions. The wish to help arises and leads to support for the ideas for which people had to suffer.

4 Originally a Confucian term, *anshin ritsumei* 安心立命 (or *anshin ryūmyō* in Buddhist context) means total trust in heaven's will and the consequent rest and peace of mind. In Buddhism it refers to complete composure of mind and absence of desires.

Consequently, the prosperity of a religion is frequently a consequence of its suppression. The prosperity of Christianity is the logical result of its history of persecution and martyrdom beginning with Jesus' death and continuing through the Roman Empire (IES 204 f).

3) Just as Christians were willing to give their lives for their beliefs, they didn't hesitate to take other people's lives if those people resisted their religious beliefs. This zealous evangelical spirit has proved quite effective and has contributed to the persistence of Christianity. Inoue mentions the crusaders, the religious wars of early modern Europe, and Henry VIII and other leaders as historical examples (IES 205 ff).

4) Christianity has long been associated with politics and supported national interests. Consequently, political struggles often gained a religious character and vice versa. Owing to the close connection between religion and politics in European countries, Christianity has been and still is a socially and politically influential religion (IES 208).

5) Due to its practical activities, Christianity is of use to society. Its social activities appear in the fields of international relations, politics, morality, education and enlightenment. The public benefit it brings about in these fields is another reason for its contemporary prosperity (IES 209).

The strength and success of Christianity, Inoue concludes, lies in its practical achievements, not in its doctrines. Its spirit of courageous evangelization and apology resulted in the spread of Christianity to America, Africa and even to Eastern countries like India, China and Japan. In this respect, Buddhism is pictured as being far inferior due to the indolence and lack of scholarship and morality among Buddhist priests. How can Japanese Buddhism prevent Christian expansion if it is in such a poor condition? By emphasizing the strong points of Christianity and contrasting them with apparent deficiencies in Japanese Buddhism, Inoue wants to draw his readers' attention to the threat of Christianity and the urgent need for Buddhist reform. If it is to survive, Buddhism must be of practical use for public life in the fields of international relations, politics, morality, education and enlightenment. Among priests, courage, morality and scholarship must be cultivated. If Buddhism in Japan did not succeed in these reforms, Inoue believed it would be supplanted by Christianity (IES 208 f).

Owing to Inoue's appreciation of Christianity in the above-mentioned respects, his criticism does not aim at the basis of Christianity, i.e. the religious intentions it shares with Buddhism, nor does he touch on the sphere of religious practice. Rather, he portrays Christianity as a model of social and political commitment. Thus, Inoue's view of Christianity is founded on a

basic acceptance of it as religion and his respect for its ‘worldly’ activities. Inoue’s admiration for Christian “practice,” i.e. its evangelical work and its benefits for nation and people, has to be seen in the light of his differentiation between religious theory (*riron* 理論), i.e. doctrine, and practice (*jissai* 実際). In order to spread its theory and pursue its religious intentions, Inoue states that a religion must adapt to the secular world. It must learn how to achieve secular power and public acceptance to be able to enter the contest between religions (IES 176). To Inoue, the acceptance of a religion as true depends upon the persuasiveness of its doctrine (IES 19 f), but its survival depends entirely on its usefulness to society. In Inoue’s eyes, the majority of people evaluate religion not based on reason but according to its benefits for society (IES 145).

4. *Inoue’s criticism of Christianity*

Inoue’s criticism of Christianity has one aim: he wants to prove that Christian teachings are not appropriate for a modern, enlightened society, whereas Buddhism is the ideal religion for civilized countries. By advocating this position, he tries to counteract an opinion common in the early Meiji era that Christianity must be a modern, civilized religion as it belongs to those nations that seem to represent modern civilization.⁵ In order to correct this view, Inoue makes use of both nationalistic and theoretical arguments.

4.1. *Inoue’s concern for the nation*

Inoue’s nationalistic arguments stem from his concern that Christianity might take the place of Buddhism and become the dominant religion of Japan. He fears the loss of Japan’s peculiar cultural identity as a consequence of gradual westernization. Since Buddhism has been the religion of Japan for more than 1000 years, it has become the foundation of its customs and its polity. In his eyes, only Buddhism can prevent the process of westernization and guarantee the maintenance of the ‘Japanese spirit’ as manifested in its customs, manners and thinking. Just as Japan’s identity is rooted in Buddhism, so also is all of Asian civilization. If Buddhism vanishes, Eastern civilization will lose its specific character and become the victim of westernization. Hence, the reform and propagation of

5 This attitude is reflected in an article by Tsuda Mamichi, a member of the *Meirokeisha* 明六社 (Association of the 6th Year of Meiji). At the beginning of the 1870s, he suggests in the journal *Meiroke zasshi* 明六雜誌 that the general adaptation of Christian ideas would be the best way to promote enlightenment, since no religion reaches Christianity’s level of enlightenment. (TSUDA 1976: 39 f)

Buddhism, combined with the rejection of Christianity, are regarded by Inoue as the most urgent tasks of the day (IES 124 ff). He therefore appeals to all Japanese scholars to participate in reviving and spreading Buddhism not only in Japan, but also in Europe and America. Once European and American scholars recognize the philosophical deficiencies of Christianity and become aware of the superiority of Buddhist theory, Inoue argues, they will also contribute to the dissemination of the Japanese religion in the West. If this goal is achieved, there will be no more reason to fear westernization (IES 130 f).

As noted above, Inoue's rejection of Christianity is closely connected to Buddhist apology. From the Tokugawa era onward, nationalistic arguments against Christianity almost always included emphasis on the importance of Buddhism for both state and the people of Japan. Inoue continued this tradition but added a new aspect. The benefits to the nation offered by Buddhism were usually illustrated by discussions of the role it has played in Japanese history and culture. Inoue, too, relies on this traditional approach, but in addition he claims the "truth" of Buddhist doctrine to be the origin of Buddhism's contribution to national welfare (STAGGS 1983: 253 f; IKEDA 1976: 236 f). In his opinion, Buddhism is destined to be the future religion of modern nations in East and West because "it contains the real truth" (IES 126), as manifested in the philosophical character of its teachings and their accordance with scientific knowledge (IES 167 f, 202 f, 289). In a time when Japan had taken up the cause of modernization, this argument must have been very attractive to patriotic Buddhist intellectuals. It is surely one reason for the popularity of Inoue's writings.

Rejecting Christianity from the perspective of national interest was probably partly a result of the close relationship that existed between government and Japanese Buddhism up to the Meiji era. Opposition to Christianity arising from concern for the nation had always been a characteristic of anti-Christian thinking among Japanese Buddhists. In the 17th and 18th centuries the spread of Christianity was suspected of causing 'national damage' (*kokugairon* 国害論) because it was seen as destroying native religion, culture and politics and preparing the way for the colonization of Japan by Christian countries (KASHIWAHARA 1969: 127 f). At about the time of the beginning of the Meiji era, the fear that Christian mission was a way to prepare Japan for military invasion and colonization was revived.⁶ Inoue's warning that Christianity is the religion of strong

6 For example in Gesshō's 月性 *Buppō gokoku ron* 仏法護国論 (1856), in: YASUMARU and MIYACHI 1988: 215-222.

nations and probably tied to their political power suggests this fear (IES 124).

Another reason to emphasize the close tie between Buddhism and nation was the local persecution of Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) at the beginning of the Meiji era. It was initiated by the new government's policy to separate Shintō and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離),⁷ which was utilized by zealous Shintoists to stir up anti-Buddhist iconoclasm. The new government's favoring of Shintō and its indifference towards Buddhism resulted in a Buddhist self-examination, out of which the call for Buddhist reform was born. At the same time, the idea of an interrelation between the prosperity of Buddhism and the welfare of the state was revived. In this context, Inoue's arguments must be seen as the attempt to "re-establish" Buddhism by defining its indispensable value for nation and state.

4.2. Inoue's theoretical criticism

Inoue's theoretical criticism of Christianity is based on his firm belief in the superiority of Buddhist theory over Christian theology. In order to prove the irrational character of Christian beliefs, he refutes them by means of logic and empirical falsification, and finally compares basic concepts of Buddhism and Christianity. His arguments can be divided into three categories:

- a) Logical contradictions in the Christian idea of God and man.
- b) Factual contradictions between Christian teachings and the natural sciences.
- c) Proofs of the philosophical superiority of Buddhist concepts over Christian doctrines.

An example of the first category is his discussion of the Christian idea of man's conscience and free will. Christians believe, Inoue argues, that God has given conscience and free will to all men in order to make them able to distinguish between good and bad – by means of their consciences – and develop a way of acting in correspondence with that conscience. Their behavior is therefore based on the free choice between good and bad. At the same time, Christians explain whatever happens to them as the result of God's will: if someone becomes rich and famous, it is said that God rewards him or her; if someone falls into poverty, it is explained as a sign of God's

7 The *shinbutsu bunri* (神仏分離 separation of Shintō and Buddhism) edicts issued by the government in 1868 demanded the strict separation of Buddhist and Shinto worship. In many cases they resulted in the destruction, fusion or closing of temples, and many priests were forced to return to laymanship. This persecution led to both an economic and an identity crisis within Buddhism.

punishment. If people have a free will, they are responsible for what they do. How can they shift this responsibility onto God? Inoue calls this contradiction a defamation of an innocent God by guilty people (IES 35 f).

He also tries to refute the Christian conviction that human conscience is given by God and therefore exists from birth. If it is natively given, why do children and “barbarians” act in cruel and unscrupulous ways? In Inoue’s view, conscience develops as a result of education and experience rather than being natively given (IES 27, 38 f).

With respect to the theoretical weakness of the Christian idea of God, Inoue mentions the vagueness of Christian doctrine concerning the relation of God to time and space. He regards time and space as two important elements of the human notion of the universe; that is, the universe is defined by the correlation between time, space and matter. All things exist in dependence upon time and space. In order to exist in a solid or liquid state, matter has to occupy space; the change from liquid to solid state, on the other hand, requires time. The origin of time and space, Inoue complains, is not explained in the Bible. Are they also created by God or did they already exist prior to the creation? If God had not created time and space, he in fact would have created just a part of the world – the material things – and not the whole world (IES 56 f). Furthermore, this would mean he came into existence after time and space and would therefore exist within their sphere as men do (IES 95).

Is it possible that God has created time and space and exists independent of them? As people’s thinking is bound inseparably to the categories of time and space, Inoue argues, they couldn’t think of or imagine him if this were the case, and they wouldn’t be able to know about God at all (IES 58, 95). To Inoue, there is no satisfying Christian answer to the question of how God is related to time and space.

Another example of Inoue’s criticism of Christianity’s logical contradictions is his refutation of the Christian view that God exists outside the human mind. In his opinion, people perceived the world and concluded that it must have a cause, and so created a God they believed to be the origin of the world. This human perception of the environment has in turn led to the development of the Christian concept of God. Thus, the idea of a God who is the creator of the world is a product of mind. Such a God could have neither come into existence nor persisted without it (IES 96).

From a Christian theological point of view much might be said to dispute Inoue’s arguments. But in the context of this paper, which does not aim at a theological reflection on Inoue’s thinking, it is sufficient to note that these

examples reflect a superficial knowledge of Christian theology and terminology.

How does Inoue demonstrate the contradiction between Christian teachings and the findings of natural science? His favorite example is the creation story in Genesis. His arguments include the following:

According to astronomy, the earth circles around the sun and is not the center of the universe. The Bible, on the other hand, claims that God created the earth first, and then placed sun, moon and stars around it, making the planet earth their central point. The Christian concept of the form of the universe is at odds with astronomic knowledge and therefore must be wrong. In addition, the creation story in the Bible claims that God created the world in six days. In contrast, geological research has proven that the development of the earth and its inhabitants took many millennia. Finally, due to the progress of biological research, it is well known that man evolved from animal, and that they share ancestors. According to Genesis, God created animals and plants first, and later made man out of clay. Why is man made of a different material than animals? It is also said that God gave man a soul by breathing into him. Why didn't he give animals souls although it is known today that they have them? Again the words of the Bible contradict reality (IES 22 ff).

As far as this argumentation is concerned, Inoue is representative of the anti-Christian attitude of his time. The creation story was often portrayed as an example of the illogical and unrealistic character of Christian teachings or of the self-contradiction and irrationality of God's actions.⁸ Inoue's approach gives us an idea of the unsophisticated, literal understanding of biblical writings held by Buddhist intellectuals of that time. Owing to this lack of understanding, Inoue does not differentiate between metaphorical and conceptual language and consequently doesn't grasp the meaning of the creation story. Apparently he, as well as his fellow-Buddhists, were victims of the simplicity of Protestant missionary instruction in the first half of the Meiji era; emphasis was laid on the biblical teachings and ethics, whereas dogmatic theology was neglected (SCHEINER 1970: 44).

The core of Inoue's theoretical criticism is his comparison of Christian and Buddhist teachings. This comparison deals mainly with their respective teachings about the origin of the world and its permanent changes. First, Inoue contrasts the Christian conviction of the creation of the world by God and his rule over it with the working of physical laws or other laws of nature

8 For example in Fujishima Ryōon's 藤島了穩 *Yasokyō no mudōri* ヤソ教の無道理 (1881). As I could not get hold of the original I had to refer to its description in SAKURAI 1971: 130-135 and MORIOKA 1976: 108-109.

that are claimed to be in accordance with Buddhist concepts (IES 272-288). The comparison culminates in five arguments Inoue puts forward in order to prove that "Christianity is a part of Buddhism" (*yasokyō wa bukkyō no ichibubun naru yuen* ヤソ教は仏教の一部分なるゆえん), i.e. that Christian doctrines are in fact rooted in Buddhist ideas (IES 288-296). These five arguments are as follows:

1) "Buddhism is an intellectual and emotional religion, whereas Christianity is simply emotional" (IES 295).

In his logical refutation of Christian ideas, Inoue amply documents why he regards Christianity as a non-intellectual religion. In addition, he understands its emergence as being the result of human emotion. As with most other religions in ancient times, Christianity emerged as a result of speculation. People's sensual perception of their environment and themselves created certain emotions, including fear, joy, hate, love etc. These emotions caused speculations which led to the creation of religions. The fear of natural powers or of the unpredictability of fate, for instance, made people speculate about the cause of thunder or storms, or about their individual fate. Consequently, they developed the idea of gods and demons. Similarly, speculation about the continuity of life before birth and after death gave rise to the concepts of heaven and hell. In Inoue's opinion religions that arose in this way are based on emotion (IES 201 f). Thus, Inoue's characterization of Christianity as emotional refers to two different aspects: to its causation by emotion and to the emotion-oriented character of its teachings.

Inoue believed that Buddhism is superior to Christianity because it includes both intellectual and emotional aspects. One classification of Buddhist thinking differentiates between the teachings of the "Holy Way" (*shōdōmon* 聖道門) and those of the "Pure Land" (*jōdomon* 淨土門). Schools belonging to *shōdōmon* believe that awakening must be attained by "one's own power" (*jiriki* 自力), whereas the *jōdomon*-schools believe that salvation in form of birth in the 'Pure Land' is achieved by effect of "other-power" (*tariki* 他力), namely that of Amida Buddha (skt: *Amitābha*). To Inoue, the teachings of the "Holy Way" such as of the Buddhist Kegon, Tendai or Kusha schools, are pure philosophy and therefore rational (IES 250 f). They are in perfect accordance to logic and the laws of natural sciences (IES 289). The teachings of the "Pure Land" like those of Jōdoshū and Jōdo Shinshū, on the other hand, he characterizes as religious and emotional. The apparent differences in the ways to attain liberation are explained by Inoue as being "skillful means" (*hōben* 方便; skt: *upāya-kauśalya*), i.e. adaptations to the believers' mental or physical abilities.

Thus, the manifold Buddhist teachings are in fact closely related to each other; they are merely different expressions of the single Buddhist truth and together they make up the whole of Buddhism. Due to this inclusion of emotional and rational teaching, Buddhism is therefore accessible to both ordinary and educated people (IES 250 f).

2) “The law of cause and effect (*inga* 因果) is a basic concept of Buddhism. Christianity, on the other hand, centers around a God who is derived from this concept” (IES 295).

According to the Buddhist law of cause and effect, everything exists in dependence. There is no unconditioned existence. Therefore, anything in existence embodies cause and effect at the same time, depending on the perspective taken. As every cause must have a cause itself and every effect has an effect, this law exists endlessly, without beginning and without end. It is the fundamental law governing the universe. Inoue claims that the Christian God emerged as a consequence of people’s recognition of the world and themselves. They concluded that there must be a cause of the world’s existence as well as their own, leading them to develop the idea of a God who created their world. In concluding that existence must have a cause, they applied the law of cause and effect. Consequently, the Christian concept of God was in fact a result of this concept of *inga*, which is a Buddhist teaching (IES 98).

In Inoue’s eyes, the Christian God owes not only his existence to this law, but all his acts in the world are determined by it, because it is undeniable that all phenomena and their changes follow the rule of causality. Thus, even if God governs the world, his rule must depend on this law (IES 97 f). Inoue tries to illustrate the fundamental character of this Buddhist concept by asking if the law of cause and effect would still exist and be effective if God did not exist, and concludes that it of course would. Even if there existed no concept of a Christian God, the world would be governed by the same principle of causality. On the other hand, could God exist and be effective if the law of cause and effect vanished? He couldn’t, because his existence originates in this law and his control of the world must rely on it (IES 107).

3) “The nature of mind and thinking (*shinshō shisō* 心性思想) are main pillars of Buddhism. The Christian God evolved as a result of the nature of mind and thinking” (IES 295 f).

The mind, i.e. its nature and effects, is manifested in the Buddhist “mind-only theory” (*yuishin-setsu* 唯心説; skt: *citta-mātratā*), as expounded in the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*. This theory belongs to the central teachings of the Indian *Yogācāra* school. It was adopted by the Chinese Fa-hsiang school of

Hsüan-tsang, whose teachings were the foundation of the Japanese Hossō school. According to the mind-only theory, all perceivable phenomena are nothing but products of our mind. They have no independent existence apart from human mind. What we perceive as reality is the consequence of a permanent process of mental imagination.⁹

Inoue regards this theory as the foundation of the emergence and existence of belief in God. As noted above, Inoue argues that God came into existence as a result of people's recognition of the world around them and their efforts to explain its origin. But where does this ability to think logically about the world and its origin come from? Inoue believes that the ability to think logically existed prior to God and is the reason for his existence. In other words, because thinking occurs in the mind, God is only a product of the mind (IES 102-106, 288).

To Inoue, the superior and inclusive character of the Buddhist mind-only theory becomes obvious when contrasted with the Christian claim that God exists beyond the realm of the mind and independent of it. What are the Christian claims based on? The existence of God can only be known by means of thinking, logic or sensual perception. But these are effects of the mind, whose functioning is explained by the Buddhist mind-only theory (IES 288). Any debate about the existence or non-existence of God must ultimately occur in the human mind. Hence, the existence of God is rooted in the Buddhist mind-only theory.

4) "According to the Buddhist view, the origin of all phenomena and their changes is the timeless, unfading "thusness" (*shinnyo* 真如). Christians, on the other hand, regard a god as the origin of all phenomena who is in fact part of this Buddhist thusness" (IES 296).

Here, Inoue applies the Tendai idea that the perceivable world emerges out of thusness (*shinnyo*) through self-development. Thusness is described by Inoue as the single essence (*tai* 体) of all phenomena, the absolute nature behind their appearance. It doesn't have a beginning or an end. It brings

9 According to this theory the phenomenal world develops by means of the so-called 'storehouse-consciousness' (*arayashiki* 阿賴耶識; skt: *ālaya-vijñāna*). The storehouse-consciousness is one of the eight consciousnesses of man: The 1st through the 6th are the six kinds of sensual perception, namely sight (*genshiki* 眼識, skt: *caḥsur-vijñāna*), hearing (*nishiki* 耳識, skt: *śrotra-vijñāna*), smell (*bishiki* 鼻識, skt: *ghrāṇa-vijñāna*), taste (*zesshiki* 舌識, skt: *jihvā-vijñāna*), touch (*shinshiki* 身識, skt: *kāya-vijñāna*) and mental awareness (*ishiki* 意識; skt: *mano-vijñāna*). The 7th is the self-consciousness which is responsible for the false view that there exists individuality and self (*manashiki* 末那識; skt: *manas*). The 8th is the storehouse-consciousness (*arayashiki*; skt: *ālaya-vijñāna*). It 'stores' the seeds (i.e. the essence) of all mental and physical impressions and experiences transmitted by the other seven consciousnesses. When its seeds are matured, they produce individual objects of perception.

forth phenomenal appearances (*sō* 相) by way of an inherent power (*riki* 力). As thusness and the relative world of phenomena are of the same essence they are identical and inseparable. Inoue tries to illustrate this relation by discussing the nature of identity (thusness) and difference (phenomenal appearances): Identity differs from difference by being non-difference. If identity differs, it can't be called identity any more but must be called difference. If identity and difference are both difference, they do not differ any more, hence they are identity. Identity is difference and difference is identity. The same applies for thusness and the world of difference. Whether we perceive the manifold phenomenal world or realize the single thusness behind everything depends on our perspective (IES 91 f).

According to Inoue, Christianity claims that God is the origin of heaven and earth. This claim is based on the logic that every existence must have a cause. If this logic is applied consequently, the Christian God must have a cause himself, namely another god, who in turn originates in another god and so forth. There must be a timeless principle which is the origin of heaven and earth without having an origin itself. This principle is the Buddhist thusness. If this principle is not fully grasped, it can appear in the form of a creator god in people's thinking. Thus, the Christian God is a transformation of an impersonal Buddhist principle into a personal god (IES 289 f).

5) "Buddhism teaches the existence of a universal principle (*fuhen no ritai* 普遍の理体). Christianity teaches an individual God (*kotai no tentei* 固体の天帝)" (IES 296).

This argument grows out of Inoue's fourth statement above. Here, he specifies the differences between the Buddhist principle of thusness and the Christian creator and illustrates the reason why Christians misunderstood the Buddhist principle as a personal god. Inoue criticizes the Christian idea of the *creatio ex nihilo* by contrasting it with the Buddhist concept of self-development out of thusness: the Christian God creates like a carpenter but Buddhist thusness evolves gradually out of itself. Whereas the Christian God exists outside and independent of all things, Buddhist thusness is everything and everything is thusness. To Inoue, these two concepts reflect different stages of mental evolution. The realization of a general impersonal principle in his opinion characterizes a higher level of thought than the notion of a personal god (IES 290 f).

He illustrates the gap between Christian and Buddhist belief by means of an allegory: the Christian concept of God is like the conviction that a house is built solely by means of will and work of a carpenter. In fact it is not the carpenter, but the effect of the laws of nature that enables the construction. The carpenter is completely dependent upon the force of gravity, the

character of his material, the natural functioning of his body etc. The same applies to God and the Buddhist concept of thusness: on first glance, it might seem as if the phenomenal world has been created by God, but his creation depends on the laws of nature which are evolving out of the timeless principle of thusness (IES 291).

The topic of Inoue's comparison is the question of the origin of the world and the power that determines its development. The Christian view of God as creator of the world is contrasted with the Buddhist view that the phenomenal world arises either from the effect of mind (*raya-engi* 賴耶緣起) or the effect of thusness (*shinnyo-engi* 真如緣起). With respect to the cause of all changes, he takes up the theory of God's rule over the world and compares it to the Buddhist law of cause and effect (*inga*).

In order to prove the superiority of Buddhism, Inoue applies an inclusive argument. He explains why the Christian idea of the creation and rule of the world by God is either rooted in Buddhist theory or is a kind of misinterpretation of the basic Buddhist principle of thusness (*shinnyo*), based on a lack of understanding. If these fundamental Christian teachings about God depend in every respect on Buddhist theory, Inoue argues that Christianity must be a part of Buddhism.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, Inoue's theoretical criticism is based on the assumption that religious teachings must be reasonable. In his opinion, faith should be the result of persuasion by reason, not emotion as is the case with Christianity. Yet he admits that Buddhism also includes teachings appealing to emotions in its "Pure Land" traditions. He even recognizes a similarity between Christian and Pure Land thinking: both expect salvation in form of birth in paradise by means of faith (IES 249, 267). Considering Inoue's recognition of this similarity, it would have been more appropriate for him to compare Christian beliefs to similar concepts in Pure Land Buddhism.

Also, his understanding of Christianity refers mainly to only one of its historical forms: the Protestant Christianity as taught by contemporary missionaries in Japan. In this respect, allowance must be made for the time he lived in. He could scarcely have attained deep knowledge of for instance the results of the attempts of medieval scholars to grasp and explain the contents of Christian truth by reason. The conviction of Christian thinkers such as Johannes Scottus Eriugena (ca. 810-ca. 877), Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) or Peter Abelard (1079-1142) that religious belief must be reasonable reflects a way of thinking that is not as contradictory to his own demand for a rational religion as the Christian teachings he chose to

criticize. His arguments in favor of Buddhism, on the other hand, make use of the whole history of Japanese Buddhism without restriction to one form of appearance: he selectively applies different theories of Buddhist philosophy that were developed centuries ago. A comparison that makes use of the wide field of Buddhist philosophy while ignoring the long history of Christian thought is rather out of balance. As Inoue had to rely upon the predominant form of contemporary Christianity in Japan, it would have been more appropriate to compare it to the analogous Buddhist schools of his time, namely the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.

Another criticism of Inoue's comparison of the two religions is offered by Ienaga Saburō. He particularly notes Inoue's ignorance of the mythical character of the creation story. Why does Inoue explain the detailed description of the paradise of Pure Land in the respective sutra as a mere metaphor, necessary to make Buddhist truth accessible to ordinary people, but does not apply this interpretation to the Christian creation story (IENAGA 1955: 155 f)? Here Ienaga touches one of the fundamental deficiencies in Inoue's criticism of Christianity: the failure to differentiate between metaphorical and conceptual language. As the creation story is a main object of Inoue's critique and he fails to realize its metaphorical character, it is not unfair to judge his criticism as missing the meaning of Christian teachings.

However, more interesting than speculation about an appropriate level of comparison is the question of Inoue's motives. He did not simply want to contrast the rational persuasiveness of Buddhist and Christian explanations of the world. He wanted to show the relationship between Buddhist and Christian views in order to demonstrate the inclusion of Christian ideas within Buddhist ones and by doing so give a definite answer to the question of the superiority and inferiority of the two religions. In defining the position of Christian doctrines in comparison and relation to the superior Buddhist standpoint, Inoue seems to apply the method of *kyōsō hanjaku* (教祖判釈; judgment based upon interpretation of doctrines) to the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity. *Kyōsō hanjaku* is a method used in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism to classify different Buddhist texts, doctrines or teaching methods from a certain doctrinal point of view by developing a classification system in which the various elements are put into a hierarchical or chronological order. It culminates in that school which brought about this classification in its main texts or its teaching method which are believed to be superior to the rest of Buddhism. By judging Christian beliefs as mere parts of the whole truth which is contained in Buddhist doctrines, they are integrated on an inferior level into a Buddhist system of religious beliefs.

The other apparent influence on Inoue's religious thinking is the theory of evolution. In defining the value of Christian and Buddhist doctrines, he assumes an evolutionary development of religious thinking which reflects the intellectual capacities of men at different times and in different places. In Inoue's opinion, the intellectual development of mankind is accompanied by a religious development. The Christian idea of a personal god ranks at a very low level of intellectuality at which people are tied to thinking in forms, whereas the recognition of a timeless principle reflects a higher level which includes the ability of realizing the formless. This double influence of both traditional Buddhist thought and contemporary scientific thinking on Inoue's view of religions illustrates the above-mentioned characteristic of the intellectual history of Meiji Japan: its integration or rejection of Western thoughts.

Inoue's reinterpretation of Christianity from a Buddhist point of view calls into mind the view of Buddhism (and other religions) held by the initiators of the 1893 "World's Parliament of Religions" in Chicago. John Henry Barrows, chairman of the Parliament, expected Christianity to supplant all other religions because it contains the truth of all other religions. To him, non-Christian religious beliefs are mere different and inferior manifestations of God's acting in the world. Consequently, the world-wide establishment of the 'real' Christian truth was one of his motives for organizing the Parliament:

But Religion, like the white light of Heaven, has been broken into many-colored fragments by the prisms of men. One of the objects of the Parliament of Religions has been to change this many-colored radiance back into the white light of heavenly truth. (BARROWS 1893: 3)

It is interesting that the Christian as well as the Buddhist views at that time were both based on the presumption of an evolution of religious thinking: the same idea was utilized by the two sides with contradictory results.

Inoue's refutation of Christianity is based on Buddhist doctrines as well as the natural sciences. Therefore, the critiques of Ienaga, which state that Inoue argues not from a Buddhist but a Western perspective because his criteria of evaluating the two religions are taken from Western thinking, i.e. Western sciences (IENAGA 1955: 158), are only partly legitimate. It cannot be denied that Inoue relies heavily upon Western philosophy and the natural sciences. But the arguments he puts forward to prove that Christianity is "a part of Buddhism," i.e. a former state in the development toward a Buddhist understanding of the world, rely on basic Buddhist concepts such as the mind-only theory or the idea of the arising of the world through self-

development out of thusness. As this conviction is the essence of his view of Christianity, it is justifiable to look at Inoue's thinking as criticism from a Buddhist perspective.

Inoue's intention to promote Buddhism as the future religion of Japan and the West by showing its modernity in contrast to Christianity indicates a change in the self-confidence of Japanese intellectuals vis-a-vis the West. Tsuda Mamichi's proposal to promote Christian ideas on a large scale in order to improve enlightenment¹⁰ reflects a willingness to understand modern civilization in Western terms. Inoue's claim that Buddhism is the appropriate religion for modern nations, on the other hand, hints at a tendency to abandon this Western orientation and develop a Japanese concept of modern civilization, at least as far as religion is concerned.

In his zeal to prove the modern character of Buddhism and the inappropriateness of Christianity for Japan, Inoue disregards one important factor. His main criterion for evaluating religions seems to be rationality. But the value of a religion and its belief for its adherents, which is one source of its strength, cannot be measured by the rationality of a religious teaching only. It also depends on the degree to which religious faith meets the needs of people, which are not necessarily intellectual. From this point of view, Inoue's assumption that the advancement of civilization and scientific knowledge will bring forth the demand for a rational faith is questionable. The aspect of emotion will never be excluded from religious faith.

What effect did the encounter with Christianity have for Buddhist thinking? Inoue's writing seems to indicate that the confrontation with the foreign religion led to a recollection of the long tradition of Buddhist thought. In order to prove the appropriateness of Buddhism as a modern religion in contrast to Christianity, Inoue did not refer to the teachings of his own school, Jōdo Shinshū, but made use of Buddhist ideas developed in India and represented by some of the early schools of Japanese Buddhism. Thus, he seems to have rejected the dominance of sectarian affiliation in favor of being part of a larger unity called Buddhism. In this respect, his thinking corresponds with a general trend in the intellectual Buddhist world of his time toward giving up sectarian limitations and developing a global understanding of Buddhism.¹¹ This development went hand-in-hand with the rise of Buddhist Studies and the science of religions as expressed in new historical and philological research on Buddhism and its primary sources. It also might be rooted in the persecution of Buddhism at the beginning of the

¹⁰ See footnote 5.

¹¹ Reasons and characteristics of this process are discussed by KETELAAR 1990: 174-212.

Meiji era (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) as well as in the confrontation with Christianity. The consequent feeling of crisis which was prevalent among Buddhists at that time surely helped to strengthen solidarity and the awareness of the unity of Japanese Buddhism.

The Buddhist-Christian encounter also influenced Inoue's view of modern Buddhism. The example of Christianity was one motivation for his call for more social action by Japanese Buddhism. Many Buddhist intellectuals in the 1880s shared his opinion and regarded Christianity as a model in the fields of education, charity and propagation (THELLE 1987: 196-199). As a matter of fact, Japanese Buddhism did increase its social and secular activities beginning in the Meiji era by founding Buddhist kindergartens, schools and universities, starting missionary work, and supporting scientific research on Buddhism.

Inoue's thinking reveals the ambivalence of a mid-Meiji Buddhist towards Christianity. His view of Christianity reflects not only a religious interest but also an attempt to be a modern intellectual whose reasoning must be objective and rational. It is because of these two concerns that Inoue attempts to refute Christian doctrines while at the same time accepting the grounds Christianity has in common with Buddhism and even acknowledges its strength in certain regards. Ultimately, this attitude may have helped to pave the way to non-polemical communication and tolerance between the two religions.

Abbreviations

IES *Inoue Enryō senshū*. Ed. Tōyō Daigaku sōritsu hyaku shūnen kinen ronbunshū hensan iinkai.

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