

FOR LIVING BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

DHARMA WORLD

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Religionists United
in Prayers for Peace



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Cover photo: As part of the united endeavors by many Japanese religionists to avoid war in Iraq, WCRP/Japan held an emergency prayer gathering at Enryakuji on February 20. Rissho Koseikai President Nichiko Niwano read an appeal calling on the U.S. and Iraqi presidents to make the greatest possible efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully. After the military strikes began on March 20, the religionists' prayers continued. Related stories on pp. 21–22.

DHARMA WORLD presents Buddhism as a practical living religion and promotes inter-religious dialogue for world peace. It espouses views that emphasize the dignity of life, seeks to rediscover our inner nature and bring our lives more in accord with it, and investigates causes of human suffering. It tries to show how religious principles help solve problems in daily life and how the least application of such principles has wholesome effects on the world around us. It seeks to demonstrate truths that are fundamental to all religions, truths on which all people can act.

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Note: Because of their scholarly nature, some essays use diacritical marks or alternative spellings for foreign names and terms; other essays do not, for easier reading.

What Does This Century Hold?

What kind of century should we make of this new, twenty-first century? While I was pondering this question, it was announced by the headquarters of the Raelian movement in Switzerland that a cloned human baby had been born. The reporters asked the executive of the headquarters if the necessary DNA tests had been done, but he answered, "No comment."

In answer to the question, "What proof is there that the baby was cloned?" he declined to answer, saying only that they would "provide an explanation at a later time." I suspect that this announcement was probably no more than a self-advertising public relations ploy by the Raelian movement.

Up until now, there have been clones of sheep and cows, but the news that this technology has been extended to human beings has no doubt thrown many people into consternation. The majority opinion about the issue of cloning human beings is most likely that, from the standpoint of human dignity and ethics, strict legal controls should be enforced.

Regardless of whether we regard them as true or not, announcements of cloned human infants have surfaced in Switzerland and Italy, and I think that this phenomenon itself needs to be treated as a serious problem. I think this because cloning technology can be relatively easily applied even at sterility treatment facilities, and if things continue in their present direction, we cannot exclude the possibility that we will be hearing announcements of the birth of cloned humans in various locations.

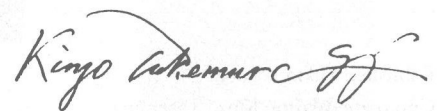
Another reason for anxiety about this is because in the course of animal experimentation, there have been many cases of stillbirth among infant animals born as a result of cloning technology. Some reports relate that there have even been cases in which the animals were born with some kind of deformity or suffering from some immune deficiency. Thus, from the standpoint of safety as well, all kinds of obstacles and insecurities arise. But even if these kinds of problems did not exist, we could not simply condone

everything that science can accomplish, even if it is safe in itself.

To turn to a slightly different topic, it is said that remarkable new discoveries and technological innovations are being made recently in the field of biotechnology. Japan has also recently declared itself a "bio-industrial nation," and has adopted a plan to develop new economic power by promoting industries in cutting-edge technological fields. This is an important development that we should welcome, in these times when automobile manufacturers and a great many other Japanese industries are moving their plants to China or other countries with lower labor costs, resulting in the progressive hollowing-out of Japan's domestic industry.

However, when we add in the factor that a lot of people find it difficult to decide on their own system of values, this may lead to an even more tense and stressful society. It is a fact that an increasing number of people are attempting to choose the lifestyle they feel is most fitting for themselves, without being swayed by the changes around them.

In addressing the original theme of this essay, "What kind of century should we make of the twenty-first century?" the news of human cloning jumped into the discussion. The cloning of a human being means that an individual with the same genes will be born, resulting in an exact replica of someone who already exists—that is, a copied human. It gives us an uneasy feeling to think of human clones being popped, as it were, out of a mold. In this context, I think that the twenty-first century should be one hundred years of asking ourselves, "What is true wealth?" What do you think? □



Kinzo Takemura

We would like to share readers' thoughts and experiences of faith and also welcome your comments on the contents of this magazine. We would also appreciate your reports on recent events of interreligious collaboration in which you took part. All letters are subject to editing. Letters can be forwarded to us by regular mail, fax, or e-mail. Our mailing address, fax number, and e-mail address are:

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The Difficulty of Real Compassion

by Nikkyo Niwano

This essay is part of a continuing series of translations from a volume of inspirational writings by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai. DHARMA WORLD will continue to publish these essays because of their lasting value as guidance for the practice of one's faith in daily life.

To “bestow the Buddha’s wisdom” on others in a *hoza* counseling session is, simply, to link them with the Buddha-dharma. Another way of putting this is to say that it is connecting a person who is deluded to the Buddha. Above all, it means helping others to establish a karmic connection with the Buddha and his teachings. Thus it is very important that we are able to give the impression of being approachable and trustworthy to others in the *hoza*, so that they will feel they can open up in our presence.

For example, when speaking to a person who tends to be short-tempered, rather than flatly taking him or her to task, we need to be aware, saying something like, “It may be that you find it difficult to excuse even small mistakes in others because you are such a perfectionist yourself.” Also, it is easy to tell a woman whose husband is cheating on her that it is her fault for being so cold to him. In this situation, however, it is far better to say, “You are kind-hearted, but maybe you give the impression of being too severe,” or “You obviously feel deeply for your husband, but you seem to find it difficult to express that feeling.” It is very important, in other words, to show that you are broad-minded, gentle, and understanding.

In short, *hoza* leaders must exhibit a tolerance that derives from compassion. They should not deal with people’s problems severely, only according to the law of cause

and effect, but should speak of the Buddha-dharma, tempering their words with sympathy and compassion.

Setbacks and Gains

As long as we are alive, we have to take in nutrition to preserve our physical bodies, but we should be even more concerned about the nutrition of the spirit. What is “spiritual nourishment”? The source of such nourishment is the joy of knowing that you are useful to others in some way, the amazement that even you are capable of doing much good, and being deeply moved by the realization of how wonderful others are when you hear about or see their ways of life. It is of supreme importance that we are able to cultivate these sources of spiritual nutrition within ourselves, and then pass on to others our purpose in life and our deep feelings.

I hope that all of you will open that bottle of vitamins that is in your hearts and distribute to as many people as possible that vitamin called “love.” Such a feeling is an indispensable source of nutrition for faith.

Noriko Omura is a renowned piano teacher. She says that the most important thing in teaching pupils is the vitamin called love. First of all, she seeks out her pupil’s strongest points, and begins by saying, “You certainly have talent here!” These words open the pupil’s heart to the teacher. It is best to wait until after the pupil has developed trust and confidence in the teacher before pointing out problem areas. She starts pupils off on an easy piece, and then has them try one a little more difficult. Finally she has them play the piece that they are best at, so they go home happy and with a feeling of confidence.

We probably cannot compare the practice of the piano

Nikkyo Niwano, the late founder of the Buddhist association Rissho Kosei-kai, was an honorary president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and was honorary chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan) at the time of his death in October 1999.

with the practice of our faith, but what is similar is that we cannot open the minds of others unless we first give them a feeling of joy upon learning about Buddhism, and we cannot do this by being strict and pointing out mistakes all the time. Unless they open their minds to us, our thoughts will not touch their hearts, however many words we use. Our task is to open the door to Buddha's wisdom, to reveal it, to let all people know it, and to let them enter into it. In order to awaken others to the buddha-nature sleeping within them, compassionate action is of the utmost importance.

When we get sick, suffer a fall, or have something bad happen to us, we say, "We have been given a lesson by the Buddha." As a result, we perhaps tend to feel that the words "a lesson by the Buddha" are gloomy and unlucky. Some people might even mistakenly associate them with some kind of divine punishment.

Every day we get up, wash our faces, perform our devotions, greet our family members, sit down to breakfast, and then leave the house for work or school. Because this same pattern recurs day after day, it becomes second nature to us, and so of little importance. However, it is this very uneventful repetition that means that we are being sustained by very precious divine protection.

It goes without saying that there is no one who would not want small rather than great difficulties, and preferably, no difficulties at all. But when our ordinary lives pass day by day without difficulty, we hardly register it. We only appreciate that very uneventfulness when some setback occurs. Though setbacks teach us to realize how thankful we are for the ordinary, most people hold them in aversion. Unfortunately, it seems that people do not want to acknowledge their faults: they stumble because of a stone, or a slope, or a shoe, never because of their own failings. Thus it is difficult for us to gain some meaning through a setback we suffered in order to make the best use of it. The Buddha's lesson brings us spiritual awakening—what we can gain by turning our setbacks into something to be grateful for. It is a great error to think that it is a punishment.

A Bodhisattva's Four Types of Action

I do not think there has ever been a time in Japan like the present for extolling freedom and equality. We can perhaps even say that there is no country in the world as fortunate as present-day Japan. We must not forget, however, that true freedom is freedom from internal defilements, and equality is, in a Christian sense, "equality before God." Equality without God can easily lead to a breakdown of order. Western societies seem now to be greatly unsettled as a result of "godless humanism," and we could say the same about Japan in terms of "fearless humanism" or, in a Buddhist sense, a "humanism that does not recognize the veneration of the buddha-nature."

Equality is interpreted by Buddhism as "the equality of

all living beings who equally possess the buddha-nature." Unfortunately, in today's society, people have lost sight of their buddha-nature. At such a time, we have all the more need to awaken, through practicing veneration of the Bodhisattva Never Despise (described in chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra), to the realization that all people are endowed with the buddha-nature.

The most important thing when we practice veneration of the Bodhisattva Never Despise is first of all to believe implicitly in the buddha-nature of others. Unless we do, there can be no response. The bodhisattva action of leading people to Buddhism begins with making spiritual contact with them.

The bodhisattva has to acknowledge four types of action in drawing people to the Buddhist Way. At first a bodhisattva must have the spirit of charity—this is the donation of teaching the gift of the Dharma, or giving people something else they would like. The second type of action is using kind words—speaking to others in a gentle and sympathetic way. The third is conduct benefiting others through our own everyday actions—which inspires the broad-mindedness to have faith in others. The fourth is taking the position of others in order to help save them—for example, helping a neighbor who is confronting some unusual difficulty or being a support to a bereaved family at a funeral. It is only through such true meetings of minds, and through sharing the troubles of others, that we can perform real veneration.

Repaying Kindness

It is easy to talk about practicing compassionate conduct for the sake of others, but very difficult to do. Therefore it is necessary first of all to realize for ourselves what it means to be given life. Without such a realization, feelings of gratitude cannot arise, and without gratitude we cannot act for the benefit of others.

When we speak of compassion, we mean not only our compassion toward others, but also the need to realize the great compassion that the Buddha has toward us. Perhaps, when the most important thing is lacking in regard to our faith, we do not sufficiently feel that others come first. If we reflect on this, from the standpoint of having been given life, then we will come to understand clearly how we should live and how we should act toward others.

A faith based on how we should live our lives begins with gratitude and repentance. The Pali language calls those who truly know how to be grateful *katannu*. This literally means "those who know what has been done for them." Similarly, the word for "gratitude" (*on*) in Japanese is written with elements that mean "a mind that seeks to know the causes."

When we ask why we are here, when our mind seeks to know the causes, then for the first time we are able to feel and practice gratitude, and then to undertake the repayment of kindness to others. □

Shariputra

by Gene Reeves

Although we often encounter the name of the monk called Shariputra, we do not know much about him. Sometimes portrayed as a dunce, it is to him that Shakyamuni expounded the second and third chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Just who was Shariputra, and what can we learn from his story?

At the very beginning of the Lotus Sutra's third chapter, called "A Parable" because it tells the parable of the vehicles (see the November/December 2002 issue of DHARMA WORLD), Shariputra, the leading shravaka—not normally regarded as a bodhisattva—tells the Buddha that he is full of ecstasy because he realizes the truth of the Dharma: namely, that he too is destined to become a buddha, and in that sense is, in fact, already a bodhisattva, one who is practicing the bodhisattva way.

Who is this Shariputra? What story does the Lotus Sutra tell about him, and what can we learn from it?

One of the ten great disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, Shariputra was usually regarded as first in wisdom, sometimes regarded as first among the disciples, and sometimes even mistaken by Jains as the leader of the Buddhist movement. Shariputra was a brahman, a member of the highest caste in India, who left a wealthy family to follow one of the six great non-Buddhist teachers. He taught skepticism about knowledge of things we cannot see—such things as other worlds, causation, and so forth.

It is said that Shariputra and Maudgalyayana (called "Maha-Maudgalyayana" in his only appearance in the Lotus Sutra) were close friends before they became monks. One day when they were in a crowd of people watching dancing girls and enjoying a festival, Shariputra suddenly realized that all of those people now having so much fun, and he himself, would soon be dead. He resolved to seek liberation from a condition in which the conclusion to everything is death. After listening to several other teachers, he decided, with Maudgalyayana, to become a disciple of the skeptic, Sanjaya. Later, after meeting a monk who told him only that the Buddha's main teaching was that all things are produced through causation, together with Maudgalyayana and all of the other disciples of Sanjaya, he joined the Buddha's following. This was about a year after Shakyamuni's awakening.

Legend also has it that when he was about to die Shariputra requested permission from the Buddha to die before the Buddha himself, as he would not be able to stand the

grief of witnessing the Buddha's death. With the Buddha's permission he returned to his home with one disciple. Saying "I have been with all of you for forty years. If I have offended anyone, please forgive me," he lay down on his bed, and quietly passed away.

In the Vimalakirti Sutra, Shariputra is something of a dunce who shows up late to hear a conversation between Manjushri and Vimalakirti, an exceedingly wise Buddhist layman whom Manjushri has gone to visit because he is at home sick. When he enters, Shariputra can't find a seat and asks himself where he should sit. Vimalakirti, reading his thoughts, embarrasses him by asking whether he has come to hear the Dharma or to find a seat.

In other Mahayana sutras as well, Shariputra is often treated as stupid or foolish. To some extent this is true

Photo: IBC

Gene Reeves, former dean of the Meadville/Lombard Theological School, University of Chicago, recently retired from teaching at the University of Tsukuba, where he taught Buddhism and American studies. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy of religion from Emory University. He is currently doing research, teaching, and writing on the Lotus Sutra at Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo.

also in chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra. There a young girl, a dragon princess, makes him look foolish by suddenly becoming a buddha after Shariputra expresses the very conservative view of women that a woman's body is too filthy to receive the Dharma, much less to embody a buddha.

Shariputra's name occurs often in the Lotus Sutra. Though he does not play much of a role in it, in the first paragraph of the first chapter of the sutra, Shariputra is one of those introduced as one of twelve thousand great monks—"arhats without attachments, free from earthly desires, self-developed, emancipated from all bonds of existence, and able to think for themselves."

In the second and third chapters, however, it is Shariputra to whom the Buddha explains the practice of skillful means. In these chapters, Shariputra appears as the spokesman for the whole assembly, pleading with the Buddha to explain himself, and especially to preach the Lotus Sutra for the sake of those who have gathered. Here he does seem to be "first among the disciples."

In the rest of the sutra, Shariputra's name is included in lists three or four times, sometimes as the head of the shravakas, including such an appearance at the very end of the whole sutra, but he doesn't speak or play any special role after chapter 3.

The Chapter 3 Story

Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra is called "Skillful Means," as it sets out one of the two or three most important teachings of the Lotus Sutra—that of the One Vehicle of many skillful means. This, in brief, is the idea that Shakyamuni Buddha and all other buddhas have used a enormously wide variety of teachings, stories, practices, and so forth according to what was needed to fulfill the one purpose of liberating all beings, leading them to a supreme awakening that is equivalent to being a buddha. There are many means within the one purpose, the one truth, which itself can be described or pointed to in many ways.

The chapter ends with these memorable words:

There will also be those who are
Modest and pure in heart,
Devoted to seeking the Buddha Way.

For all of these
The One Vehicle way should be praised everywhere.

It should be understood, Shariputra,
That the Dharma of the buddhas is like this.
With hundreds of millions of skillful means,
In accord with what is good,
They teach the Dharma.

Those who have not practiced and studied it
Cannot fully understand this.
But all of you,

Knowing that the buddhas, teachers of the worlds,
Use skillful means according to what is appropriate,
Should have no more doubt.

Your hearts should be filled with great joy,
For you know that you too will become buddhas.

Chapter 3 begins, as we have seen, with Shariputra expressing joy over his realization that he is a bodhisattva, destined to become a buddha. Previously Shariputra and the other shravakas had understood that bodhisattvas had been told that they would become buddhas, but not that they themselves would, and they had wondered why they had not received this message of universal salvation from the Buddha. Now, Shariputra realizes, they had not really understood the doctrine of skillful means, and that what the Buddha had taught them was a means to bring them closer to the truth.

Then Shariputra says that, his doubts having been removed, he is at peace both in body and in mind, and that, having received a share of Buddha-dharma, he has realized three things: 1) that he is a child of the Buddha, 2) that he is born from the Buddha's mouth, and 3) that he has been transformed by the Dharma.

The Buddha tells Shariputra that he had taught him to aspire for buddhahood in a previous life, but that Shariputra had forgotten all about that. Thus, the present teaching is only to call Shariputra back to his own original vow. The Buddha then proceeds to explain that in a future life Shariputra will become the Buddha Flower Glow. And he describes that aeon of Buddha Flower Glow, called "Adorned with Great Treasures," and his buddha-land, "Without Blemish," a kind of paradise with great quantities of gold and jewels and other precious things. But it is called "Adorned with Great Treasures" because in it there will be countless bodhisattvas, and they will be regarded as great treasures.

This announcement by the Buddha was the impetus of a great party and celebration, as everyone in the assembly rejoiced and danced with great joy. At least their hearts danced for joy. Everyone shed their outer garments and offered them to the Buddha. And when the gods offered their garments to the Buddha, the clothes swirled around in the sky, and the gods made great music and created a wonderful shower of heavenly flowers. Then the gods announced that after the first turning of the wheel of Dharma at Varanasi, the Buddha had now turned the wheel of the greatest Dharma.

The Second Turning of the Wheel

Though later in this chapter, in the parable of the vehicles (which we have already discussed), Buddhist diversity is symbolized by the three, or four, vehicles, but here there are two divisions or kinds of Buddhist teachings, Hinayana and Mahayana. At least two important things are indicated



A wooden statue of Shariputra at the temple Kofukuji in Nara. Photo by Kozo Ogawa.

by this two-fold division. One is that here, in the Mahayana, which means “great vehicle,” something new is being taught, something that goes beyond what was taught at the Deer Park. Second is that while the first turning/teaching is superseded, it is not false or to be abolished. The first turning of the wheel (such teachings as the Four Noble Truths) is superseded by being included within a larger framework of Mahayana teaching.

It is appropriate, I think, that in Rissho Kosei-kai’s Horinkaku (Dharma Wheel Reception Hall), in order to see the magnificent statue of Kannon (Avalokiteshvara) with a thousand arms in the main hall, one has to walk through a great reception hall dominated by four great black columns in which are carved the Four Noble Truths. The four truths, in other words, can lead you to the bodhisattva way.

Throughout the Lotus Sutra two things are affirmed: 1) that the sutra is in continuity with what was taught and done in the early years of the Buddha’s ministry, and 2) that something new is happening here. This is generally true of Mahayana sutras. They both affirm a continuity with older Buddhist traditions and claim that in themselves something new has emerged.

Thus, it is significant that Shariputra becomes further enlightened here, “re-born” as he puts it. This can be contrasted with some other Mahayana sutras, in which he is treated as merely stupid, meaning that Hinayana Buddhists are quite stupid and unworthy of the Dharma. In some cases, shravakas were even said to be *icchanti*—hopeless, incorrigible, utterly devoid of buddha-nature.

It is, I believe, unfortunate that the Lotus Sutra adopts the Mahayana practice of referring to the twenty or so traditional Buddhist sects of that time with the demeaning term “Hinayana,” meaning “inferior,” “lesser,” or “small.” That may reflect some sociopolitical situation at the time the sutra was compiled about which we know nothing. But we should understand that, first, the sutra teaches that this lesser way is sufficient to save people. In the parable of the burning house, for example, it is the attraction of the lesser vehicles that saves the children from the raging fire. Consistent with this, whenever there is a description of a more or less paradise-like, future world, there are plenty of shravakas in it. Rather than reject “Hinayana” teachings and methods, the Lotus Sutra seeks to incorporate them into the One Vehicle. Second, in the Lotus Sutra, teachings about the shravaka way should not be understood as being merely about monks living many centuries ago. These teachings are for us today as well. It is we ourselves, above all, who should not be arrogant or lazy, or feel too comfortable with what we have achieved

or too worn-out to do anything more. It is we who need always to remember that we have entered a way that is very difficult and comes to no end in life.

Shariputra’s Four Realizations

Shariputra says that he has realized four things. Let us take a brief look at each of them:

1) A child of the Buddha

Here and throughout the Lotus Sutra, the primary meaning of “child of the Buddha” is “bodhisattva.” Here, Shariputra realizes that while being a shravaka, he is also a bodhisattva, actually more deeply and profoundly a bodhisattva. But being a child of the Buddha has other implications as well.

What Shariputra originally set out to find was an understanding of the world in which death is not the end of everything—that is, a world in which everything comes to nothing. In other words, he sought meaning in life, he wanted his own life to be meaningful, to amount to something more than death.

Basically, he found two things. First, he found that nothing can separate us from what Christians call the love of God and Buddhists the compassion of the Buddha. The Lotus Sutra teaches repeatedly that the Buddha is all around us, nearer than we think. He is the father of us all, the Compassionate One. The second important meaning of this metaphor is that we owe

our lives not only to our biological parents and ancestors, but even more to the process, the Dharma, by which we live and are sustained. Chinese and Japanese Buddhism places enormous stress on the importance of our biological ancestors for our lives, but in the teaching that we are all children of the Buddha, we should realize that biology is only one of the ways in which we inherit from the past. What we learn from our teachers, usually to be sure in the first instance from our mothers, but also from a whole company of teachers—including those we encounter in books, has an enormous impact on shaping who and what we are. And those of us who are significantly drawn to the Buddha-dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, will be especially aware of our indebtedness both to the Buddha and to the tradition that has made his Dharma available to us.

2) Nourished from the Buddha’s mouth

Just as inheritance is not only biological, nourishment is not only physical, but mental and spiritual as well. Where should we look for mental and spiritual nourishment? We should not think, I believe, that because we are Buddhists

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or followers of the Lotus Sutra our spiritual nourishment must always come from the Lotus Sutra or from Buddhist sources alone. One of the wonderful things about the Lotus Sutra, as we saw when looking at the simile of the plants, is its recognition that the Buddha-dharma nourishes the whole world, not just Buddhists.

One way of understanding this, then, is to imagine that the Buddha can speak to us and nourish us in innumerable ways. In other words, anything at all, if we penetrate into it deeply enough, can be a revelation to us of the Buddha-dharma. No matter how good or bad a person or situation or thing may be, it can be something from which we can learn; if we are open to it, we can find in it something of value for ourselves.

3) Transformed by the Dharma

While the Dharma can be thought of, and is, something that nourishes and sustains us, it can also transform our lives. Shariputra's life was dramatically changed by the Dharma. Here, hearing the Dharma, he suddenly realizes that the goal he has been pursuing and the kind of life he has been living, while good, is not good enough. He realizes that the way he has taken can be a kind of gateway to more fully following the Buddha. No wonder he is filled with ecstasy!

To understand the Buddha-dharma as ultimate truth about reality is to experience it as liberating. That Shariputra has received only some of the Buddha-dharma means that even though he is enlightened, liberated, and overcome with joy, this is only a new beginning, a rebirth, not a death in which there is nothing more to do. He is set free to live in the Dharma.

The Sanskrit word *dharma* has many meanings and uses, both inside and outside of Buddhism. But here we might want to see that there are three basic meanings. First, it is reality, especially, the law-like aspects of all reality (and therefore sometimes translated as "Law"). Second, dharma is the teaching about that reality, especially the Buddha's teaching of the truth about all existence. Third, it is the realization and embodiment of that reality and teaching—hence, it is equivalent to awakening or enlightenment. In other words, the same dharma can be: 1) real or true, 2) taught, and 3) understood, embraced, and embodied.

Shariputra's Doubt

His doubts having been removed, Shariputra was at peace, mentally and physically. Perhaps "doubt" is not a good choice of words here, as this is not a matter of doubting whether something is true or not. It is a matter of not having confidence about one's own position or status or importance in the scheme of things. In one sense, it is a matter of self-doubt or lack of confidence, but more importantly it is a matter of doubting the benevolence of the Buddha, or the meaningfulness of life, something Chris-

tian theologians have sometimes called "existential doubt."

What Shariputra gains from realizing that he is a bodhisattva is not a safe trip directly to heaven, as on an elevator, but something more like admission to a stairway. The stairway will be difficult. But the most important point is that there is a stairway, a way to overcome our suffering from the unsatisfactoriness of life, and the Buddha's teachings can lead us to it.

Is life really meaningful? That is what the story of Shariputra is about. And the Buddhist answer is that life is and can be meaningful, or can be meaningful because it is meaningful.

Shariputra's Original Vow

The Buddha reminds Shariputra that he had learned this lesson before but had forgotten his own original vow. This is one of the many ways in which the Lotus Sutra teaches that the potential for being a buddha is fundamental—something given to us originally. It is like the inheritance of the poor son in the parable of that name. His inheritance is not something given to him by his father. It was his from the beginning of his life. He didn't know it, and his father did not know where his son was, but the inheritance was the birthright of the son, something that, though he might lose it, could never be taken from him.

So too with Shariputra. His life as a bodhisattva was always his life. Now, quite suddenly, he knows it.

Joy in Solemn Assemblies

Buddhism has often been portrayed in the West as a very negative teaching. Indeed, the emphasis on "emptiness" found in many Mahayana texts can be taken in a very negative way. But the Lotus Sutra, while it certainly does not reject this important idea, has little to say about emptiness, preferring instead to emphasize the positive aspects of the Dharma—especially the potential and capacity of everyone to become a buddha. One thing that is interesting in this connection is the emphasis of the Lotus Sutra on joy, often called "great joy." At the end of chapter 2, the shravakas are told that their hearts should be full of joy, and in the very first sentence of chapter 3 we are told that Shariputra is ecstatic with joy. Almost everywhere you turn in the Lotus Sutra, someone is receiving the sutra with joy, or is full of joy, or has a heart that is dancing for joy.

This sutra understands itself to be good news for everyone—in one sense, a kind of wake-up call to enter a new world, or to experience the world in a new way; in another sense, a kind of public announcement that everyone is a bodhisattva and therefore that you are already a bodhisattva, and are on your way to becoming a buddha. Hearing such an announcement, really hearing such an announcement, we should all be glad and full of joy!

To be continued

The Other Side of Time

by Donald S. Harrington

*I sing of life, yet mind me well of death:
To-day shadowy Death dogs my steps, my seated shape, and has for years—
Draws sometimes close to me, as face to face.*

—Walt Whitman

I came across the phrase in John Berger's "Sicilian Lines," and it stopped me short—"the other side of time." The whole phrase was—"the coexistence of everything on the other side of time." What was he talking about? Where is the other side of time? Is this an astrophysical or a philosophical concept?

Time is a concept. Only the human, so far as we know, is a conceptualizing creature. None of the other higher animals is aware of the years, the months, the days, hours, minutes, and seconds of life. They are aware of the seasons, of day and night, of when they must hunt in order to eat, or rest in order to survive, or win a mate in order to procreate. But they do not seem to count their time, nor to be aware that at the end death awaits them, as it awaits us all.

Time is a human concept. We wear our watches on our left wrists in order to see them easily if the right hand is busy. We "keep" the time. We try to be "on time." We know that our lives are a long succession of moments of time, and that there will come a day for each of us when, as we say, "our time is up." Each one of us must die. Then, for us, time ceases to be; then our time is over, though time itself goes on—at least as long as anyone remains aware of it.

So, it must be death that Berger is talking about when he writes of "the coexistence of everything on the other side of time." Yes—he is challenging the notion that when we die everything is over. We may no longer be conscious of it, but everything that is, or ever has been, he says, coexists on the other side of time. Our lives, *all* lives, all happenings accumulate there. Nothing really stops; nothing is lost; everything survives there, and the smallest moment of anyone's time makes some kind of difference there, on the *other* side of time; that is, until our sun burns out, our solar system disintegrates, and the age-long works of time-conceiving earthly humans return to cosmic dust.

Gordon D. Kaufman, professor of divinity emeritus at Harvard Divinity School, wrote in 1997 in *Zygon, Journal of Religion and Science*:

"We humans, living on a relatively small planet, revolving around a third-rate sun in one among the millions of galaxies that today appear to constitute the universe, are not in a strong position to speak with great confidence about the overall context of human existence; to speak as though we know what is in fact the whole (the reality) of which we are a part, or even to know whether it is appropriate to think of this widest context of our lives as a whole.

"We humans clearly move beyond our depth when we

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pose questions of this sort to ourselves, but there seems to be no way to avoid these issues. For we live and think, experience and act, in terms of meanings and purposes, values and significances. It is hardly possible for us to avoid wondering, therefore—especially in moments of crisis or calamity or great suffering (or great jubilation), . . . whether human life as such *has* any meaning, whether, with all its burdens, it is worth carrying on. . . . Aware, as we are, that we are rapidly destroying planet Earth's capacity to sustain many forms of life (including our own), it seems obvious that we must develop a new vision or conception of the whole, of the overall context within which human life falls, if we are to live and act responsibly today."

From time immemorial, this question of what lies on the other side of time has haunted us. Our dreams have ranged from eternal torment to everlasting glory. Many, facing our limitations, have said simply that we can never know what lies on the other side, so we must make the most of every precious moment of existence in time that is given us. One such, who wrote eloquently about it, was Nikos Kazantzakis in his "Report to Greco":

"I knew my true face and my sole duty [was] to work this face with as much patience, love and skill as I could manage. . . . What did that mean? It meant to turn it into flame, and if I had time before death came, to turn this flame into light, so that Charon (the god of Death) would find nothing of me to take. For this was my greatest ambition: to leave nothing for death to take—nothing but a few bones."

You see, he somehow wanted to leave all of his truly developed self on the other side before he let life go. This was a worthy vision, and one that many humans have shared. But Kazantzakis left a lot more behind than a few bones! He left a lot of light, and light is something that, intangible and momentary, is nonetheless the condition of everything tangible and eternal. And the first thing that God is supposed to have said was: "Let there be light!"

One of the greatest teachers of all time, and of our time, was the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. His always recurring emphasis was upon the all-importance of the moment, especially the moment of the meeting of human, or any living creature's, minds, hearts, and souls. Buber wrote:

"No encounter with a being or a thing in the course of our life lacks a hidden significance. . . . The highest culture of the soul remains basically arid and barren unless, day by day, waters of life pour forth into the soul from those little encounters to which we give their due. . . . [At every moment] a newly created concrete reality has been laid in our arms, we answer for it. A dog has looked at you, you answer for its glance, a child has clutched your hand, you answer for its touch, a host of men move about you, you answer for their need" (*Between Man and Man*).

Buber believed that the meaning of life was realized in the quality of its moments of time. But implicit in this is the assumption that somehow all these moments add up to create something of enduring significance.

The other side of time. This is something that we become increasingly aware of as we reach great age—the late eighties or early nineties. I can speak of this from some personal experience. When you are very old, from time to time, you slip through the curtain into that "other side of time." Other people seem not to notice that you are with them. They sometimes talk right past you, as if you were already gone. You are, for a moment, on the other side of time. And how you experience this depends largely on how you lived those moments when you were within time.

T. S. Eliot, who heralded modern poetry, the Unitarian American turned Anglo-Catholic Englishman, was preoccupied with this aspect of life—the other side of time—and what it might hold. Here are a few snatches of his explorations:

There is a time for the evening under starlight,
A time for the evening under lamplight
(The evening with the photograph album).
(from "East Coker" in *Four Quartets*)

Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, . . .

And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; . . .
(from "Little Gidding" in *Four Quartets*)

In his *Gerontion*, he describes that final stage of human misery "when there is nothing to do but brood over what little remains of a life that came rather early to have no principle of direction except its worldly interest, and to wish and wait for death, which is imminent, as its perfect ending" (John Crowe Ransom, *On Eliot's Gerontion*, p. 135).

How many human beings have I, as a minister, seen in visiting countless nursing homes across America with hundreds of aged men and women, quietly, and a few not so quietly, waiting to die. There is more than this to look forward to, T. S. Eliot protests.

Old men ought to be explorers
.
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
(from "East Coker" in *Four Quartets*)

This form, this face, this life
 Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
 Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
 The awakened, lips parted, the hope, . . .
 (from "Marina")

There are two things that give some substance to this hope. First, our bio-historical evolution. Over untold millennia, biological evolution gave us the chance to grasp at intelligence, rationality, thoughtfulness, knowledge of our world, consciousness, and consciousness of our consciousness. This led, step by upward step, to language, writing, record keeping, books—to human beings, with all their historical, sociocultural accumulations.

We have undergone a series of stupendous dawns—the dawn of knowledge, the dawn of consciousness and self-consciousness, the dawn of conscience, the dawn of power, and the dawn of realization that the future of our kind, at least for now, in our part of the universe, depends on us. This has meant that slowly we have gained a measure of control over further evolution; as Kaufman puts it, "we have gained some measure of transcendence over the nature of which we are a part."

Or, as the ancient Greek poet Agathon, as quoted by Aristotle in *Ethics*, put it: "One power there is that God Himself hath not— / The things, which have been done to make undone." In other words, the distinction between past and future, or the recognition of time, binds even God. How we exercise that momentary transcendence will most likely decide whether our species will survive significantly into that "other side of time" that awaits us after death.

Kaufman summarizes: "If we respond in appropriately creative ways to the historical and ecological forces now impinging upon us (such as the need to think politically, economically, culturally, and religiously in *global terms*, global terms that are simultaneously *pluralistic*—that is, that can recognize, tolerate, appreciate, and harmonize our different racial, national, and religious identities), then it is possible that a bio-historical niche for humankind, more appropriate for the (present) ecological order on Earth, may be brought into being. However, if we fail to respond, it seems likely that humans may not survive much longer"—not even on "the other side of time," except as our ancestors, the dinosaurs, survive in the lessons of their bones frozen into stone, and some future species may marvel at our roads, machines, and skyscrapers, and at our spiritual follies.

But we must never forget the importance of the dream of a better future, which never departs from us in our journey through time. As Fred L. Polak, in *The Image of the Future*, puts it: "We need to expand the time-concept to include the interaction between completed and non-completed time, thus adding a new dimension to the his-

torical process of sociocultural dynamics." There is a pull toward the future coming from the idealistic images held of it. The various possibilities of the future are operative in the creation of the present.

As one of those aged ones, who now and again slips through the veil of death into that "other side of time," I confess to suffering often T. S. Eliot's "conscious impotence of rage at human folly," and so I will continue to search out, expound, and try to help to build a nobler, more enduring way of global human life, as long as my moment in time still persists.

I will dare to live fully in the moment, and to be drawn by the greatest dreams of both the future and the past, drawn and shoved, and aware of this intimacy with what has been in time, and what is yet to be. John Holmes said it in verse:

When I have come upon the green door, death,
 The only opening in a sudden wall,
 And pushed it wide, and shut it at my back,
 I shall not care what lies before at all.

But I have lived too much to guess of dying
 That death's a garden, or to rhyme its fears,
 And lived so long—a twelvemonth in a minute—
 I think time goes by heartbeats, not by years.

Here in my heart I hold such strong abundance,
 I do not care what lies beyond that door.
 Life is enough. There is always music,
 Always more love, more sun, and always more.

And if the green door opens on tomorrow,
 And every friend still answers to his name,
 A little death makes eloquent the daylight:
 It will be glory that the world's the same.

And we have all been dead, who now are living!
 Speak out the secret thing we're certain of:
 We're back, we've all come back, we've all been given
 A longer time to look, and touch, and love.

Though this be wealth I'll never take to heaven—
 High rooms in paneled wood, with beams above,
 Slow green surf, a men's choir, flags, wind, running—
 This is a chant of praise for things I love:

A long music, and I ask for nothing more
 This side the narrow portal, death's green door,

Only to cry with mind and heart and tongue
 That death at any age is dying young.

(from "The Green Door") □

To Look into the Face of Death Is to Ponder Life

An interview with Alfons Deeken

From even before the moment of our birth, human beings are inexorably moving toward death. To help us deal with the problem of life and death, Dr. Deeken advocates what he terms “death education,” through which he hopes others will gain a deeper respect for life.

Why did you make the study of life and death your life-work?

When I was working as a volunteer in a hospital in Munich in my university days, a doctor asked me to attend a patient with terminal cancer who was expected to live for only about three more hours. This man, a refugee from Eastern Europe, had no friends or relatives to keep him company. I had no idea what to say to him. Politics or sports would be of no interest to a person confronting imminent death. In the end, we supported each other by praying together.

For me, it was a long and painful three hours. But that experience made me think deeply about the meaning of death and of life, arrange my priorities with regard to what is important in the life of a human being, and consider which values are truly enduring and which fall off into insignificance at the moment of death. Thus it was that a patient I did not even know presented me with what, in retrospect, became, as you say, my “lifework,” for it was at that time that I resolved to make the philosophy of death my central theme of study and began my study of life from the perspective of the moment of death.

What kind of “death education” do you advocate?

Death education is not something gloomy or nihilistic. A person who realizes the inevitability and proximity of death becomes keenly aware of the preciousness of the time for living remaining to him, and will wish to live this life to the fullest, as actively as possible. In other words, death education is in fact education for life.

Death education does not seek to indoctrinate its subjects with any specific knowledge or to urge upon them any particular view of life and death. Rather, the aim is to encourage them to arrive at their own personal view of life and death by getting them to consider such abstract questions as: what constitutes quality of life? what does life mean to me? what do I value in life? as well as such

concrete questions as: how do I want to die? what kind of funeral would I like to have?

With the above as a basis, I have come up with twelve themes that I believe are important components of death education:

- 1) understanding the process of dying;
- 2) thinking about how one can die a truly human death;
- 3) breaking the taboos that surround the subject of death;
- 4) dealing with the fear of death and its attendant anxieties;
- 5) dealing with psychological threats to life, especially the temptation to take one's own life;
- 6) knowing how to be of help to someone who has been told he or she has a life-threatening disease, as well as knowing how to give such a person spiritual care;
- 7) an explanation of the hospice movement;
- 8) an explanation of euthanasia;
- 9) ways of thinking about organ transplants;
- 10) showing the importance of having children attend funerals;
- 11) advocating “humor education”;
- 12) thinking about what comes after death: philosophical and religious perspectives.

Are you saying that thinking about death awakens people to the goodness of life and leads them to consider the meaning of life? Could you be more specific?

One of the movies of the late director Akira Kurosawa is entitled *Ikiru* (“To Live”). He gave his movie this wonderful title in spite of the fact that from beginning to end the movie is about death. The protagonist, knowing he has cancer and only half a year to live, wants to spend his final days in doing something that is meaningful, and so he becomes almost obsessed with the idea of building a small park for children to play in. The final scene of the movie is especially memorable. It is late at night and snow is falling. The protagonist takes his last breath while swinging gently on a children's swing in the now-completed

park. This film supports the view that we should not just wait passively for death to come, but should use the days that remain to confirm the meaning of life and to achieve still further growth as human beings.

Can we take this to mean that even young people, who think of death as something in the far distant future, will become more appreciative of the value of life as they become more aware of the reality of death?

In my university classes, I have the students imagine that they will soon die of an incurable disease and write a farewell letter to those whom they will leave behind. I also

have them write an essay about how they would spend the time remaining to them, if they knew that they had only half a year to live. I have read thousands of such letters and essays, and I can say that all of them, with almost no exception, seriously address the basic propositions of human life. In their farewell letters, they thank parents and other members of the family, teachers, and friends for their love and friendship, and express remorse over failures and mistakes. The students reveal their feelings most candidly, such as, for example, feelings of regret about things left undone. The essays clearly reveal that a great number of the students (perhaps, the greatest number) realize that what matters most at the moment of death is the manner in which one has lived. By honestly looking death in the face, the students learn how precious our limited life is, and how wonderful it is to live with love for others.

At about what age should death education begin?

Having been raised in a devout Catholic family, I think my death education began in early childhood. I was one of eight children. My four-year-old sister died when I was ten. When my parents learned that she had an incurable illness, they decided to have her die at home, in the warmth of the family circle, rather than in a hospital. My parents told the rest of us about her condition, and decided that we would all take turns keeping her company, explaining that since she had only a limited amount of time left, it was all the more important to treasure each day.

We talked about death a lot in the family. For Christians, death is not the end of everything, but the beginning of a new life. After death, we will be reunited in Heaven with those who have gone before us, and will continue to live enveloped in God's infinite love. The belief that human life is eternal underpins Christian faith. Even though my sister knew she would not be able to remain alive in this world, embraced in her family's love, the hope of being able to meet us all again in Heaven was no doubt a great spiritual support for her. With the words "We'll meet again in Heaven," she took leave of us.

Many children have experienced losing a loved one. What is the best way for adults to deal with children who have had this experience?

Losing a loved one is a painful experience. It seems to me that the starting point of death education is to teach about the grieving process that must be gone through to recover from the experience and then to find amelioration of the debilitating sadness it causes. The fact is that the deeper the sorrow and pain, the greater potential there is for growing into the kind of person who is able to empathize with the sufferings of others.

Children often ask adults about death, not only on the

Alfons Deeken is president of the Japanese Association for Death Education and Grief Counseling. He was born in Germany and received his education in Munich, Tokyo, and New York, earning a Ph.D. in philosophy from Fordham University. Until his retirement in March, Dr. Deeken was professor of philosophy at Sophia University in Tokyo; he is now professor emeritus. In 1982 he founded the Japanese Association for Death Education and Grief Counseling, which has chapters in 47 Japanese cities with more than 5,000 members. Dr. Deeken has published 26 books, mostly in the field of death, dying, bereavement, and grief. In 1998 he was awarded the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, and in 1999 he received the Tokyo Metropolitan Cultural Award from the city of Tokyo.

occasion of the death of a loved one, but also on the death of a beloved pet or of a well-known figure not known personally. Such times provide a golden opportunity for teaching about life and death. But if adults do not answer children's questions honestly or seek to avoid answering them, they send children the tacit message that it is taboo to talk about death.

Recently, all around the nation, as more people choose to confront death without subterfuge, they have been forming groups that meet to reflect on the meaning of life and death. But there is still a deeply embedded feeling that death is a taboo subject. People who have grown up in this culture cannot bring themselves to talk to children about death. To overcome this reticence, I have been suggesting that schools set aside one day as a day "to think about life and death"—even one day a year is better than nothing—and encourage parents and guardians of the children also to take part.

What should this day "to think about life and death" include?

I think it should concentrate on at least five important themes and incorporate concrete, practical approaches. The first theme would be death education. This should be presented in terms of things the children are likely to ex-

perience at some time in the future, such as "What can you do when your father or mother is at the point of death?" From that starting point, it is very easy to establish the importance of treasuring one's parent, and so death education becomes education in filial piety, also.

The second theme would be the death of a loved one and the grieving that follows, as discussed above. The third theme is suicide and suicide prevention. Using, for instance, the example of a child who commits suicide because of bullying, one might discuss what can be done to prevent such a suicide and stress the importance of having respect for life and of lending one's support to those who are suffering.

The fourth theme is traffic-safety education. Young people who are about to get their driver's license are invited to reflect upon the suffering and sorrow that accidents caused by reckless driving inflict upon those around them. Through this reflection, students learn about human norms and gain respect for life. Education concerning AIDS is the fifth theme. This education encompasses everything from ways to avoid contracting AIDS to caring for those who have been diagnosed with HIV. The students are made to see this issue as a broadly human one that concerns everyone.

Moreover, this kind of education should not be left up to the teachers alone. Bringing in outside speakers—experts, such as doctors, nurses, and counselors; parents who have lost children in traffic accidents or through suicide; people who have been told that they have cancer, etc.—and having them talk about their experiences will serve to deepen the students' understanding of life and death.

In one of my classes, I had a man who had lost a child through suicide address the students. Six months later, one of the students came to me and confessed that he had been thinking of killing himself, but had changed his mind when he heard that father's tearful plea. He determined never to give his own parents that kind of sorrow.

As I said above, I also invite parents and guardians to take part in that day. When parents and children hear the same talk, the taboo against speaking about death in the family circle will very likely be broken. And if it all leads to discussing among themselves the important topic of how one ought to live here and now, parents and children will, as a result, understand each other better and the bonds that unite them will be strengthened.

This day to "think about life and death" will also be a day to "deepen respect for life," won't it?

I always distinguish between death that is avoidable and death that is not. Death from the natural consequences of aging or from an incurable disease is unavoidable death. But death from suicide, traffic accidents, war, and other forms of violence, or from environmental pollution, can be said to be avoidable. I believe that if death education

can implant in each student's heart a great respect for life—both their own life and that of others—the number of avoidable deaths can be greatly reduced.

Can death education be conducted in the absence of a religious context?

It is true that German schools have classes in religion twice a week; death education is conducted within the framework of these classes. But in Japanese schools, at least in public schools, religious education is prohibited, so that death education cannot be conducted here in the same way as it is in Germany.

This does not mean that death education cannot be conducted at all. In Britain, there is a model of various teachers addressing life and death issues in the context of their own disciplines. For example, a mathematics teacher might have the students investigate the age at which people die by examining the gravestones in a cemetery. In this way, the students can calculate the average age of death in different periods, or learn that a great number of people died in the world wars. This gets the students to think about death.

A history teacher might discuss the pyramids of ancient Egypt, explaining the cultural context and the view of life and death that underlay the construction of the pyramids,

pointing out the difference between funeral customs then and now, and so on. In literature, music, and art can be found a multitude of moving works on the theme of death. In addition to introducing the works themselves, the teacher can also talk about, say, the letter that Mozart wrote to his father when he was thirty-one, or what Michelangelo is supposed to have said to a friend late in life, thus teaching the view of life and death pulsating beneath the works.

So we can think about death education from a variety of perspectives.

The famous philosopher Martin Heidegger defined human beings as “beings-toward-death.” In that sense, human beings begin their journey to death the moment they are born, or even before. If we take this view, we can say that death education is lifelong education, beginning in childhood and continuing through life. In the process, each person acquires a unique, personal view of life and death. This is the most important aspect of death education. □

The preceding text is a slightly adapted translation of the interview that appeared first in Japanese in November last year in Kyoiku no Kaze (Winds of Education), Vol. 11 (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2002).

On January 25, many citizens of various occupations from all over Japan joined Sophia University students to attend the last lecture by Professor Deeken in the university's auditorium. Photo: Asahi Shimbun Publishing Co.

Raising Questions Is Our Responsibility

An interview with UUA President William G. Sinkford

Last March 8, as a preemptive strike against Iraq by U.S. and U.K. forces was looming, many citizens and religionists in the United States and all across the world were apprehensive about the Bush administration's determined choice of war and were calling for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Against such a backdrop, DHARMA WORLD asked Rev. Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association in North America, about how his organization was involved in efforts to prevent war.

We understand that hundreds and thousands of people in America have demonstrated strong opposition to the Bush administration's determination for military action against Iraq, while there is still a high approval rating for its policy. How do you evaluate the overall reaction of the American people to the Iraqi crisis?

It is true that more than a million American citizens have demonstrated against unilateral war with Iraq. There will be, as you know, demonstrations taking place today as well. It's my belief that support for the administration is actually quite mixed and has been dropping. So that now about half of the American people are in support of President Bush and about half are against unilateral war with Iraq. So it's a very divided United States.

Unfortunately, the conversation about war has been framed by the administration, and I believe it has confused the issues of the war against terror with a war against Iraq. And so it's my belief that the support for the war is actually very shallow in the American public, and when the realities of war come, and sadly I believe that they will, I believe that that support will rapidly evaporate. I don't think the American people want war, and I think it is a sad fact that we are going to be forced into one.

Soon after September 11, 2001, a tremendous number of American flags were displayed across the country. What did you think about this phenomenon?

I think the attacks of September 11 galvanized the United States public in a way that we have not been galvanized for a generation. And having the American flag displayed was a way of showing our solidarity with one another. And I understand that perfectly. I have to tell you that what I did at the Unitarian Universalist Association—rather than having the American flag flying—was to have the world

flag flying, the picture of the world taken from space, which shows one blue planet on which we all must learn to live together. That was my primary response.

Could you elaborate your ideas on the meaning of patriotism?

I think that the American people want to be patriotic. I want to be patriotic, and I want to be happy with what my government is doing. I want to be able to support it fully. I think that's true for all of the peoples of the world. But I think it's a real mistake to confuse nationalism with patriotism. Nationalism says, "My country, right or wrong, I will stay behind it, regardless of what my country does." Patriotism, especially for the American people, means that we have not only the right but the responsibility to question what our government does. In a democratic society, like the United States or Japan, we have a right to be in conversation and to have our opinions heard. And that is certainly happening. The groundswell of opinion against the war has been substantial, and so most of us are not confusing nationalism with patriotism.

I should tell you that my son serves in the U.S. Army, with the 82d Airborne Division. He is just back from seven months in Afghanistan. He and I have had some good but often hard conversations about what patriotism means. The simple nationalistic approach, which members of the armed forces are required to hear, because their job is to follow orders, needs to be balanced with the more democratic, patriotic response, which says we all need to be in conversation about this.

As we move into war, one of the things that is most on my mind—perhaps it's because my son is in the military—is that I hope that the American people and the people of the world do not confuse the soldiers (the young men and women who have to execute the war) with the government

that decides that war is necessary. During the war in Vietnam, too many Americans became confused about that, and attacked the soldiers when in fact it was the government that was making the decisions. So I am urging Americans not to do that, and to be in full support of our young men and women, even if we are in disagreement with our government.

What kinds of actions have the UUA and other religious communities in America taken?

I was in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, when the terrorist attacks occurred. The first thing I did on

September 12 was to go to the American Muslim Council and offer to stand in solidarity with them, knowing that Arab and Arab-looking people would be profiled and attacked, as indeed they were—there were thousands of incidents. So Unitarian Universalists and other people of faith stood with the Muslim community. We walked Muslim children to school, so that they would not be harmed. And that was very much appreciated by the Muslim community. Religious communities in the United States have come together in extraordinary ways. The UUA has been working closely with the National Council of Churches, which calls together most of the Christian denominations, to raise our voice against the rush to war. And the religious community has been working with others in coalitions that sprang up almost instantaneously. The most important one is called “Keep America Safe: Win Without War,” which calls together the National Council of Churches, the National Organization for Women, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), business leaders, doctors; it is a broad coalition, including an Internet group called “MoveOn,” which in one week registered something like 400,000 e-mails against war. So the coalitions are broad, and I know that for relatively small religious movements like Unitarian Universalism, we can be far more effective if we work in coalition with others, and we’ve been working hard to do that.

Buddhism teaches us that there exist in each of us “three poisons”—greed, hatred, and ignorance—including a hidden drive toward confrontation. Therefore, the basis of our endeavors for world peace must be the building of peace within each and every one of us. Could you expound your thoughts on this for us?

I appreciate the question and I should say in advance that I’m no Buddhist scholar nor am I a practicing Buddhist, so I approach the question as an amateur. But I do think that the three poisons resonate with me.

First, I think we are not having a good enough conversation about the possibility of war. So on the issue of greed, there is very little conversation, at least in the United States, about the role that oil plays in the U.S. decision to attack Iraq. Very few people are talking about that. But the reality is that Iraq sits on the second largest reserves of oil in the world. The United States has done nothing to curtail its appetite for oil. And I have to believe that there is a relationship here; there is a reason that we are choosing to confront Iraq, and not confront North Korea, for example, and I believe that oil plays a role there. So that is one response to the poison of greed, something that the United States will do well to pray on.

Hatred is a poison that I know well in my own life. I am an African-American, and in the United States that places me in a position where I have had to know hatred personally. The poison here for me is the viewing of another

William G. Sinkford was elected president of the Unitarian Universalist Association in June 2001. He was born in San Francisco in 1946; his commitment to liberal religion dates to his teenage years, when he was an active member of the First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated cum laude from Harvard University in 1968 and spent the following year in Greece as a Michael Clark Rockefeller Fellow. After college, Rev. Sinkford held management positions with large corporations, ran his own business, and later heard his call to the ministry. Toward the end of his theological education at Starr King School for the Ministry, Rev. Sinkford joined the staff of the UUA. He earned his M.Div. in 1995, and was fellowshiped as a community minister and ordained by his home congregation in the same year.

human being as the “other,” as someone who doesn’t deserve the same respect that “I” deserve, someone who can be viewed as less human at least than “I” am. And it is very clear that many people in the United States, I believe, encouraged by our government, are viewing people in the Muslim world in that way, seeing them as dangerous terrorists, as amoral people, as something less than we are. And the reality, of course, is that they are just human beings like we are, with governments that they agree with and don’t agree with, just as we do. And I think that *that* is a real danger; it’s the kind of poison that allowed the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II in the United States. And it is a deadly poison.

Ignorance I understand as well to be a poison. As I said, I think we are not having a good enough conversation about the reasons for war. In the United States, at least, we are not talking about what the future holds once we invade, we are not talking about how long we will have to stay, we are not talking about how we can invade Iraq without creating the next generation of terrorists that will threaten our safety and the safety of the world. There are too many things we are not talking about. So the American people actually are, I believe, ignorant of many of the dimensions of this potential war. And I believe actually that is why so many, as many as half, are willing to support the war.

I should say that the UUA and Rissho Kosei-kai have been working with organizations that try to work against that ignorance. I am thinking of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and the recent trip by two UUA representatives to Iraq—John Buehrens, the former president, and Robin Hoecker, a young woman who wrote a journal that is available at the UUA website; and I also know that you just had two young people from Rissho Kosei-kai return from Iraq—so we are trying to do something to improve the information that’s available, and I think that’s a very positive thing for us to do.

In order for us to avoid a “clash of civilizations,” what do you believe is necessary?

This is a big question. So let me say just a few things that are on my mind and in my heart. What I know is that if we create an “other,” and call the Muslim countries and Arabs and Muslim people “other,” we would set up an expectation that we *should* clash. But the reality is that the Muslim faith and the Christian faith and the Jewish faith all derive from the same foundational story—we are all children of the same book. There is far more that unites us than divides us. And we need to find ways to understand *that*, rather than focusing on only those things that divide us. Now, the reality is that there are many differences between Muslim culture and the culture of the West, which is in part Christian, but certainly not *only* Christian at this point. We live in a very pluralistic society in the West, as you do here. The test for all of us—it’s not just

the United States and the Muslim world—is to find ways to live in which we can understand that our differences do not need to divide us. Our differences can be blessings, and not curses, and so there is a great deal of hope if you can move into that space, as I did on this trip. I had wonderful opportunities to learn more about Japanese culture and religious traditions, as well as time to sit with Japanese religious leaders and converse with them and begin to learn a little bit. And they could learn a little bit, I hope, from me. That is where we need to go. And I just pray that we move there rapidly enough to save us.

Beginning with religious cooperation between organizations like the UUA and Rissho Kosei-kai, what do you think the world’s religionists can or should do to help bring about a better, more peaceful world?

I think that’s the real question. I also think that we need to be honest with ourselves and admit that we have not yet found the way. Despite all that we have done and the commitment of Rissho Kosei-kai and the UUA and other people of faith, we have not yet found the way. And so being able to move forward—and here we must go back to the three poisons—begins in a way that tries to avoid ignorance of where we are and what we’ve been able to do. So I don’t have a guaranteed program. I wish I did. I know, however, that the religious community needs to continue to raise its voice. I know that Rissho Kosei-kai young people have been praying in front of the American Embassy, UUA young people and older people like me have been praying in the United States; we’ve been speaking out. I know that *that* is necessary, so that the voice for war is not the only voice in the public conversation.

I think that for the long term, building relationships that cross the divides of religion and culture is probably the most effective thing we can do. So I deeply value the relationship between the UUA and Rissho Kosei-kai and want to further that and deepen it. I want to get our young people together, to work together and to talk together, so that we do a better job with the next generation than we have managed to do for ourselves. We need also to develop some capacity for advocacy, and I know that this is something to which Rissho Kosei-kai is committed, as is the Unitarian Universalist Association. But always, there is a value in the separation of church and state, and we need to find ways to respect that effectively, while at the same time having a way for our voices to be influential in the shaping of policies. My approach in my leadership has been more to ask questions than to provide answers, because I don’t think it’s for the religious community to write legislation; but we should be able to ask the questions that can ground decision-making in religious depth. So that’s one more thing that I believe we need to do—and I think we need to stay in the learning mode, because as I said, we do not yet have this one figured out. □

Religionists United in Prayers for Peace

Since February, leaders and members of religious organizations in Japan belonging to the Japanese Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP/Japan) and Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan) had taken part in various activities in prayer for the peaceful resolution of the Iraqi crisis. Based on the religious spirit of universal respect for every life, their commitment continued even after the war began on March 20.

Shinshuren Members Gather to Pray for Peace and Respect for All Lives

On February 15 the Tokyo metropolitan office of Shinshuren sponsored a Gathering for World Peace and Respect for All Lives at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery in Tokyo. Some 4,800 people, citizens as well as adherents of Shinshuren's member organizations, attended. The participants united in heartfelt prayers that the crisis in Iraq would be solved peacefully. Peter Cardinal Seiichi Shirayanagi and Rev. Mitsuhiro Fukata, chairman of Shinshuren, delivered a speech entitled "Words for Peace." Rev. Fukata warned against the facile justification of violence as a countermeasure to violence. Pointing out that every religion believes in the equality and preciousness of all human lives, he called for actions to prevent the sacrifice of the invaluable lives of fellow human beings in a terrible military confrontation.

After an offering of flowers by several representatives and a period of silent prayer, attendees recited in unison an appeal for peace, asking for efforts to avoid armed conflict and to realize a world in which every life is respected. □

WCRP/Japan Calls for Peaceful Resolution of Iraqi Crisis

On February 20 WCRP/Japan held an Emergency Gathering for Prayer for a Peaceful Resolution of the Iraqi Crisis at the temple Enryakuji on Mount Hiei near Kyoto. Some 230 people, both citizens and members of religious organizations that belong to WCRP/Japan, participated in the assembly.

Peter Cardinal Seiichi Shirayanagi,

Shinshuren members stand in silent prayer at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery.

president of WCRP/Japan, told the gathering, "War is an act of human beings. War can be avoided if human beings change." He declared that to bring about true peace, all people in the world must love their fellow human beings as siblings and neighbors, while recognizing and accepting mutual differences. Rev. Eshin Watanabe, chief priest of Enryakuji, read an invocation for peace. His appeal demonstrated his deep apprehension about military action against Iraq and his strong wish that prayer by religionists would illuminate a path to peaceful resolution of the crisis. After a silent group prayer, a representative of the citizens present offered Cardinal Shirayanagi "Messages for Peace," a collection of writings by some 1,000 people across the country. Rev. Nichiko Niwano, president of Rissho Kosei-kai and an executive director of WCRP/Japan, then read an appeal calling on President George W. Bush and Presi-

dent Saddam Hussein, as well as religionists and citizens of the United States, to make the greatest possible efforts to resolve the Iraqi crisis peacefully. The appeal was sent to the governments of the United States and Iraq, to the WCRP's national chapters, and to related organizations. □

Rissho Kosei-kai Gives Iraqi Crisis Statement to Japan's Prime Minister and to U.S. and Iraqi Presidents

Rissho Kosei-kai has published an announcement, "Statement in Support of a World Respectful of All Lives," on its wish for a peaceful resolution of the Iraqi crisis. This statement was published in the name of Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, chairman of the board of directors. Rev. Yamanoi visited Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's official residence in Tokyo and handed the statement to the chief cabinet secretary, Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, on February 18. Rev. Keiji Kunitomi, director of the Youth Division of Rissho Kosei-kai, visited the embassies of the United States and Iraq in Tokyo and handed copies of the statement and many peace messages from Rissho Kosei-kai members to Mr. Daniel Shields, first secretary of the U.S. Embassy's political section, and to Mr. Abdulwahab M. Ghazal, second secretary of the Iraqi Embassy. Rev. Kunitomi is also the chairman of the Awake to World Peace Committee. □

Youth Members Act against War

In early February Rissho Kosei-kai youth organized the Awake to World Peace Committee. The committee was formed to help youth members take

part, on the grassroots level, in the global concern over the Iraqi crisis. The committee took several actions first on February 15: declaring a "Prayer for Peace" at the ceremony commemorating the Buddha's entrance into nirvana, holding a silent prayer in the organization's Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo, and participating in a prayer gathering organized by the Tokyo metropolitan office of Shinshuren at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery.

On February 9, the committee had solicited from university students and other adult members peace messages on the theme "Toward a World Respectful of All Lives." By the deadline of February 22, a total of 6,989 messages were brought to the secretariat set up in the Youth Division. During the same period, the Arigatou Foundation, affiliated with the Myochi-kai Buddhist organization, solicited peace messages from children from elementary-school to high-school levels. Rissho Kosei-kai youths also responded to the solicitation and sent 2,899 messages to the foundation. These messages were then brought to the American and Iraqi embassies in Tokyo.

From February 21 through March 1, two young staff members of Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters went to Iraq and monitored the activities of UN agencies and NGOs inside Iraq. They also visited Iraqi government organizations and the Japanese Embassy in Baghdad, presenting those they met with copies of Rissho Kosei-kai's statement for a peaceful resolution of the Iraqi crisis.

Ideas for further activities were also collected through the Internet. In early March, when the preemptive strikes on Iraq by U.S. and U.K. forces were feared imminent, based on the ideas sent from members nationwide through the Internet and by fax, the committee called on young members to participate in the "Donate a Meal Campaign" and in "Time-out for Peace," a one-minute daily prayer at every 8:00 P.M., an activity that the Catholic Focolare Movement in Italy had started during the Gulf War. Young members in several local branches created leaflets bearing

prayers, calling on citizens to take part in the daily prayer. Since March 18, the day U.S. President Bush issued an ultimatum to President Hussein of Iraq, young members have actively exchanged mails, calling on one another to participate in a simultaneous recitation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra throughout the night from 8:00 P.M. of March 19 to 6:00 A.M. of March 20, in order to pray for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, till hours before the attack began.

From March 21, the day after the war on Iraq broke out, Rissho Kosei-kai members began the "Sutra Recitation in Prayer for an Early End to the War on Iraq," at the Great Sacred Hall, local branches, and at members' homes. □

Shinshuren Submits an Appeal for Peaceful Resolution of International Tension Related to the Iraqi Crisis to Japan's Prime Minister

On March 14, Rev. Mitsuhiro Fukata, chairman of Shinshuren, visited Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's official residence in Tokyo and presented an appeal for peaceful resolution of the international tension related to the Iraqi crisis to the chief cabinet secretary, Mr. Yasuo Fukuda. Rev. Nichiko Niwano, president of Rissho Kosei-kai, and Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, chairman of the board of directors of Myochi-kai, also attended on behalf of the representative officials of the federation. At the meeting, Rev. Fukata explained the tenor of the appeal to Mr. Fukuda. In response, Mr. Fukuda pointed out the danger posed by the fact that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. He insisted that the world should unite in an effort to pressure Iraq to disarm.

The appeal declared that from the standpoint of its principle of renunciation of war, the federation requested the Japanese government to devote itself to the utmost diplomatic effort to settle the problem by peaceful methods without arms. The appeal stressed that in conformity with the spirit of the Japanese constitution, which pro-

claimed the renunciation of war, the Japanese government should call for Iraq, the United States, the United Nations, and the International Atomic Energy Agency to resolve the international tension peacefully. □

Peace Fund for Iraqi Refugees and Children

On March 20, the executive committee of the Rissho Kosei-kai Peace Fund urgently announced that it was offering a total of 28.5 million yen to two Japanese NGOs and one international organization in order to promote international relief for Iraqi war victims. Through a report made by two staff members of Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters dispatched to Baghdad a month before, the committee was informed that there was a high possibility that many Iraqi refugees would cross the borders of the neighboring countries if U.S. and U.K. forces began invading Iraq. In addition to this, the committee also recognized the malnutrition of many Iraqi children under a decade-long economic sanction following the UN Security Council resolution of 1990. The committee also saw that the conditions of the handicapped and orphans, who are helpless, together with pregnant women and newborn babies, would worsen if the war became more serious. For these reasons, Rissho Kosei-kai's donation will support the Japan International Volunteer Center and assist medical aid and distribution of blankets to the refugees fleeing to Jordan, and also offer medical care for the pregnant women and babies, as well as food for orphans and those in Iraq who are visually and aurally challenged.

The donation also will support the UNHCR office in taking care of supplying food and water to the refugees in Jordan and also the creation of sanitary health conditions for them. Promoting assistance for psychological care and vocational training programs for Iraqis, it also will support JEN (a multiorganizational NGO) in investigating the current conditions for that purpose. □

Truth in the Media from an Interreligious Perspective

Over 400 people attended a two-day conference held in Rome, February 17–18, by the European chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace in cooperation with the mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni; the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Graz Peace Centre; and the City of Graz, Austria, 2003 Cultural Capital of Europe. The congress, titled “Media and Truth: An Interreligious Perspective on Ethical Reporting—Possibilities and Obstacles,” enjoyed the participation of over 40 speakers from all of the world’s major faiths. The idea of the meeting, said Conference and Program Director Lisa Billig, vice moderator of WCRP-Europe, was born out of the deeply felt need to respond to the requests of the religious minorities in Europe, which for many years have been asking the WCRP to undertake effective action to stem the growing tide of xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism. “We believe,” she explained, “that it is important for American, Arab, Israeli, Palestinian, Italian, European, and international media people, as well as experts of different faiths and even nonbelievers, to meet, at this moment of great world tension, to discuss the responsibilities and ethics of reporting as part of an ongoing process aimed at better communication between the media and religious communities.”

The conference was divided in area subjects debated by a panel of speakers. In the session titled “Europeanizing Islam vs. Islamizing Europe: A Vision,” Professor Mohamed Mzoughi, who teaches Islamic philosophy at the Pontifical Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies (PISAI), explained that although it is true that there is a form of integralism that wishes to install a society based on the Shariyah (Islamic law), integralism is not a prerogative of Islam, as held by widespread clichés.

The Middle Eastern conflict and the media reporting on that conflict was

the subject of an extensive debate that saw the participation of numerous speakers.

In a panel discussion devoted to “Religion in the Media,” Ms. Mariangela Falà, president of Italy’s Buddhist Union, said that Buddhism is one of the least known religions in the West. As it is not present in the cultural and social Western contexts, she said, media reporting on Buddhism is often approximate and superficial—“The trend is to identify all Eastern religions as one.” The media, she affirmed, “are responsible for the fact that in Europe Buddhism loses its particular geographic and cultural connotation, and this leads to misunderstandings.” As a matter of fact, it is described by the media “as a part of the New Age philosophy, although it is totally unrelated to it.” And also, “The fact that the Italian media often define the Dalai Lama as the ‘Pope’ of Buddhism,” she said, “expresses the need of the local media to identify with a known figure who is part of a familiar context.” Dialogue is therefore difficult, because the trend is to see the East in the East and not in Europe. Ms. Falà described the situation in Holland, where the Buddhist Broadcasting Corporation regularly broadcasts Buddhist-related programs, and the same happens in France. “In Italy there is also a need for such programs, although when a religious tradition is explained on its own, the risk is a lack of integration in the society. . . . The task of the media,” she concluded, “is to promote dialogue and growth in the awareness of diversity, without syncretism.”

Mr. John Allen, correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*, emphasized the distinction between Arab and Islamic countries. He pointed out the fact that Bangladesh and Sudan, which are non-Arab countries, have an Islamic predominance and are areas in which religious persecution against Catholics is most severe. “Also, for this reason,”

he said, “we are witnessing a shrinking of the Christian population in the Muslim world today.”

The situation of the Baha’i religious movement in the context of religious persecution was explained by Ms. Lucia Ricco, director of Italy’s Baha’i community. The Baha’i in Iran have no civil rights, she said, because they believe in a revelation that follows the birth of Islam and is therefore seen as denying the very existence of the prophet Muhammad and of the Islamic faith. From 1979 until today, over 200 Baha’i in Iran were killed or disappeared, and over 1,000 others were arrested with neither justification nor trial. “Interreligious dialogue is paramount to the establishment of peace and understanding, as it is the only tool capable of overcoming national boundaries,” Ms. Ricco stated.

During the conference, messages of good wishes for the initiative sent by outstanding religious and political leaders were read. Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, said, “Religious leaders have to cooperate with media people in order to bring about a more balanced coverage of religious affairs, overcoming ignorance, eliminating prejudice, in order to contribute to a more harmonious and peaceful world.” Italy’s President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi also sent a telegram congratulating this “highly significant initiative, which proposes a moment of reflection and dialogue to promote the cultural, religious, and social integration between different peoples.”

In the closing session, Ms. Billig said that the conference was not meant as an end in itself. “It is part of a process, a step toward setting up some kind of permanent structure that would offer possibilities for regular meetings between the media and religious representatives on timely issues,” she concluded. □

Eva Ruth Palmieri

Globalization for the Common Good

by Kamran Mofid

For each community, we have granted a law and a Code of Conduct. If God wished, he could have made you One Community, but He wishes rather to test you through that which has been given to you. So vie with each other to excel in goodness and moral virtue. Qur'an 5:48

From the dawn of our creation, it has been our ultimate desire to find happiness. This desire is in the nature of things, common to all of us, at all times, and in all places. Nature, together with all the material of the universe, is modified by us to create wealth so that this desire might be satisfied.

Today, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, our civilization has scored its greatest success in the material sciences. Its glory is the willing application of these teachings to daily life. In them it has found the way of truth, but in the study of the forces governing the relations between people in society, it has shown little aptitude.

So tragic is this failure that we have turned the masterpieces of the material sciences into juggernauts of destruction that threaten to annihilate the very civilization that produced them.

This is the challenge of our time—either we must find the way of truth in the government of our relations with one another, or we must succumb to the results of our own ignorance.

As has been observed by many philosophers and theologians throughout history, we should be aware that there are two forces at work in society—the material and the spiritual. When either of these two aspects is ignored or neglected, so that they appear to be at odds with one another, society inevitably tends to run down and become fragmented, and divisions and rifts manifest with greater force and frequency.

This, it seems clearly, is exactly what is happening today, leading to a situation of disequilibrium and disharmony. Only the reawakening of the human spirit to love and compassion will save us from our own worst extreme. Physical wealth must once again go hand in hand with spiritual, moral, and ethical wealth.

Today, despite a fivefold increase in economic growth and a twelvefold increase in global trade since the Second World War, there exists a massive economic inequality, which many call an “economic apartheid,” both within and

between nations. Currently the globalized world economy faces catastrophic socioeconomic, political, cultural, spiritual, environmental, and security crises that are threatening the fabric of society and life itself.

What are the main crises faced by modern society? There are global problems of abject poverty, famine, starvation, AIDS, inequality, greed, injustice, marginalization, exclusion, crime, corruption, the sex industry, anxiety, fear, depression, loneliness, mistrust, drug and alcohol abuse, intolerance, xenophobia, and environmental degradation and destruction. There is also much amiss with the Western capitalist model, as highlighted by the recent scandals in

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multinational corporations such as Enron, WorldCom, Xerox, Tyco, Dynergy, Arthur Andersen, Global Crossing, Adelphia, ImClone, and AOL, to name but a few from a long list of disgraced businesses, which have sunk the world of business to a new level of recklessness and irresponsibility.

There are many books already written on why such scandals took place. They all expound their own theories as to what went wrong. But they all agree on the role played by one vital element: dishonesty, fueled by greed. All this points to an important truth that we forget at our own peril: honesty and greed are essentially spiritual and moral issues. As such, they belong to the province of religious faith, which seeks to apply God's wisdom to the formation of moral and spiritual values. But as no part of human life can operate without these values—not least the sphere of business—then genuine faith, far from being a private affair, is relevant to the whole of life, from the top chief executives to the bottom line.

In short, the greed-motivated neoliberal world is spinning out of control. Maybe it is time for us to try to redefine our values. Looking at the problem of market capitalism and its values from a religious perspective, it has been suggested that these can be identified as twofold: namely, greed and delusion. Within the domains of modern economic theory and the kind of market it promotes, the moral concept of greed has inevitably been lost; today it is left to religion to point out what is problematic about a human trait that is unsavory at best and unambiguously evil at its worst. Religious traditions have tended to accept greed as part of the human condition, but rather than give it free reign they have seen a great need to control it.

This should come as no surprise to those with a more traditional orientation to the world. By far the best critique of greed is provided by the traditional religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as others, such as Sikhism, Sufism, Zoroastrianism, and Baha'ism. They all offer a wealth of teachings and recommendations as to how we should ethically and morally lead our lives, and how we can achieve happiness without greed and delusion.

The limited benefits of neoliberal globalization—which is based on individualism, greed, self-interested motives, and economism (regarding human societies primarily as economic systems in which economic considerations alone govern our choices and decisions)—have been mainly on the economic and business side, while other equally important aspects have remained, by and large, much neglected: values such as faith, spirituality, justice, love, compassion, sympathy, empathy, and cooperation.

In order to succeed in reversing the crises associated with economic globalization, we need to awaken a desire in people to ask deeper and bigger questions about life and its purpose. Globalization today desperately and fundamentally needs a conscience, morality, ethics, and spirituality.

This is where religion, faith, and theology come in, where they can make economics, politics, business, and the world of globalization more relevant and acceptable.

Many social scientists, including economists and others from different disciplines, have addressed the study of ethics, morality, justice, and more. However, these studies have mainly approached the issues philosophically. In this way, they have neglected the most important source of most people's understanding of right and wrong: their religious tradition. While philosophy can shed the light of reason on the ethical dilemmas of economic life, it is less convincing about *why we ought to behave well*. Philosophy lacks the compelling urgency of religious faith.

The pertinent question at this juncture is: Why should we try to relate religion to economics? Because both have the same end, that all may live happily, although they employ different methods for its achievement—one, through production and exchange of goods and services; the other, through selfless service, love, and compassion. Religions could—if they speak with their original source of inspiration—greatly contribute to restoring the balance between the material and spiritual elements, thus opening the way for living a full human life in a peaceful, just, and sustainable society.

As has been observed, the teachings of all religions on ethics, spirituality, and the common good can provide us all with a clear and focused model of moral behavior in what has been termed "the marketplace." The overall ethical orientation to the challenges of daily economic activity can easily be connected with each of our faith traditions.

In the Jewish tradition, we see the effort to balance pragmatic considerations of economic efficiency against biblical ideals of interpersonal equity and social justice. The key themes of Christian and Islamic thought are a concern for human dignity in the former and a concern for communal solidarity in the latter. Actually, as noted, these three themes are not separate but overlapping and interlocked; they are shared by all three traditions. Together, they form an inspiring mosaic of Western divine ethics.

The religious wisdom traditions of the East have somewhat different themes from those of the Abrahamic religions, but they are nonetheless very similar to those of the Western traditions. The importance of humility and patience is a striking aspect of the Hindu view of economic life. In Buddhism, the theme that seems to resonate most strongly is compassion; while in Confucian thought, it is reciprocity. Yet these themes, also, are not so much separate as overlapping and interlocked. Moreover, the mosaic they form is not sharply distinct from that of the Western traditions. For business and the marketplace, the mosaic would portray a coherent religious and spiritual vision of an ideal economic setting. In short, economic actors would exhibit mutual compassion, and individual achievement would not be at the expense of communal solidarity. Steady economic and moral improvement would be

A tremendous number of buy and sell orders lie scattered on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, symbolizing the close of a heated trading session. Photo: PPS/Cameron Davidson

pursued with humility and patience. These must become the guiding principles and the vision beyond the teachings of new economics.

There must, therefore, be a serious attempt to connect economics with theology and spirituality. In modern neo-classical economics there is no such connection. Neoclassical economics tolerates religion only if it narrows its focus to individual salvation; the wider social concerns that pre-occupied Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and other prophets are not considered within its sphere. For neoclassical economists, anything that interferes with their true religion, namely the market, is blasphemous. How conveniently they have forgotten that their supposed mentor, Adam Smith, “father of modern economics,” had been a professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University and that before he wrote *The Wealth of Nations* he was already famous for his great work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Moreover, these so-called market fundamentalists have also so conveniently ignored what Adam Smith said: “No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which the greater part are poor and miserable.”

Furthermore, it is significant to remember that, when de Tocqueville, in the second volume of *Democracy in America*, coined the term “individualism,” he wrote that for him individualism consisted of love of family and friends.

This is in total contrast to neoliberalism and its false promotion of individualism, which has so harmfully destroyed many families and friendships in the interest of policies motivated by short-term greed. This lack of love, empathy, and friendship can best be seen in the rise of the culture of not sharing, giving, and caring in the last few decades. At the end of the great economic boom of the 1990s, Americans donated to charities far less per head than they did in 1940, at the end of the great depression.

In short, economic life had formerly been regarded as one branch of moral life of the whole society. But today it has been declared a moral-free zone. In shaking ourselves free from many forms of tyranny, we have achieved one kind of emancipation, but in the process we have delivered ourselves into the hands of a philosophy that has destroyed the basis for any common social purpose by emancipating economic activity from the realm of moral regulation. In the world today, the main problems are not economic or technological. As has been noted, what is really wrong with modern society is the fact that it is morally sick.

In our economic world today, there is much emphasis on the creation of wealth, but in the materialistic environment that has developed, there is no room for the creator, and there exists no proper relationship between creator

and creation. We should not forget that our most important economic resources owe nothing to human labor and manufacturing or economic factors in general. The land, the air, the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the vital natural resources such as oil, gas, coal, and more are all God's gifts—they are for the benefit of *all* God's creation.

Violence, aggression, selfishness, and greed, as well as disrespect for values based on common-good principles, have made a mockery of that. Modern economic theory, which has no religious foundation and has created its own god, "the God of Mammon," has seen to the degradation of God's creation in the name of the market, profit maximization, and uncontrolled growth. What a bitter harvest this has become!

If we succeed in aligning the most powerful force in capitalism, namely profit, with social, moral, ethical, and spiritual objectives, by bringing economics and theology together and making them work together for the common good, the world will be a much better and safer place, and globalization will become a force for good. If we interlink theology, economics, and business, we can make these subjects far more effective than if they continue to be studied, as they are now, in isolation. Therefore, we should not seek to reject economics, politics, business, profit, trade, etc., *per se*. We should seek to ensure globalization for the common good, creating a world in which everybody becomes a stakeholder and in which everybody benefits.

As a lecturer on economics and business studies, with a wide range of teaching experience in different parts of the world, I have firsthand knowledge of the crisis associated with godless, faithless, spiritually impoverished teachings of business schools and economics departments.

If our students are trained only in neoliberal ideology, divorced from spirituality and respect for a transcendent power greater than their own, then, in my view, we cannot blame the students when they mismanage the Enrons and WorldComs of this world. A more ethical and caring environment would result if the education of potential future leaders include the bigger picture.

Although I defend certain positive benefits of a well-regulated and accountable market economy, I also maintain that there can be no civilized marketplace without morality, ethics, spirituality, and religion. I believe that the solution to the current socioeconomic global crises is not technical. It needs to embrace true human values such as justice, love, sympathy, and cooperation. This is in total contrast to the currently dominant neoliberal prescription of greed, selfishness, and individualism, which has left so harmfully no room for altruism, selflessness, cooperation, giving, and sharing.

It is my belief that the only way to reverse the crises associated with inhumanity, injustice, and environmental degradation is to acknowledge God, the Ultimate Reality, and to love him.

In many religions love plays an essential role in ethics, mysticism, theology, and even philosophy. To draw a religious picture of the world, including the story of the creation of the universe and humankind and then God's treatment of humanity, one always needs to invoke the notion of love. God Himself is love and has created the world out of love.

Moreover, it is important to note that all religions believe that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, so that without the knowledge of God there can be no true education. Our modern secular civilization, it seems, has decided otherwise. It is impossible to exaggerate the dangers that must inevitably arise when one's social life becomes separated from the religious and spiritual impulse. We have only to look at the history of the ancient world and we shall see how destructive these consequences are. The Roman Empire, and the Hellenistic civilization of which it was the vehicle, became separated in this way from any living religious basis, which all the efforts of Augustus and his followers were powerless to restore; and thereby, in spite of its high material and intellectual culture, the dominant civilization became hateful in the eyes of the people. And so all that was strongest and most alive in the moral life of the time separated itself from the spiritual life of society.

This spiritual alienation of its own greatest minds is the price that every civilization has to pay when it loses its religious foundations and is contented with a purely material success. We are only just beginning to understand how intimately and profoundly the vitality of a society is bound up with its religion. It is the religious impulse that unifies society and culture. The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product; in a very real sense, the great religions are the foundations on which the great civilizations rest. A society that has lost its religion and its spirituality sooner or later loses its culture and sooner or later fails to exist, as did many civilizations before it.

This is the challenge we face in this new century. Successful and ethical businesses should be congratulated and admired for their good work, and they should be invited and encouraged to play a fuller role in ensuring the common good of the community and the people who have played a vital role in the creation of wealth, with total respect for the environment and God's gifts. This coincides with God's vision of his kingdom, in which the leading perspective is not the profit of the fittest, as in neoliberal ideology, but a level playing field for all.

So, if we truly want to change the world for the better, all of us, the business community, politicians, workers, men, women, young, and old, must truly become better ourselves. We can do this by sharing a common understanding of the potential of each one of us to become self-directed, empowered, and active in defining this time in the world

World religious leaders at the plenary session of the first WCRP assembly in Kyoto (1970) took the first step toward world peace through interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

as an opportunity for positive change and healing and for the true formation of a culture of peace. We can realize this potential by giving thanks, spreading joy, sharing love, seeing miracles, discovering goodness, embracing kindness, practicing patience, teaching tolerance, encouraging laughter, celebrating and respecting the diversity of cultures and religions, showing compassion, turning from hatred, practicing forgiveness, peacefully resolving conflicts, choosing happiness, and showing love, sympathy, and empathy to others.

It must also be noted that as part of God's creation we are therefore all equal and that nobody can claim a monopoly on righteousness and civilization, regardless of how powerful they perceive themselves to be. The greatest threat to humanity is annihilation. Today we devote more than ever before to military expenditures, creating tools for our own destruction. We now have enough power to eradicate life many times over. This doomsday capacity has been recently combined with strategic doctrines widening the possibilities for actual use of the tools of destruction. This, combined with the adoption of the doctrine of preemptive strike, based mainly on self-interested motives, as well as the present overemphasis on military power for solv-

ing conflicts, together with simplistic notions about good and evil nations, is sooner or later bound to lead to collective disaster and destruction. Might is *never* right. It is only when we admit this that we can have a fully inclusive globalization for the common good, embracing all of us, leading to a harmonious world.

Finally, it is worth remembering the wise words of the Persian poet Saadi, who centuries ago wrote:

All Adam's race are members of one frame,
Since all, at first, from the same essence came.
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed
The other members lose their wonted rest.
If thou feel'st not for other's misery,
A son of Adam is no name for thee.

The first two lines of the poem are inscribed at the entrance of the Secretariat of the United Nations in New York. □

This article is based mainly on Kamran Mofid, *Globalisation for the Common Good* (London: Shepherd-Walwyn, 2002).

The Oneness of Religions

by Harold Rosen

All the major world religions teach the same broad set of moral and spiritual guidelines, this writer points out, and their view of the good person is essentially the same.

I believe that anyone who makes a study of the world's religions in any depth, as I have, will make three major discoveries: 1) all religions are essentially one; 2) religions have developed complementary themes; and 3) religions teach progression toward a day of ultimate fulfillment—but a little explanation is required.

What does it mean to say that “all religions are essentially one”? For me, this means that their most important teachings about how we are to live, individually and together, are the same. It means that they contain identical universal truths. It means that all religions teach a common set of moral and spiritual principles, or virtues.

Some of these virtues are more “ethical”—like truthfulness, respect, kindness, love, service, justice, and peace. Some are more “spiritual”—like faith, gratitude, detachment, prayerfulness, reverence, devotion, and purity of heart. And some of the virtues seem to be both ethical and spiritual at once—like patience, humility, compassion, forgiveness, wisdom, purposefulness, and unity.

The discovery that the great religions are essentially one is quite surprising, because from the outside, and at first glance, they seem quite different. We note differences in rituals and customs, the dress of the leaders, social expect-

tations, and languages. We note differences in the cultural and historical contexts in which the various religions emerged and developed. We note apparent differences in beliefs that are based on sometimes widely varying interpretations of foundational teachings. We also note that many conflicts and wars have been supposedly over “religious differences,” and our immediate thought is that these struggles must surely be about something very real and important.

But all the major world religions—including Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and the Baha'i faith—teach the same broad set of moral and spiritual guidelines, and their view of the good person is essentially the same.

Let me illustrate this. We can find something similar to our “Golden Rule” in all religious systems. A Native American version: “We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive.” Hindu: “One should always treat others as he himself wishes to be treated.” Buddhist: “Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.” Jewish: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Christian: “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” Islam: “Love for your neighbor what you love for yourself.” Sikh: “Be not a stranger to anyone, and let no one be a stranger to you.” Baha'i: “Lay not upon any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you.” Are these rules essentially different? No, they are essentially the same.

I recently taught a lesson on world religion in my sister's sixth-grade class in Southern California. We focused on the Golden Rule. When I asked the children why these rules sounded so alike, two answers emerged: 1) the later religions learned it from the earlier ones; and 2) the “Guy in the Sky” taught it to all of them. These are two fairly sophisticated theories, and I lean toward a version of the latter.

Let us consider another example, the ethical virtue of “respect.” What is taught by the major religions? Hindu: “The wise look impartially on all—lover, friend, or foe” (Gita 6:9). Buddhist: “Those who do their duty are tolerant and accepting, like earth” (Dhammapada 95). Jewish: “The discretion of the wise makes them slow to anger; and it is their glory to overlook transgressions” (Proverbs 19:11). Christian: “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. . . . Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 5:45, 7:1). Islam: “There must be no compulsion in religion. . . . Will you compel others, against their will, to believe? No soul can believe, except by the will of God” (Qur'an 2:256, 19:99–100). Sikh: “Where there is forgiveness (and tolerance) there is God Himself” (Adi Granth, Shalok, Kabir, p. 1372). Baha'i: “The heaven of true understanding shineth with the light of two luminaries: tolerance and righteousness” (Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 169). Are these teachings essentially the same? Indeed, they are. And examples of other virtues found in all major

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religions could be multiplied indefinitely. So, the first important discovery from studying the major religions is that they teach essentially the same moral and spiritual virtues.

A second major discovery is that there are complementary themes in each of the major religious dispensations—they emphasize some principles more than others, because humanity is in different conditions of receptivity at different times and places. The lessons and the cures change from era to era.

The theme of Hinduism might be stated as “many paths to one summit,” or “a yoga for each kind of seeker,” or “diverse means of linking to God”; if we were to state the theme in one word, that word could be “yoga” (or joining with God). That of Buddhism, “awakening in compassion for the suffering of humanity”; in one word, “compassion.” That of Zoroastrianism, “discerning good and evil, and joining the forces of good”; in a word, “wisdom.” That of Judaism, “making a covenant with God, and observing the Law”; in a word, “covenanting.” That of Christianity, “salvation through sacrificial love and forgiveness”; in a word, “love.” That of Islam, “submission to God, and building a spiritual nation”; in a word, “submission.” And that of the Baha’i faith, as “unity in diversity, and building a global civilization”; in a word, “unity.” So our second discovery is that religions develop complementary themes, all of which we need.

The third discovery is that all the religions teach about a “succession of prophets or founders,” or a “progressive revelation toward a day of ultimate fulfillment.” Judaism, for example, spoke of Adam being succeeded by Noah and Abraham and Moses and David and Isaiah and others, along with the expectation of a Messiah. Christianity added one major Savior, Jesus the Christ, and a few other prophetic figures like Peter, Paul, and John, along with an expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Islam added Muhammad, along with an expectation of the Promised One (El Mahdi) who would bring about final justice. The Baha’i writings describe this progression in great detail. Here is one short version: “The holy Manifestations Who have been the Sources or Founders of the various religious systems were united and agreed in purpose and teaching. Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Bab, and Baha’u’llah are one in spirit and reality. Moreover, each Prophet fulfilled the promise of the One who came before Him, and likewise, Each announced the One Who would follow.”

Hindus await the Return of Krishna; Buddhists await Maitreya Buddha; Zoroastrians await the Shah Bahram, the Future Savior; Jews await the Messiah, the Anointed One; Christians await the Second Coming of Christ; Muslims await the Qaim, the Promised One, the Mahdi, or the Return of Jesus; and Baha’is believe that these promises and expectations will now be fulfilled through Baha’u’llah’s guidance about the Oneness of the Divine Source, the

Oneness of Religion, and the Oneness of Humanity. We are poised for the coming-of-age of humanity, and we will be the builders of an ever-advancing civilization.

What are some of the religious visions of the day of humanity’s fulfillment? A Native American vision from Black Elk: “All the nations will form one tribe, and will understand one another. . . . We will learn a new dance, a new song, a new prayer. . . . A new world is coming.” A Hindu vision: “The minds of the people will become pure as flawless crystal, and they will be as if awakened at the conclusion of night.” A Buddhist vision: “The people will all feel equal, and they will be of one mind, mutually expressing pleasure upon meeting their fellows.” A Zoroastrian vision: “When the World Savior comes forth in full glory, . . . he will drive away covetousness, . . . envy, and wickedness. The time of the wolf will end, and the time of the sheep will begin.” A Jewish vision: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . None shall hurt or destroy, . . . for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.” A Christian vision: “There will be a new heaven and new earth. . . . God will dwell with his people. . . . Behold, all things shall be made new.” An Islamic vision: “God will show you the truth of the matters about which you dispute. . . . God will one day bring you all together.” A Sikh vision: “All humanity shall live in peace together under a shield of administrative benevolence.” A vision by Judy Chicago in the Unitarian hymnal: “Compassion will be wedded to power, . . . softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind; . . . the greed of some will give way to the need of many; . . . all will live in harmony with each other and the earth.” A Baha’i vision: “It will be our duty to investigate the essentials of Divine Religion, to seek the realities underlying the oneness of humanity, and to discover the source of fellowship and agreement, which will unite all in the heavenly bonds of love.”

And let me close with one final vision, from the Chinese tradition. “When Da Tong (the Great Togetherness) becomes effective, all men everywhere will live for the common good; leaders of worth and ability will be selected; their words will be trusted and they will be makers of peace. Men . . . will provide sustenance as long as they live to the aged, employment to the able-bodied, opportunity for development to the young, friendly care to widows, orphans, childless men, and the disabled, for each man a task, and for each woman a home. Not wishing to be wasteful of their possessions, they will nevertheless not keep them for purely personal use; not wishing to be inactive in the application of their strength, they will at the same time not exert it merely in their own behalf. Thus evil devices will cease or fail to prosper, robbers and traitors will be out of work, and outside doors will not need to be closed. This will be what we call Da Tong.” So may it be! □

Counting Our Blessings

by Nichiko Niwano

We can only realize true happiness and be filled with the joy of life when we give thanks for all our blessings. Such gratitude is the key to being able to accept as precious everything that comes to us.

The ability to accept every day as a blessing and live it with thanksgiving is, I believe, the greatest happiness. I would like to see us live with the focus on how we can maintain this frame of mind. As I have said repeatedly, our greatest blessing is having been born into this world, having been given life as human beings. Life consists of both joy and sorrow, both pleasure and pain. It is because we have been given life that we can taste all this. And it is because human life has been bestowed on us that we can encounter the precious teaching of the Buddha. How blessed we are! To live in thanks for this is what gives our life significance; it is the leitmotif of life as a human being.

True *joie de vivre* and happiness come from thanksgiving for our own life. Conversely, if we forget to give thanks for life, there can be no *joie de vivre*, no happiness. At bottom, our life is linked to the lives of all other beings. And while our life is finite, it is sustained by an infinite life and thus partakes of eternal life. What is more, each and every life is unique; each is distinctive and irreplaceable. Let us live in such a way that we never forget to give thanks for this wondrous life, this blessed life, this irreplaceable life.

Everything Is a Blessing

When we realize what a blessing our life is and the impulse of thanksgiving arises within us, we become able to accept everything that occurs around us as a blessing. Joy and pleasure, of course, but also pain and sorrow become blessings. Even those who speak to us harshly and those with whom we are in conflict are seen as blessings. All people are perceived as precious.

Everything is a blessing: being able to wake up in the morning as usual, being able to say good morning to our

family, seeing our children set off for school, being able to work. The natural phenomena of rain and sunshine are blessings, as are the sights of flowering plants and of animals romping. Being healthy is a blessing. And if we fall ill, we realize the joy and blessing of health and thus can give thanks for illness, too. We take the occurrences of daily life for granted, but when we think things through, we see that nothing could be more marvelous. What a blessing the commonplace is!

Daily life means, I think, living with thanks for everything, seeing each and every commonplace element of everyday life as a blessing and a wonder. To nurture this sensibility is to cultivate the field of the heart and mind. I hope, too, that we will firmly realize that gratitude arises from recognition of transience.

Seeing the Unseen

Every Japanese person knows the word *arigatai*, translated here most often as "blessing." *Arigatai* harbors an important meaning. Its literal meaning is "difficult to have or be." Originally, *arigatai* signifies how very difficult it is for each and every thing to be precisely as it is. We need to clarify what is *arigatai*, what is a blessing. I have talked again and again about the importance of recognizing transience. This means realizing what is a blessing by identifying what causes us to feel thankful.

The Buddha teaches that having received life as human beings, having come into contact with the Buddha Dharma, and all the commonplace things that we take for granted are occasions for thanks. To accept this fully and feel thankful for everything is to cultivate the field of the heart and mind.

We say thank you (*arigato* in Japanese) when someone has been kind to us or shown us goodwill. But being thankful does not apply only to what suits our convenience; it means being able to say thank you for that which is inconvenient or uncomfortable, as well. It also means being thankful for the working of the fountainhead of all life, the absolute force that sustains all living things.

Nichiko Niwano is president of Rissho Kosei-kai and the Niwano Peace Foundation, a president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), and vice-chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan).

Rev. Niwano (second from left) praying for a peaceful resolution of the Iraqi crisis with other religious leaders in Japan during a Prayer Gathering held at Enryakuji on Mount Hiei on February 20, when the preemptive strike against Iraq by U.S. and U.K. forces was feared imminent.

The majestic tree that withstands wind and rain has long, stout roots stretching deep underground. Those roots, invisible to us, support the great tree. The saying “the tip of the iceberg” means that what we see is only a tiny bit of the whole; the bulk of the iceberg is hidden beneath the surface. And frigid though the water is, under the iceberg are hosts of plankton and fish. What this tells us is that valuable things dwell where we cannot perceive them directly. Our being alive here and now is due to the working of a great life force invisible to us, and we are sustained by its power. In short, we live because we are given life. What a blessing this is! Cultivating the discernment to sense the blessed working of the unseen transforms our life.

Thanksgiving, the Foundation of Human Life

Whether we are deeply thankful for having received the precious gift of life and having been born as human beings determines whether we know happiness. The verse in the Dhammapada that reads “Difficult is the attainment of the human state. Difficult the life of mortals”^{*} teaches that being able to give thanks for one’s own life is the greatest happiness of having attained life in this world.

The key to *joie de vivre* is gratitude for having been given life in this world. If we have a strongly developed sense of gratitude, life becomes firm and solid, and we can live a life full of joy, never wavering. Gratitude for having received life as a human being; when we become aware of this, the foundation of humanity, we can give thanks for everything, even hardship, accepting it with thanks as a time of testing and then rising to the challenge. When we become aware of the blessing and wonder of having received life as a human being, a sense of the value of our own life wells up within us. We are also compelled to feel the same way about all life.

When we become aware of the blessing of our own life, we find ourselves unable to fight with others. Instead we realize that harmony with others is our true desire and the desire of all people. To become aware of, and live with gratitude for, the blessing and wonder of life, and of having been born as a human being, is the foundation of human life. Herein lies an important aspect of the objective of cultivating the field of the heart and mind. □

^{*}John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana, trans., *The Dhammapada* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2000), p. 34.

Always Moving Towards Nirvana

An interview with British composer Adam Gorb

Adam Gorb studied music at Cambridge University and with Paul Patterson at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He has composed a wide variety of works, many of which have been performed around the world. Works include: Metropolis and Awayday for wind ensemble; Prelude, Interlude and Postlude for piano; Kol Simcha, a ballet; a string quartet; and Symphony No. 1 in C for the Royal Northern College of Music Wind Ensemble. Mr. Gorb was commissioned to write a work for the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra's 74th regular concert in Tokyo on October 18, 2002, in which the result, his Towards Nirvana, premiered. He is head of the School of Composition and Contemporary Music at the Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester, U.K.). DHARMA WORLD spoke with him in Tokyo on the day before the concert about the writing of this major work and the relationship between music and religion.

Could you please tell us why you composed Towards Nirvana?

First of all, it was commissioned by the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra (TOKWO). And, just personally, to give some background about myself religiously and spiritually—I was born into a Jewish family, and I think that for me it was much more a social thing rather than anything spiritual. That is, I was much more interested in how the Jews live their lives than in what they believe. And if I had to say what my own belief is, I'm not sure. I know little about Buddhism. I have read a couple of books about it and I think it is a religion that is quite attractive to people in the West. It seems that Buddhism is a lot freer than Christianity or Islam, and that one is freer to adapt it to one's way of living.

As far as this particular piece is concerned, the title was quite difficult to find because I think that nirvana is something that the Buddha found only by searching for many years and that it's what Buddhists spend all their lives looking for. So I would never think that I could actually ever get there. I mean, I probably need to write another ten pieces, called *Further Towards Nirvana*, and *A Little Bit Further Towards Nirvana*, and so on. As far as it links in with the structure of this piece, I wanted to depict what is

wrong with today's society. I was trying to express the tormentor and the tormented. And in the first five minutes of the piece, there are some quite vulgar and quite militaristic passages. It is loud, fast, very dissonant, and rhythmically complex. The second part of the piece (which is in three parts) is a very slow diminuendo over five or six minutes, gradually growing darker and darker, further and further down into a sort of depth of thought, before a certain amount of self-knowledge comes in the third part of the work, where I imagine lots of doors opening, ways opening, especially the "Middle Way," which Buddhism talks about.

And I introduced a lot of Eastern-sounding instruments—tuned gongs, water gong, and a temple bell. But I hope there is a sense of questioning at the end; that nirvana is not yet reached, and that there is a sense of what is going to happen next. The piece ends very softly, with just a solo piccolo playing in a very low register. And I like to think that maybe this work almost rises slightly from the ground at the end, suspended in midair, as if it needs to move elsewhere.

There is also a certain symbolism in the numbers as well. I read that the number thirty-one is quite important in Theravada Buddhism—symbolizing various states of existence, going from the bottom of the worst hell all the way

Mr. Gorb enjoys conversation with the members of the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra at a rehearsal for the orchestra's 74th regular concert in Tokyo.

up to the state of not-existing. There are thirty-one different states, so at the end of the piece, I used just thirty-one notes rising from the bottom to the top. And there are also thirty-one repetitions of a stroke on the tam-tam with a bass drum, which gradually get softer all the way through the second section to the third section. So there are a certain number of things that helped me give a structure to the piece.

Please tell us in detail how the commission came about. Was it through TOKWO's principal conductor, Douglas Bostock?

I think that the commission probably happened through Douglas. He had certainly conducted some of my pieces, and he must have talked with the management. And he did say to me that it would be quite nice if I could find some link with the Rissho Kosei-kai lay Buddhist organization. So it was basically through Douglas, and when the letter came from the organization, it was fantastic, and I must thank Douglas for that.

Could you please tell us why you finally chose "Towards Nirvana" as the theme of your new piece?

I like to tell a story in music. I think it is important. I knew I was going to write a work that would be about 20 minutes long. It's always very hard to start a piece, but I knew

how I wanted to end it—with the idea of attaining a certain sense of tranquillity after a long struggle. I know a lot of people in the West are quite interested in Buddhism, because it's something very universal—it's not even seen as a religion, but as a sort of philosophy. And the title came afterwards. I was going to call it *The Road to Nirvana*, but then I thought that moving "towards" nirvana seemed more suitable.

Have you yourself ever practiced any kind of Buddhist meditation?

No, not really. I wish I had the time (laughter).

Could you please describe how you incorporated the life of Shakyamuni and his realization of the "Middle Way" into the piece?

First of all, when I was writing the piece, I could only think about the music. When I compose, I only think about the notes, sitting at the piano, banging away, and I usually have a sort of emotional direction to guide me. This time it was a settled emotion. I wanted to do something that was rather mysterious—expressing what I understand by the "Middle Way." Without getting too technical, there are the thirty-one notes I mentioned that form a particular scale over several octaves, and if I play it on a piano, it seems to avoid certain musical intervals, certain discordant

sounds. And it seems to work quite nicely as far as the philosophical idea of moving “towards nirvana” is concerned. Some groups of instruments just do one thing, and other groups do something else. Everybody is sort of coexisting all at the same time and not in any way striving against one another, but getting away from a sense of argument and direction, which is what the first two parts of the piece are about. I think that’s a good point—moving away from a sense of direction—because of course it implies that there is a direction.

One composer I did think of a little toward the end was the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. I do not know anything about his spiritual world, but he, like the French composer Debussy, managed to create a sense of no direction, a sense of something just happening at a particular time, and all with a lack of tension, which I try at the end of this piece. Maybe my next piece, if I ever do *Further Towards Nirvana*, will just be a very soft piece, a work in which all things exist as one in time.

Your words remind us of an ideal state of the world in which people are allowed to exist in diversity, but in total-ity are in harmony. Is that what your music tries to express in the third section of the piece?

I think harmony is a very complicated word, because in Western musical tradition, we all grow up with harmonic rules that were really created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And now in the twenty-first century, there are no rules of harmony any more. And so what a lot of composers try to do is to find their own rules that are good

for them, whereas Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wagner, Mahler, and all those people used Bach’s rules. What I am talking about is that there exists functional harmony and non-functional harmony. Functional harmony implies a tension that moves toward a kind of relaxation, a resolution. Now, I suppose one could say that the first part of *Towards Nirvana* is written in functional harmony, but all of Bach’s rules are broken all the time, because it is so dissonant. And the second, or middle, section, is again still dissonant functional harmony, but it gradually evaporates, and the whole, if you like, tyranny of functional harmony—the “you must do this” aspect—is, I hope, lost in the third part. So actually the third part is the least harmonic in a Western sense; but when we talk about living together in peace and harmony, I think that the third section is probably the most like that. It is a different sort of harmony. I know that many other composers—like Debussy or Messiaen—have experimented with modes and particular notes and scales, trying to find their own harmony.

*We learned that your piece *Awayday* has been performed a hundred times since its premiere.*

Probably over a thousand, actually!

Is there any secret that has enabled it to be so well loved by so many people?

Well, it is a very popular piece, a very light piece. I used to play in a wind ensemble and I advise my students—“If you want to write a piece for symphony orchestra, well, you can

do it. But people will not perform it, because they would rather perform Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, or people like that. But if you write for a wind ensemble, it is a new repertoire." And there are thousands of wind ensembles in America, Europe, and Japan. So if you write a piece that works, wind ensembles will play it at conferences, and then other people will hear it. I am lucky because I have a publisher who represents my works for wind ensemble. *Awayday* was first performed, I think, in America in 1997 or 1998, and after that a lot more people found out about it. And it is six minutes long, which is a nice length.

This piece, *Towards Nirvana*, is twenty minutes long. I do not think it will get performed a lot. It is too long and very difficult (laughter).

Of course, we hope that it will get performed many, many times.

I would love to think that. It often happens, though, that serious pieces do not get performed very often. My first piece, *Metropolis*, is a serious piece that sometimes gets performed, but it is very difficult. But lighter pieces like *Awayday* and *Yiddish Dances*, and another piece, *Bridge-water Breeze*, which is intended for children, get done a lot because they can be played by schools or community bands. But I like that. I think that the best thing that can happen as a composer is that people are playing your music and you do not even know about it.

You were probably very young, but about when did you decide to become a composer or musician?

I started composing when I was ten and wrote a lot of music when I was a teenager. Then I went to university, but I did not write very much there, and after that I worked in the theater and played the piano in ballets, operas, and musicals, and I also did jazz gigs and taught a bit—so I just led a general life as a musician for about ten years. But then I met an important composer and teacher Paul Patterson. When I heard some of his music, I rang him up and asked to study with him. I was about twenty-seven then. After a few years he said that I should go to the Royal Academy of Music in London and continue studying with him there. I had done a first degree at Cambridge University, and so I did a master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music. Then I met people like Edward Gregson and Timothy Reynish for the first time, and the first performance of *Metropolis* took place back in about 1993. And after that I started to be able to get commissions through people knowing about me. So I suppose I decided I really wanted to compose, to be professional about it, maybe about fifteen years ago. But if I had not gone to the conservatory, I could not have done it. I would be still playing the piano for musicals now.

Concerning the relationship between music and religion, in the Christian tradition, music has played an important role in church services. In Buddhism, there is a tradition known as shomyo, which is a kind of chanting sung by Buddhist monks. What is your perception of the relationship between religion and music?

I think it is there. I like writing church music. I have written some anthems for choir, and I would love to write a big mass or something. I do not have a particular point of view—for example, Wagner was not a religious man, but he wrote some of the most beautiful religious music ever in his last opera, *Parsifal*. I think Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* is very much about all religions coming together. I think of Mahatma Gandhi, who said, "I am a Muslim," "I am a Hindu," "I am a Jew," "I am a Christian." And I think that Buddhism is somehow most like that—this is what I wanted to express in this piece. In addition to the humming and the percussion instruments, there is a passage toward the end of the piece with two saxophones playing off stage. And what I tried to do there was impersonate those very rough Tibetan trumpets, which have a coarse, strange sound as if it were from another world. But the challenge for me was how to actually do that in a wind ensemble. I did not really want to introduce actual Tibetan trumpets into the piece, because then it could not be played anywhere. The percussion instruments are OK, like the gongs and the temple bell, because you can get or improvise those instruments. But I think that what is important is a sense of practicality—however spiritual.

You were born into a Jewish family. In the case of Judaism, there is also a very strong connection with music, as we see in the movies, especially Fiddler on the Roof. Do you have something to say about this?

Yes, of course—this piece is not about that. Although one could say that in parts of the opening, there are passages that may sound a little bit like Jewish music, that's just maybe the way I write. There is a particular sort of Jewish celebration music called *klezmer*, which I used in about four different pieces. It is traditional Yiddish dance music that has been influenced by jazz, as well as by other folk music, and it has gone all around the world, and is particularly popular in America and Europe. And certainly it is that sort of sense of celebration that interests me very much about the Jewish way of life—the way the Jews can laugh in the face of terror. I think that the idea that even though there may be something terrible lurking, you still have to carry on enjoying life is what I was trying to express.

And we think you did a good job. Thank you very much.

And thank you for your kind words. It was my pleasure. □

Peace of Mind Through Faith

by Yumiko Yokoyama

In this speech, which she delivered in Los Angeles on November 10, 2002, a grateful woman relates how the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra not only carried her safely through life's vicissitudes, but also blessed her with the precious gift of life.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to tell you about my experiences on Founder Niwano's Birthday.

I was born the second of three children on July 16, 1952, in Nagasaki. My elder brother had died one week after his birth, and I have a brother who is two years younger than I. My father was a very successful merchant and managed all different kinds of businesses with almost 200 employees. My mother helped with his business accounting and by doing whatever else she could. But she was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia due to accumulated stress and fatigue when I was five years old. My father hired two maids to help my mother with us two children, but he was seldom at home with us. I used to greet him by saying, "Welcome to our home" to him, as I thought he was more like a house guest. Later I found out he had two mistresses and spent most of his time with them. Both my brother and I grew up without love, but we were generously given money and material things.

I dreamed of attending Kassui Women's School when I was about eleven or twelve years old. I really studied hard for the entrance exam and passed it. This school was famous for how hard the entrance exam was, but once you pass the entrance exam you can go automatically from junior high straight through college. When I passed the test, I decided to become a stewardess after I graduated from school. But just before school started my parents divorced and my father decided to take me and my brother to Nagoya, where he lived with his second wife, even though I begged my mother to keep me with her in Nagasaki. I started to go to public school in Nagoya and our family life started there. I always quarreled with my stepmother and I kept writing letters to my mother. I had to read and write letters to my mother at school. However, my mother suddenly passed away when I was fourteen years old. I began to blame my father and his wife, thinking that they are the ones who killed my mother. And my attitude changed and I started to fool around during my high-school years. But then I started to realize that I could not go on with my life like that and decided to escape from Nagoya to

Tokyo, where my aunt and uncle lived. I moved to Tokyo after my high-school graduation and started to work at Keio department store. While I was working at Keio, I was scouted by a nightclub manager and I started to work as a hostess at eighteen years old. By twenty, I had become the top hostess in the Shinjuku area!

My life had changed completely by twenty-five. I owned my own establishment in West Shinjuku and my brother started to work for me as a Chinese cook. I hired seven young girls and business was very good and prosperous. My father came to visit me almost every month to teach me

Yumiko Yokoyama is a member of Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles.

how to run the business and taught me not to be taken advantage of by others. When I had to do official paperwork, such as contracts, he always came with me. I started to feel oppressed and wished that he would go back to Nagoya right away. I was kind of relieved that I could say goodbye to him, with cold joy, knowing that he was ready to go home. But when I turned twenty-six years old, my father suddenly got sick and was admitted to the hospital with hepatitis. Four months later he passed away. I felt so strange without his harsh atmosphere around me, and I started to wish I hadn't treated him so coldly, or at least that I had spent more time with him being kind. After his death, I realized how big my father's mind was, and came to see that he always watched over me with love and compassion. That is why my business was improving and why I was blessed in many ways. For the first time, I felt sincere thankfulness toward my father, seeing how wonderful the scale of his mind was, and how filled with love he really was. I came to see that he really cared about me.

Six months after his death, one of my frequent customers asked me to become his partner and open a *yakitori* (grilled chicken morsels on skewers) restaurant in Los Angeles. After quickly selling my Shinjuku bar, I flew to Los Angeles in 1979 to start the restaurant as his partner. However, I could not get along with him and lost all of my \$100,000 investment within two months. I came to realize that my so-called partner had taken all the money and that the business was a fraud. I really wished my father had been alive at that time, and I felt I needed his business wisdom very badly. After that incident, I became distrustful of the people around me and I started to drink heavily. I could not see my future, and I had to start working in the Piano Bar at 3rd and Normandy. Two to three months after I started working there, one of my friends back in Japan, named Tomiko, came to Los Angeles to bring me back to Japan with her. I decided to go back home with her, as my life was kind of meaningless in Los Angeles and I didn't know what to do with myself.

I returned to Japan with Tomiko in February 1980. While I was living with Tomiko's family for a month or so, one day she said to me, "Yumi, why don't you study the Rissho Kosei-kai teachings with me?" When I asked her what kind of teaching it was, the group leader, Ms. Shimizu, came and explained the teachings to me. I felt good about the teachings and had wanted to practice ancestor veneration for a long time, so I simply decided to join Rissho Kosei-kai right away. Ms. Shimizu led me very strongly in the practice. One time, when I was very sad, I called her up while I was drinking and she talked with me and listened to me till the next morning. She cried with me sometimes. She led and took care of me even better than my own parents ever did. She always told me that whether or not I could understand the meaning of the Lotus Sutra, I should just recite it as much as I could, just like the rain pouring on me. She also taught me to recite the whole

Threefold Lotus Sutra book through once a month. I have been practicing it ever since then. She taught me many things and the way I am now is because of her love and compassion. I sincerely respect and am thankful for her. When I climbed Mount Shichimen as a pilgrimage, she came to see me off as if she were my own mother. She also came to see me when I came down and was crying with joy for me. I was able to receive various qualifications, even becoming a dharma teacher, because of her. Four years after I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I received the *Gohonzon*—the scroll of Shakyamuni Buddha's image. I was very happy in Japan during those six years. Thank you very much, Ms. Shimizu.

To go back to my business story, I started my business in Japan again one year after I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, but my business went down with fraud, and that created a huge debt totaling three million yen.

I worked hard till four in the morning, repaid all my debts, and moved to Hawaii in February 1986. After six months in Hawaii, I met a man named Robert, and we got married, but I found out a month later that he was an alcoholic. I kept on going to Rissho Kosei-kai of Hawaii and received Rev. Yamamoto's guidance, and I tried hard to work it out, but I ended up divorcing Robert two years later in 1988.

During my stay in Hawaii, I incurred another debt of \$300,000, and with it I moved to Las Vegas in 1996. I was really ready to work earnestly in Las Vegas and I started working at the Gucci store in 1996. Later I was asked to move on to Prada at Bellagio in 1998, and I kept on working hard there. Even though Rev. Yagitani, Mrs. Nakazato, and Mrs. Tajima called me and asked me to join their practice, I always made excuses, saying that I was too busy. I escaped not only from the Buddha but also from Rissho Kosei-kai for six years. During those six years, I just kept on working hard and returned my \$300,000 debt within a year and bought a brand-new house in Las Vegas. I kept up my trend of top sales girl in this business for three consecutive years by selling \$5 million worth of merchandise all by myself and by working like crazy.

On March 31 of 2002, on Easter morning at around 8:30, I got up from my bed and tried to go to the bathroom, but I could not move. I had a severe pain around my waist. I called my friend for help and spent all day in bed with the help of painkillers. My friend took me to the doctor the next day, but I was still just taking painkillers. I thought that something was wrong with my hip bone. After two months of tests, I was diagnosed with cancer. It had started with breast cancer and had spread to my spine and pelvis. It was such a shock to me when I was told this that I wanted to scream, "Why me?" I had never missed a day of reciting the Lotus Sutra for the last twenty-two years and had always recited many chapters every morning and evening. I have always helped others and have always quite generously given the things I possessed to my friends. All

my money was taken by swindlers, so why did I have to go through this kind of pain? I really began to doubt God and the Buddha's existence.

At the same time, because of my sickness, I started to think of my mother's position while I was growing up, as if it were my own pain. I thought of her loneliness and disgusted feelings caused by her not being able to move around freely because of her sickness. I am sure my mother was devastated that her own children were taken away from her. While I was in bed, not moving and with severe pain in my waist, I deeply realized what my mother had gone through. Until this day, at fifty years old, I always blamed my mother somewhere in my mind for my having had such a hard life; I thought it would have been better if she had kept me with her in Nagasaki when my parents had divorced. I blamed my father, also. If he hadn't divorced her, no matter what she said, my mother might have not died at the young age of thirty-eight. Through my own sickness I realized how selfish I had been. I never knew how much both my parents cared for and were concerned about me and my brother. Mother and Father, I am sorry that I always lived my own way so selfishly. Please forgive me for blaming both of you. I love you both.

I was told by my doctor to receive six antineoplastic chemotherapy treatments starting on June 6. After the fourth treatment was done, I had a bone scan on August 20. On August 23, my doctor told me the result: there was no treatment for me, as my cancer had spread to my spine and pelvis. I was told that I could live two to five years at the most, and would never recover 100 percent from this sickness.

It was my death sentence, but I decided from that moment to challenge it with my life, following the Buddha's Way. I decided once again that I would live with Rissho Kosei-kai teachings for the rest of my life. Through this cancer I learned a lot and realized many things. I wasn't thankful enough about having a healthy body until I got cancer. I realize now that I have to cherish every moment of this life. With Mrs. Nakazato's help, I introduced a person to the wonderful teaching of Rissho Kosei-kai, and attended the Autumn Ancestral Ceremony for the first time in six years.

I received the last chemo treatment on September 24 smoothly and had a CAT scan on October 1. Two days later, when my doctor gave me the results of the CAT scan, I could

not believe it, because the doctor told me that all my cancer was cleared and that I looked clean. It was a miracle and I truly felt the existence of God and the Buddha, and through my sickness, proved how faith works.

For future protection, my doctor insisted that I take radiation treatments, because no one knows if my cancer might come back again. The radiation therapy started on October 23 and would continue for three treatments. I would like to live every day at my best with this Lotus Sutra teaching. I feel that the Buddha showed me some of his invisible power through my sickness within the last month or so. Thank you very much, Founder Niwano and President Niwano.

I found in the September issue of *Yakushin* (Rissho Kosei-kai's monthly periodical) that President Niwano said, "Illness can be a good friend of the Dharma." Because of my cancer, I realized how cruel and selfish I had been toward my father. And I was enabled to understand my mother's feelings, such as how lonely and filled with pain she had been during those two years after the divorce, living alone without her children around her until she died. Also, as President Niwano said, "it is possible that peace of mind through religious faith provides unexpected merits." I have proven these words myself through my experience. I was given a second chance to live now. I would like to promise, here in front of the Buddha, that I will spend the rest of my life helping other people around me with the Rissho Kosei-kai teachings.

Ms. Shimizu in Japan, Rev. Yamamoto and members of the Hawaii Branch, Los Angeles and Las Vegas members, and all my Christian friends, thank you very much for all your love and support. I am alive today because of all your love and compassion. Thank you very much. □

Ms. Yokoyama (center) poses with fellow members of the Los Angeles branch, after delivering her testimonial speech.

Elegant Yakushi Nyorai from the Seventeenth Century

by Takeshi Kuno

In the main hall of Toji in Kyoto sits the Medicine Buddha, known in Japanese as Yakushi Nyorai. Although he carved it in the seventeenth century, the Buddhist sculptor Kosho brilliantly succeeded in expressing the delicate eighth-century style in which the original sculptures it replaced are thought to have been made.

Soon after the transferal of Japan's capital to Kyoto in 794, Toji (East Temple, formally known as Kyō Gokokuji) was constructed for the protection of the city. The images housed within its various halls consisted of two types. The first was Buddhist images popularly worshiped in the Tenpyō era (729–49); the second was esoteric Buddhist sculptures produced after Kūkai (774–835; founder of the Shingon sect of esoteric Japanese Buddhism) was appointed head priest of Toji in 823. The former type is represented by the Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaisajya-guru) triad enshrined in the Kondo (main hall). The latter includes the three-dimensional mandala formed of images on the platforms of the Kodo (lecture hall), with the Five Tathagatas, including the Cosmic Buddha Dainichi Nyorai (Mahāvairocana), in the center; the Five Bodhisattvas to their east; and the Five Great Wisdom Kings (Skt: Vidyaraja; Jpn: Myōō) to their west. (See the January/February 2003 issue of DHARMA WORLD.)

The images contained within the main hall when it was first constructed were lost quite early on, and the present Yakushi triad is a reconstruction of the images newly made after they were lost once again in a fire during an uprising in 1486. They were carved between 1602 and 1604 by the great Buddhist sculptor Kosho (1534–1621) and craftsmen from his workshop. This attribution is confirmed by a wooden tablet dated the fifth of the sixth month, Keicho 8 (1603), which was found within the head section of the central image.

Kosho, a prominent sculptor of Buddhist images in the period, is said to have been a son of the master sculptor Kosho. As a direct descendant of the traditional school of Buddhist sculpture, Kosho had been active from the early years of the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1603) to the early years of the Edo period (1603–1868). Examples of his work include the statue of Nyoirin Kannon (Cintamani-cakra Avalokiteshvara) at Shitennoji (1587), the four Bud-

dhist statues in the pagoda of Toji (1591), and the Great Buddha of Higashiyama (1598) ordered by the imperial regent Toyotomi Hidetsugu (1568–95) just before his demise. In 1598, Kosho also carved an image of a Japanese Shinto deity for Toyokuni Shrine, the Kannon statue that was the central image of the Sanmon (gate) of Shokokuji in Kyoto, and the four Buddhist statues that are housed in the great pagoda on Mount Kōya. He also made the Shakyamuni triad for Daijō-in in Nara in 1601. In 1604 Toyotomi Hideyori (1593–1615), son of the national unifier Toyotomi Hideyoshi, commissioned him to make the Yakushi triad for Toji. Kosho later went on to produce, with his younger brother, the Nio statues for the great gate, as well as the statues of Aizen Myōō (Ragaraja) and Fudo Myōō (Acalanatha) for the Miedo (1606), all on Mount Kōya. He also undertook a great deal of restoration work, including repairs to the statues of Sanjusangendo in Kyoto and the aforementioned images of the Five Great Wisdom Kings in the lecture hall of Toji.

Of all his output, this Yakushi triad is considered to be among his best. Stylistically, it continues the tradition of the triad belonging to the Nara temple known as Yakushiji. The 228-cm-high central image is seated in the lotus position on a pedestal, down the sides of which its robes fall. The stern visage is majestic, and the well-rounded torso is clothed in a simple robe draped over the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder partially bare. This style of dress follows the traditional pattern. The twelve guardian generals positioned around the base of the pedestal are also notable because their forms adhere to the old style.

The attendant statues are well-balanced in form, and the elegance of their facial expressions is typical of Tenpyō-era images. The attendant images, which are 290 cm (left) and 289 cm (right) tall, hold lotus flowers that incorporate the shapes of the sun (left) and the moon (right), and their skirts are lightly engraved with a pattern. All in all, they contrast with the early Heian style, which is characterized by severity of facial expression, heavily patterned robes, and full-bodied torsos. Their elegance suggests that the original statues too were in the style of the Tenpyō era. □

Takeshi Kuno, formerly a director of the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, is now director-general of the Institute of Buddhist Art Research in Tokyo.

Photo: Benrido

The Four Great Instructions Taught at Bhoganagara

by Hajime Nakamura

We all need to decide for ourselves whether or not what we are told is an authentic teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, by comparing it to the teachings found in the suttas and the Vinaya. By so doing, we will naturally become grateful for the Dharma.

Gotama Buddha then moved to Bhoganagara (lit. “city of pleasure”); the city was doubtless prosperous through commerce and rich in goods, which enabled its inhabitants to enjoy a comfortable life and devote themselves to pleasure. Bhoganagara is the site of the Ānanda Shrine, and according to some traditions was the place where the Buddha taught the four criteria by which to judge whether a teaching was truly his, saying that any decision must be made in the light of the *suttas* (sūtras) and the Vinaya. Since neither anthology had yet been compiled, the section reproduced below should be considered a later addition. The Pāli text states:

“(5) The Venerable Master, having stayed at Bhaṇḍagāma as long as he wished, said to the young Ānanda: ‘Come, Ānanda, let us go to Hatthigāma, . . . to Ambagāma, . . . to Jambugāma, . . . and then to Bhoganagara.’

“(6) ‘Yes, Master,’ replied the young Ānanda. Then, the Venerable Master went to Bhoganagara together with a large company of *bhikkhus*.

“(7) At Bhoganagara, the Venerable Master stayed at the foot of the sacred tree of Ānanda. And here he announced to the *bhikkhus*: ‘*Bhikkhus*, I will teach you the four great instructions. Listen well, give me your attention, and I will speak.’ ‘Yes, Master,’ replied the *bhikkhus*. The Venerable Master then spoke as follows.

“(8) ‘*Bhikkhus*, suppose a *bhikkhu* were to say: “Friend, I have personally heard this directly from the Venerable Master; it is the Dhamma, it is the Vinaya, it is the teaching of the Master.” *Bhikkhus*, you should neither joyfully accept what he has said, nor should you reject it. Neither joyfully accepting it nor rejecting it, you should comprehend correctly his words and phrases, and compare them with the *suttas* and review and scrutinize them in the light of the Vinaya. If, when these words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, they are found not to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are not the words

of the Venerable Master; they have been mistakenly understood by this *bhikkhu*.” In that case, *bhikkhus*, you should discard them. However, if those words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, and are found to conform to those of the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are the words of the Venerable Master; they have been correctly understood by this *bhikkhu*.” This, *bhikkhus*, you should accept as the first reference to the sources” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 5–8).

The above section (8) shows that the *suttas* themselves acknowledged that there were differing interpretations of the Buddhist teachings among the *bhikkhus*. This sec-

The late Dr. Hajime Nakamura, an authority on Indian philosophy, was president of the Eastern Institute in Tokyo and a professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo at the time of his death in October 1999. This ongoing series is a translation of Gotama Buddha, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1992).

tion, and those that follow (9–11), are clearly later accretions.

“(9) ‘Further, *bhikkhus*, suppose a *bhikkhu* were to say: “In such and such a place there is a community [of *bhikkhus*], where elders and venerable teachers also dwell. I have personally heard this directly from that community; it is the Dhamma, it is the Vinaya, it is the teaching of the Master.” *Bhikkhus*, you should neither joyfully accept what has been said, nor should you reject it. Neither joyfully accepting it nor rejecting it, you should comprehend correctly those words and phrases, and compare them with the *suttas* and review and scrutinize them in the light of the Vinaya. If, when these words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, they are found not to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are not the words of the Venerable Master; they have been mistakenly understood by this community.” In that case, *bhikkhus*, you should discard them. However, if those words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, and are found to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are the words of the Venerable Master; they have been correctly understood by this community.” This, *bhikkhus*, you should accept as the second reference to the sources.’

“(10) ‘Further, *bhikkhus*, suppose a *bhikkhu* were to say: “In such and such a place there are a great number of elders, *bhikkhus* of great learning, who transmit the *suttas*, who maintain the Dhamma, who preserve the precepts, and who are versed in the essence of the teachings [*mātikā*]. I have personally heard this directly from those elders; it is the Dhamma, it is the Vinaya, it is the teaching of the Master.” *Bhikkhus*, you should neither joyfully accept what they have said, nor should you reject it. Neither joyfully accepting it nor rejecting it, you should comprehend correctly their words and phrases, and compare them with the *suttas* and review and scrutinize them in the light of the Vinaya. If, when these words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, they are found not to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are not the words of the Venerable Master; they have been mistakenly understood by these elders.” In that case, *bhikkhus*, you should discard them. However, if those words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, and are found to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are the words of the Venerable Master; they have been correctly understood by these elders.” This, *bhikkhus*, you should accept as the third reference to the sources.’

“(11) ‘Further, *bhikkhus*, suppose a *bhikkhu* were to say:

“In such and such a place there is one elder *bhikkhu* of great learning, who transmits the *suttas*, who maintains the Dhamma, who preserves the precepts, and who is versed in the essence of the teachings. I have personally heard this directly from that elder; it is the Dhamma, it is the Vinaya, it is the teaching of the Master.” *Bhikkhus*, you should neither joyfully accept what he has said, nor should you reject it. Neither joyfully accepting it nor rejecting it, you should comprehend correctly his words and phrases, and compare them with the *suttas* and review and scrutinize them in the light of the Vinaya. If, when these words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, they are found not to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are not the words of the Venerable Master; they have been mistakenly understood by this elder.” In that case, *bhikkhus*, you should discard them. However, if those words and phrases have been compared with the *suttas* and reviewed and scrutinized in the light of the Vinaya, and are found to conform to the *suttas* or the Vinaya, then this is the conclusion that must be reached: “Unquestionably, these are the words of the Venerable Master; they have been correctly understood by this elder.” This, *bhikkhus*, you should accept as the fourth reference to the sources. *Bhikkhus*, you should accept these four instructions.’

“(12) Then the Venerable Master, while staying at the foot of the sacred tree of Ānanda in Bhoganagara, gave for the sake of the *bhikkhus* a large number of lectures concerning the Dhamma. “That is, such and such are the precepts and regulations. Such and such is concentration. Such and such is wisdom. Concentration nurtured with the precepts brings great results, great merit. Wisdom nurtured with concentration brings great results, great merit. A mind nurtured with wisdom is completely emancipated from all stain—the stain of the desires, the stain of becoming, the stain of false views, and the stain of ignorance” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 9–12).

The equivalent section in the Yu-hsing-ching has “You should discern truth or falsehood in the various sutras and investigate thoroughly what is the substance and what is the shadow according to the Vinaya and according to the Dharma.” The Pāli text, by comparison, has “It is the Dhamma, it is the Vinaya, it is the teaching of the Master,” with no mention of “in the various sutras.” This suggests that the northern tradition stressed the authority of the sutras to a far greater extent than did the southern. Here, too, we find the developed form of a later time. Similarly, the Pan-ni-yüan-ching relates how the Buddha teaches people according to their type and nature. “According to their clothes, their voice, and their language, I confer upon them the doctrines of the sutras, enable all to be fulfilled, reveal that the temporary teachings are mistaken, and then pass away. All people receive my teachings, though they do not know me. This is the Buddha’s blessed

natural Dharma.” The sutra relates that even the deities will be instructed: “Having led them by persuasion and encouragement for their benefit, and having caused them to attain the Way of buddhahood, and then I pass away. All of the deities do not know who I am. This is the Buddha’s blessed natural Dharma.”

The above passage is of interest for the frequent mention of the word *blessed*, expressed in Japanese by the compound used to convey thanks (*arigatai*—lit., “it is difficult to be”) and for the fact that the subject of that description is the “natural Dharma.” The words for “thanks” in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese do not contain this connotation of “difficulty.” In Sanskrit, *dhanyavādāḥ* means literally “expressing fortune”; I do not yet know whether this word appears in Buddhist literature, but I have

certainly not seen it in the texts I have read so far. The French *merci* and the Spanish *gracias* presuppose an idea of God. (In Christian theology, “mercy” is used only in regard to God’s compassion.) There are also the expressions *obligado* in Portuguese and “I am much obliged to you” in English (this usage is rarely heard in modern English, however, and uttering it would generally provoke amusement). In all cases, however, there is the assumption of the idea of a contract. In the Pan-ni-yüan-ching, though, there is no premise of God or thought of a contractual relationship. Rather, it says that to feel, or be caused to feel, “blessed” (“difficult to be” or “grateful”) is the “natural Dharma.” This is very close to the feelings and expression of the Japanese *arigatai*.

To be continued

Kushan stone relief unearthed in Gandhara, Pakistan. Third century. The top row depicts Shakyamuni Buddha flanked by two attendants. The bottom row describes the legends soon after the birth of Shakyamuni. Tokyo National Museum.

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 7

The Parable of the Magic City (1)

This is the seventieth installment of a detailed commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.

This chapter and the next two, collectively called “preaching by causality,” teach us by means of discourses concerning the causal relationship with former lives that the Buddha Law is eternal and unchanging, that all human beings equally possess the buddha-nature, and that as a result all living beings are capable of attaining the wisdom of the Buddha. The religious practice of those of us who study the Buddha Law is not something that we have taken up in this life but something that began in earlier lives, and the practice that we engage in now will not end with the present life but will continue into future lives, drawing gradually nearer the final result. I have explained this process in the discussion of transmigration. I urge you to study this chapter, not as a quaint tale of the past but as an aid to discerning the Buddha’s true intention within the parable.

At the end of chapter 6, “Prediction,” the World-honored One states, “Of my and your development in previous worlds I will now make declaration. Do you all listen well!” With this remark, he begins a new discourse.

TEXT The Buddha addressed the bhikshus, [saying]: “Of yore in the past, infinite, boundless, and inconceivable asamkhyeya kalpas ago, there was then a buddha named Universal Surpassing Wisdom Tathagata, Worshipful, All Wise, Perfectly Enlightened in Conduct, Well Departed, Understander of the World, Peerless Leader, Controller, Teacher of Gods and Men, Buddha, World-honored One, whose domain was named Well Completed, and whose kalpa was named Great Form. Bhikshus! Since that buddha became extinct, a very long time has passed. For instance, suppose the earth element in a three-thousand-great-thousandfold world were by someone ground into ink, and he were to pass through a thousand countries in an eastern direction, and then let fall one drop as large as a grain of dust; again, passing through [another] thousand countries, again let fall one drop; [suppose] he thus proceeds until

he has finished the ink [made] of the earth element—what is your opinion? All these countries—is it possible for mathematicians or their disciples to find their end or confines so as to know their number?”

“No, World-honored One!”

COMMENTARY These “countries” may be thought of as heavenly bodies, that is, stars. From the above description of the number of dust particles in the universe, the Lotus Sutra often expresses the concept of eternity figuratively as “the three-thousand dust-atom kalpas.” (In chapter 16, though, “the five-hundred[-koti] dust-atom kalpas” is the preferred expression.)

TEXT “Bhikshus! [Suppose] all those countries which that man has passed, where he has dropped [a drop] and where he has not, ground to dust, and let one grain of the dust be a kalpa—[the time] since that buddha became extinct till now still exceeds those numbers by innumerable, unlimited hundred thousand myriad kotis of asamkhyeya kalpas. By the power of my Tathagata wisdom, I observe that length of time as if it were only today.”

COMMENTARY Here Shakyamuni skillfully employs his wisdom to help his disciples grasp the actuality of eternity and infinity, using the metaphor of a world ground to dust, with each dust particle placed in a cluster of a thousand stars. This cluster of a thousand stars may refer to a galaxy. Ancient people believed there was only one sun, and perhaps some today still think so. There are in fact about one hundred billion galaxies in the universe, each of which contains around two hundred billion stars. When we add to this the probable number of planets and satellites, the total becomes well nigh infinite.

The Buddha is shown here to be not only an incomparably great religious figure but also a person with astounding abilities as a scientist. In this too we see how his

method of teaching, being scientific and firmly based on theory, appeals to our reason, while he moves our hearts with his parables, finally providing examples to lead us to a firmness of belief arising from the unity of reason and emotion.

Unless we use a finite standard to measure the infinite, we can have no true concept of the eternal. We will never be able to understand the limitless reaches of the sky just by gazing into its depths. The reality of infinity or eternity is better brought home to us through realization of the speed of light. Light travels around the world seven and a half times in one second, yet still takes tens of billions of years to cross from one side of the universe to the other. Even so, this is not the end, for endless space lies beyond.

Shakyamuni tries to make his disciples realize infinity or eternity through his example of grinding a world to dust and distributing one speck in every thousand heavenly bodies. We can but marvel at the deep wisdom he shows. All the same, though Shakyamuni has penetrated the boundless cosmos, his abiding concern is with actual human life and the thrust of his teaching is to show how people can best live their lives. This is an important point to remember.

Sometimes, when we gaze up into the starry sky, its immensity shocks us into pondering the meaning of human existence. It seems ridiculous that people should be so concerned with their personal gain or loss, with hating others, with acting indecently, and with their angry quarrels with others when the very world they live on is as a poppy seed when compared with the enormity of the universe. Such experiences are very good for us; we all need the occasional exposure to feelings and emotions that transcend our petty realities, for they serve to dilute our selfishness and greed. Nevertheless, they remain the type of realization associated with the small vehicle; if everyone remains steeped in such a transcendent state of mind, society will not develop in any vital way.

Besides understanding the vastness of the universe, we must realize the importance of our own existence within it. The fact that we exist in the universe of virtual boundlessness is inescapable and, if we think about it, of the utmost gravity. The fact of our existence is our *raison d'être*; it is our value, our function. As soon as we realize this we can understand that we are not worthless, that each one of us is a vital part of the universe, closely connected to the whole. Thus we discover our own dignity.

To realize distinctly that we are an important part of the universe and that we are connected with the universe as a whole is to be able to instantly dissolve the self, which we tend to think of as frail and unimportant, into the entire cosmos. Then we feel that the whole universe is our home, our workplace. The Zen expression that we become, wherever we are, the master of our surroundings signifies the realization that this is so. We must therefore take our mis-

sion very seriously indeed. An employee can be idle, but a master, never. We have to realize fully the significance of our existence in this life and enhance it, for doing so is the duty of the master. When all people everywhere are motivated by the same realization, human society will make real progress, for it will accord perfectly with the mind of the Buddha.

Since this may sound too sweeping and abstract, let me give a concrete example to make my meaning clearer. Each member of a baseball team is essential to the team as a whole. The team will never thrive if some members are caught up in their own small existence and think that even if they do not function adequately others will make up for their shortcomings. When each member realizes his own importance to the team, and that his own performance is linked closely to the fortunes of the team, his own identity merges with that of the team as a whole. Having merged with the team, he is now a master of the team, the master of his surroundings. When all the members think in that way, the team will be able to utilize its strength to the fullest—and also enhance it. Such a realization is what is called the enlightenment of Mahayana, and living according to it is the way of life of Mahayana.

As I have said already, we must not forget that the reason we concentrate on infinity and eternity is not to transcend our realities but to realize our worth and our mission, situated within the infinite and the eternal. This teaching becomes clearer with the Buddha's next statement.

• *By the power of my Tathagata wisdom, I observe that length of time as if it were only today.* Shakyamuni is not merely stating the fact that with the Buddha's wisdom he can see the infinite past as if it were today; he is showing us that our religious practice is not confined to this life alone and is intimating that therefore we must be very attentive to the way we live in the present. Our practice extends from the distant past to the far future. "Today" is not something separate from the whole but is like a deep pool or a shoal in the great river that flows across time from the infinite past to the eternal future. If today we become polluted in mind, body, and action, that stain will be sure to extend downstream. On the other hand, if we purify our body, mind, and action, the lower reaches of the river will surely be purified. Thus Shakyamuni states, from his deep understanding, "I observe that length of time as if it were only today," before going on to speak of causes and conditions of the distant past. We must continue to learn from this.

TEXT At that time the World-honored One, desiring to proclaim this meaning over again, spoke thus in verse:

"I remember in a past world, / Immeasurable infinite kalpas ago, / A buddha, a [most] honored man, / Named Universal Surpassing Wisdom. / Suppose someone by his power / Ground a three-thousand-great-thousandfold

world / With its entire earth element / Entirely into ink, /
 And, passing a thousand countries, / Then lets fall one
 drop; / Proceeding in a like manner / He drops all this at-
 omized ink; / [Suppose] all such countries as these, / Those
 ink-dropped and those undropped, / Again are entirely
 ground to dust, / And a grain be as a kalpa— / The number
 of those grains / Are exceeded by his kalpas. / Since that
 buddha became extinct, / Such are the measureless kalpas. /
 [I,] the Tathagata, by unhindered wisdom / Know the ex-
 tinction of that buddha / And his shravakas and bodhi-
 sattvas / As if it were now occurring. / Know, bhikshus! /
 The Buddha wisdom is pure and minute, / Faultless and
 unhindered, / Penetrating through infinite kalpas.”

COMMENTARY *Unhindered wisdom.* This refers to the wis-
 dom that is able to know, without any obstruction, what-
 ever it seeks to know.

- *The extinction of that buddha.* Here “extinction” means
 “attaining enlightenment,” not “passing into nirvana.”
- *Minute.* The workings of the Buddha wisdom are inex-
 pressibly wonderful.
- *Faultless and unhindered.* Because there is not one par-

ticle of delusion left in the Buddha’s mind (it is “faultless”),
 it can perceive things without distortion. “Unhindered”
 means that it suffers no obstruction.

TEXT The Buddha [then] addressed all the bhikshus,
 [saying]: “The lifetime of the Buddha Universal Surpassing
 Wisdom is five hundred and forty myriad kotis of nayutas
 of kalpas. At the beginning when that buddha, seated on
 the wisdom throne, had destroyed the army of Mara,
 [though] he was on the point of attaining Perfect Enlight-
 enment, the Law of all buddhas was not yet revealed to
 him.

COMMENTARY *At the beginning . . . seated on the wisdom
 throne.* “At the beginning” refers to that buddha’s younger
 days. The “wisdom throne” is the place to seek the Bud-
 dha’s enlightenment (see the May/June 2001 issue of
 DHARMA WORLD); here it refers to the platform (the Dia-
 mond Throne) where that buddha entered meditation in
 his quest for enlightenment.

- *Had destroyed the army of Mara.* Whenever holy and
 wise people enter meditation seeking enlightenment,

Chapter 14, “A Happy Life,” from a Lotus Sutra scroll copied in ink on colored paper decorated with gold and silver leaf. Twelfth century.
 Important Cultural Property. Tokyo National Museum.

armies of demons assail them and try to impede their quest. After Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan and heard the voice of God, he spent forty days fasting and meditating in the wilderness. During that time he was tempted by the devil. Overcoming that temptation, he realized that he was one with God. Hordes of monsters, half man, half beast, assailed Shakyamuni, too, when he entered his final meditation upon the Diamond Throne at Buddhagaya. Beautiful fairy women also appeared to tempt him. He routed the attacks so that no intimidation or temptation remained, and as the new day dawned he suddenly attained enlightenment to the highest Law of the universe.

These armies of Mara are considered to be the accumulated delusions lying hidden deep within the human mind. These delusions are not those of the individual alone; they include the delusions that have accumulated in the subconscious over the billions of years since life first appeared on Earth. People in a state of samadhi, in which the mind is utterly concentrated, are able to access the subconscious and bring it to the surface of the mind, viewing these delusions in their various forms. Some people fear Mara's armies and flee from their meditative state. They therefore remain in a state that enables them to view only the surface of the mind and cannot reach a state in which they can discern the essence of all things. Others become interested in that unusual experience alone, mistaking it for the real world, and immerse themselves in that experience. Ascetics who indulge in occult practices tend to be of this type. They too are unable to realize the real aspect of all things.

It is only when, like Shakyamuni, a person knows that the unusual experience is no more than a manifestation of delusion that he or she can overcome that delusion and attain true enlightenment. Later, Shakyamuni states that what we call Mara and Mara's armies are nothing other than wrong workings of the mind, actions of the defilements. We must not interpret this as referring to the defilements of the surface mind alone; it also includes the manifestation of defilements buried deep in the subconscious. Therefore it makes sense to consider Mara and Mara's armies as not just literary expressions or mere metaphors but as images that frequently surface in the concentrated mind.

During your practice of meditation you may have the kinds of experiences mentioned above, so I would like to add that should such images form, they must not be mistaken for reality or be feared; rather they should be clearly understood for what they are.

• *The Law of all buddhas was not yet revealed to him.* He had not yet realized the supreme enlightenment of all the buddhas.

TEXT So for a minor kalpa and then onward for ten minor kalpas he sat cross-legged with body and mind motionless; but the Law of all buddhas was not yet revealed to him.

COMMENTARY *He sat cross-legged.* This is the position for seated meditation called the "full lotus." The right leg is placed on the left thigh and the left leg is placed on the right thigh (see the March/April 1996 issue).

TEXT Then the thirty-three gods spread for that buddha a lion throne a yojana high under a Bodhi tree so that the buddha on this throne should attain Perfect Enlightenment.

COMMENTARY *The thirty-three gods.* The heaven of the thirty-three gods, one of the six heavens in the realm of desire, refers to the realm of Indra and thirty-two other gods. They helped that buddha in many ways to attain enlightenment, as detailed in the next passage.

TEXT No sooner had he sat on that throne than the Brahma heavenly kings rained down celestial flowers over an area of a hundred yojanas. A fragrant wind from time to time arose, sweeping away the withered flowers and raining fresh ones. Thus incessantly during full ten minor kalpas they paid honor to the buddha and even till his extinction they constantly rained those flowers, while the gods [belonging to] the four [heavenly] kings to honor the buddha constantly beat celestial drums and other gods performed celestial music during fully ten minor kalpas and continued so to do until his extinction.

COMMENTARY *An area of a hundred yojanas.* In the original Chinese translation, "area" can also be taken to mean "the ground in front of each side of the lion throne." In short, the ground around the lion throne was strewn with flowers.

• *The gods [belonging to] the four [heavenly] kings.* The four heavenly kings are Dhritarashtra, Virudhaka, Virupaksha, and Vaishravana, protectors of the east, south, west, and north, respectively. They serve Indra, the lord of the gods, and protect the Buddha Law and Buddhists. These gods waited in eager anticipation for the Buddha Universal Surpassing Wisdom to attain supreme enlightenment and tried to create the best possible environment for him to do so, honoring and thanking him for his virtues and purifying and beautifying the realm of samadhi that he had entered. Their sweeping away withered flowers and offering fresh blooms signifies that their anticipation, gratitude, and devotion to the Buddha would remain unchanging for all time.

To be continued

In this series, passages in the **TEXT** sections are quoted from *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1975, with slight revisions. The diacritical marks originally used for several Sanskrit terms in the **TEXT** sections are omitted here for easier reading.

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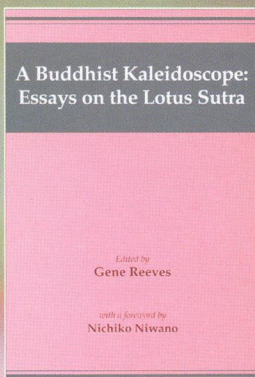
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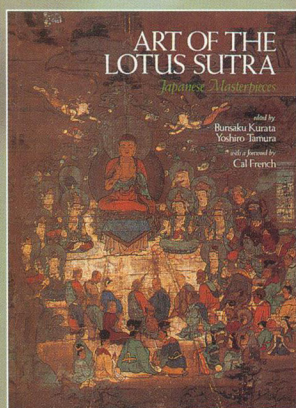
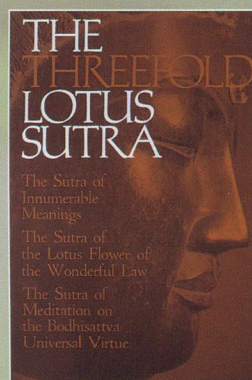
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