

“I respect you deeply” (Trevor Murphy)

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The Autobiography of Tsunawaki Ryūmyō (Part 13)

(translation and introductory note¹ by Trevor Murphy)

The future of the Nichiren denomination

Since entering the priesthood at the age of fifteen² I had trained for

1 Tsunawaki Ryūmyō 綱脇龍妙 (1876-1970) was a priest of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism in Japan ; he founded a private leprosy hospital in Minobu, Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan in 1906, at the age of thirty. It is significant that this was the only Buddhist private leprosy hospital in Japan ; all the others were set up by foreign Christian missionaries.

The majority of events and impressions recorded in this Part 13 of Tsunawaki Ryūmyō's autobiography (his feelings of frustration on discovering the true condition of the Nichiren denomination, the crisis of faith which this triggered, the two occasions on which he almost converted to Christianity but was somehow held back, and the subsequent reappraisal and strengthening of his own Buddhist faith) took place during his twenties. It is interesting to consider how these events may have contributed to his later decision to undertake leprosy relief work.

In this Part 13 of Tsunawaki Ryūmyō's autobiography we also learn, in a reference back to Part 11 of the autobiography, that the Christian speaker who made such a deep impression on Tsunawaki Ryūmyō in April or May time of 1897 was Ebina Danjō 海老名弾正 (1856-1937). Curiously his name goes unmentioned in Part 11. Ebina Danjō must rank as a major influence on Tsunawaki Ryūmyō (this is backed up by interviews with Tsunawaki Ryūmyō's daughter Michi and by the frequent mentions of his name in Tsunawaki Ryūmyō's writings) ; it is reported that Ebina Danjō “believed that a creative rapprochement between Buddhism and Christianity was both possible and necessary” [A. Hamish Ion : *The Cross and the Rising Sun* Volume 2, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993, p. 63] and it is perhaps this concept which impressed the young Tsunawaki Ryūmyō so much. We know from his writings that Tsunawaki Ryūmyō was interested in this idea of a “synthesis of religions”; he had particular hopes for a coming together of two of the largest Buddhist denominations in Japan, his own Nichiren denomination and the True Pure Land (or Jōdo-shin) denomination.

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about five years all told under the guardianship of my “Master”, the Reverend Nukina Nichiryō³, one year and eight months at Hosshōji temple in Fukuoka, followed by three years and two months at Myōtaiji temple in Daidō, Fukui Prefecture, and had then set off for Kyōto, in September 1896, at the age of twenty, to pursue a further total of six and a half years of study at the “Danrin” (Nichiren denomination-affiliated schools), one and a half years at the “Shō-danrin” (junior high school) and five years at the “Chū-danrin” (senior high school)⁴; it was during this latter period that I got to know the internal workings and behind-the-scenes goings-on of the Nichiren denomination, discovering, for example, the attitude to study held by students of the “Danrin”, and found that, the more I saw, the less able was I to restrain a feeling of intense anger at the excessive nature of the apathy and degeneration within the denomination⁵.

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- 2 Here Tsunawaki Ryūmyō expresses his age as “sixteen years old by the kazoedoshi (数え年) way of counting” (or “in one’s sixteenth calendar year”). This is the same way that one counts the ages of horses in the West; a newly-born foal is called “a yearling” and becomes “a two-year-old” at the start of the next calendar year. In his writings Tsunawaki Ryūmyō sometimes expresses his age using this kazoedoshi way of counting and sometimes using the way of counting familiar to Westerners; confusion occasionally arises when he does not specify. Nowadays most Japanese give their age in the same way as Westerners.
- 3 Here Tsunawaki Ryūmyō refers to Nukina Nichiryō as o-shisō-sama お師匠さま (which might be rendered as “my respected master”) Nichiryō-shō nin 日良上人 (which is perhaps equivalent to “the holy priest Nichiryō”).
- 4 “Shō-danrin” 小檀林, situated in Matsugasaki 松ヶ崎, was the name of the Nichiren denomination-affiliated junior high school in Kyōto. Students who successfully completed the four-year course at “Shō-danrin” were eligible to progress to the five-year course offered by “Chū-danrin” 中檀林, the Nichiren denomination-affiliated senior high school, also in Kyōto.

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In particular I found that the more I read the Lotus Sutra⁶ and the Writings of Saint Nichiren⁷ and the deeper my faith grew, the greater became this sense of dissatisfaction and regret within my heart at the way things stood within the denomination.

I feel some hesitation about relating here particular details of numerous cases where priests within the Nichiren denomination at that time behaved in a manner not befitting persons of religion. However, to give some idea of how deep my regret was, let me describe for you at least one instance.

The idea that a priest should be involved in the likes of gambling is

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- 5 Tsunawaki Ryūmyō uses strong words here to express his indignation. Alternative translations of fushin 不振 ("apathy") include "dullness", "inactivity"; daraku 惰落 ("degeneration") may also be rendered as "depravity", "corruption".
 - 6 The Lotus Sutra Hokekyō 法華經 ("Lotus Sutra" is an abbreviation of the full title "Sutra of the Lotus of the Supreme Law" Myōhō-rengē-kyō 妙法蓮華經), which contains 28 chapters, is the sutra worshipped by followers of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism in Japan.
 - 7 Saint Nichiren 日蓮聖人 (1222-1282) was the founder of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism. After periods of study in, among other places, Hieizan 比叡山 (the Buddhist centre of excellence established by Saichō 最澄 in the 8th century), he came to the conclusion that the Lotus Sutra was the only path to salvation and urged his followers to chant "Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō" 南無妙法蓮華經, meaning "I put my faith in the Sutra of the Lotus of the Supreme Law (Lotus Sutra)", so that they might be endowed with its merits. He was a controversial figure, predicting that Japan would be punished by misfortunes and invasion by the Mongols unless his Buddhist teachings alone were adopted throughout the country. As a result of outspoken demands to the Kamakura government he was exiled on two occasions, to Izu (1261-1263) and Sado (1271-1274) and eventually retired to Minobusan 身延山 in Kōshū (now Yamanashi Prefecture) in 1274, to write and to educate his followers.

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utterly scandalous and yet that kind of thing was not unusual. Moreover, that such gambling should be taking place within the temple grounds, which ought to be a site of the utmost purity, is a situation that is shameful almost beyond belief and yet that is unmistakably what was going on. The temple lies outside of police jurisdiction ; anyway, even if the police knew what was happening they would turn a blind eye to it. There were many priests who took advantage of this fact, conducting themselves in a fashion that would make even a lay person feel ashamed.

In this connection there were incidents occurring that made you want to cover your eyes. One such happening took place just as I was away studying in Kyōto. In a certain town in Fukui Prefecture (it's become a city now) there was this inn where priests would gather every month to gamble. The police got to hear about this and seven or eight priests were arrested and marched through the town by the police, roped together in a crocodile⁸ as criminals.

The shock received by the faithful was an extreme one. As you know, Fukui Prefecture is a place of immense devoutness⁹. Imagine the sight

8 Ironically, the Japanese term for “tying prisoners together in a row” is *juzu-tsunagi ni suru* 数珠つなぎにする, which means literally “linking together like the beads of a Buddhist rosary”. The Buddhist rosary, or *juzu* 数珠, traditionally contains 108 beads linked together as in a bracelet or necklace although more portable versions, containing fewer beads, are also common ; its precise form varies according to the Buddhist denomination. The 108 beads represent the 108 worldly desires considered by Buddhists to be the cause of human suffering. The *juzu* is used to count off the prayers made to expunge these worldly desires and is thus similar in function to a Catholic rosary.

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of those priests being tied up in a line and dragged by the police before the eyes of their followers. I think that their grief must have been great beyond comparison. Those, like myself, who got to hear about it afterwards, felt vexed to the point of tears. But this is no more than a single example. Some twenty years later there was another major incident of a similar kind which this time took place in central Japan ; and it too was viewed with incredulity by the world.

That is more or less the way things were⁹ and I hope that through this single instance I have been able to give some idea of the general picture of corruption and degeneration among priests of the Nichiren denomination. It follows that no positive religious activity or anything of that nature could be expected from them. And they undertook no true proselytizing or the like. In the first place, there was almost nobody among them who had acquired any cultivation of the mind in religious

9 This is perhaps a reference to the fact that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Echizen Province 越前国 (current Fukui Prefecture), Kaga Province 加賀国 (current Ishikawa Prefecture) and Echū Province 越中国 (current Toyama Prefecture) were centres of peasant rebellions, led by priests and lay persons of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination of Buddhism. The first rebellion, which took place in Kaga Province in 1474, was led by Rennyō, the chief priest of the Jōdo-shin denomination at the time, and resulted in the overthrow of the local military lord and establishment of a self-governing administration ; the denomination retained control of Kaga Province for almost a century. However, the denomination was eventually defeated by General Oda Nobunaga in the battle of Ishiyama at the end of a war covering the years 1570 to 1580. Subsequently the role of Buddhist organizations in Japan became severely restricted.

10 Tsunawaki Ryūmyō writes this passage in the present tense, lending immediacy to his assertions. Perhaps he is also suggesting that the corruption and degeneration which he witnessed in the Nichiren denomination during his twenties continues to the present day.

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matters. So it's perhaps not surprising they possessed not even a hint of the kind of impassioned energy that would provide inspiration and guidance to their followers.

And also, after beginning to attend the (Nichiren denomination-affiliated) school, I reached a point of utter disgust at the slovenly approach, moral indecency, and the like, to be seen in the students there. As I mentioned before, there was one time I got to the stage of considering whether I shouldn't just quit the school and return to Myōtaiji temple, and went to Enmyōin temple in Fukagusa to talk the matter over with a fellow member of the denomination who was my guarantor¹¹. These feelings I had of grief and indignation developed at the same time into a pessimism about the future of the Nichiren denomination. I had the feeling that, if things went on in the same fashion, the denomination would most likely have had it within a matter of decades.

What is more, it appeared that this scandalous situation I describe was not confined to the Nichiren denomination ; the same things were going on inside the other denominations too.

In the midst of all that, it seemed to me that Honganji temple¹² [headquarters of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination of Bud-

11 This visit which Tsunawaki Ryūmyō made to his guarantor is described in Part 11 of the autobiography, in the section entitled “A midday snooze in Kyōto”.

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dhism in Japan] alone, with its large number of followers and their considerable devoutness of faith, stood out above the others as flourishing. At the time, there was a school affiliated to the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination in Fushimi [a district of Kyōto] and that too appeared to be run in a most worthy and serious-minded fashion. I have made no particular study of Saint Shinran's doctrine¹³ but am able to grasp the gist of it. I reckoned I could more or less understand too the significance of setting up a religion of that nature which allowed priests to marry and partake of meat¹⁴.

Next door to Honkokuji temple¹⁵ was Nishi-honganji temple¹⁶ and nearby you could also find Higashi-honganji temple¹⁷, so, without going into all the details, I was aware that the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination was something along the lines I have described and

12 Honganji 本願寺, founded in 1272, is the head temple or headquarters of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination of Buddhism in Japan. Although there was originally only one temple by this name, a second Honganji temple was created in 1602, leading to a division in the denomination (and curtailment of the role which the denomination had played during the previous century as an agitator in peasant rebellions ; see previous Note 9). Since then the original one has been called Nishi-honganji 西本願寺 ("West"-honganji) and the new one Higashi-honganji 東本願寺 ("East"-honganji). They are situated in close proximity in the centre of Kyōto. Hongan 本願 refers to the set of 48 vows made by the bodhisattva Hōzō to save all living beings ; the eighteenth vow, in which Hōzō swears that all people without exception will have the opportunity to be saved (become able to look on this world as a paradise) and that should even one person be denied this opportunity Hōzō himself will not progress from the state of bodhisattva to Buddha (he does in fact eventually become the Buddha called Amida) is regarded as the cornerstone of faith for followers of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination. The number "eighteen" has, on account of this, acquired a special significance in the Japanese language.

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that it was the stronghold of Buddhism in Japan. That was the way it looked to me.

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- 13 Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1262) was the founder of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination of Buddhism in Japan, so the “Saint Shinran’s doctrine” refers to the teachings of this True Pure Land denomination. As already mentioned in the previous Note 12, the cornerstone of faith for followers of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination is the eighteenth vow of a set of 48 vows made by the bodhisattva Hōzō, in which Hōzō swears that all people without exception will have the opportunity to “be born in the Pure Land” (this could perhaps be explained or rephrased as “be saved” or “attain the ability to view this world as a heaven rather than a hell and to look on one’s own circumstances as favourable rather than unfortunate”) and that should even one person be denied this opportunity Hōzō himself will not progress from the state of bodhisattva to Buddha (Hōzō does in fact eventually become the Buddha called Amida). A follower of the True Pure Land denomination typically comes to a realization that anything he tries to do through his “own power” (jiriki 自力) is inevitably perverted by “self-interest” and that he is basically wretched ; his only option is to utter the name of Amida Buddha and entrust himself entirely to “other power” (tariki 他力), allowing Amida Buddha to work through him. So, the True Pure Land denomination is open to all, and especially to the most wretched of this world. Followers are encouraged to let events unfold naturally, rather than strive to do good works (which are regarded as an expression of “own power”), although this is open to misinterpretation as a licence to behave badly or as an excuse for inactivity. We should note that the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism, to which Tsunawaki Ryūmyō belonged, does not reject the idea of “own power” (jiriki 自力).
- 14 “Eating meat and taking a wife” (nikujiki-saitai 肉食妻帯) are very direct expressions of worldly desire and attachment ; as such they were traditionally forbidden to Buddhist priests in all countries, including Japan. Shinran (1173-1262) who established the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination of Buddhism in Japan felt the need for a religion that would offer salvation to all and especially to the most wretched of this world (who would undoubtedly lack the necessary will power to forego meat and family life) ; he thus proposed that all believers (including priests) should be allowed to marry and partake of meat. However, all the other major denominations in Japan continued to forbid meat consumption and family life among their priests until after the Meiji Restoration (1868), when the prohibition was removed.
- 15 One of the four chief temples of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism in Japan.
- 16 See previous Note 12.
- 17 See previous Note 12.

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However, a big dispute was to break out even within Higashi-honganji temple. The event leading up to that was the construction by Higashi-honganji of the world's largest wooden structures, the Founder's Hall and Amida Hall which can be seen today. Higashi-honganji considerably overstretched themselves in that construction work and it was from such excessiveness that the disorder and evils arose. Criticism surfaced and a number of young and energetic persons including the Bunka University graduate Kiyozawa Manshi¹⁸ formed themselves into a group called the “Shirakawa Party” and started a movement for reform in opposition to the old order. It was the so-called “Shirakawa Party” dispute. It happened just a short while after I left for Kyōto and joined the (Nichiren denomination-affiliated) school¹⁹.

Although being an outsider and therefore unaware of the full details, when faced by the fact that even in Honganji temple, which I had regarded as at least to some degree upholding the Japanese Buddhist es-

18 Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863-1903) was a central figure in promoting reform of the True Pure Land (Jōdo-shin) denomination during the Meiji period. During the long Edo/Tokugawa period (1603-1867), Buddhist temples had been used by the government as a place of registration for all Japanese people (in an effort to subjugate Christianity); it was a cosy relationship in which the temples, in return, received government backing. With the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and opening of Japan to the West, the Buddhist establishment lost its policing role and government support and also, with a change in the law in 1873, became vulnerable to competition from Christian missionaries. It was a crisis to which Kiyozawa Manshi attempted to respond.

19 The “Shirakawa Party” was established in Shirakawa village, Kyōto, in 1896 and soon after began publication of a journal calling for reform of the True Pure Land denomination. Tsunawaki Ryūmyō moved to Kyōto in September 1896.

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tablishment, there was this kind of confrontation which had arisen between the old and new factions and that these factions were engaged in an internal dispute, I could not help but feel a deep pessimism about the future of Buddhism in Japan.

As I continued in such a way to think about this point and ponder that point, my mood of pessimism only deepened. I passed those days feeling as if I was being wrung dry in a mangle. Although, as I mentioned before, I returned for a while to Myōtaiji temple in Daidō on account of the dispute at the “Chū-danrin” (Nichiren denomination-affiliated senior high school), once again resuming my studies as a second year in the spring of the following year, 1899, I continued to be troubled day and night by this kind of heaviness of heart and took to going out for a walk every night when I would seek comfort from long periods spent kneeling in prayer before the statue of Saint Nichiren in Honkokuji temple. There was not a single day during the time that I stayed in the dormitory of Honkokuji temple that I failed to make this prayer.

However, it seemed there was nothing that could be done to halt this ever deepening sense of resentful indignation and I remember a period lasting for some twenty days when I would be seated at my desk in the dormitory in tears.

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Two ropes

It was in the same year of 1899, as I was passing my days in the fashion just described, that the following took place. It just so happened that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the official establishment of the Protestant Christian movement in Japan fell in this very year and a large scale program of missionary work was being undertaken in grand style to mark the occasion. It was in November 1875 that Nijima Jō²⁰ had founded Dōshisha English School in Kyōto, so that 1899 corresponded to its twenty-fifth year.

I have already spoken of the great impression made on me about two years previous to that when I happened to enter a Christian church and hear Ebina Danjō's talk about the Zen master Hakuin²¹. With such a recollection and also on account of the sheer splendour of the events staged for the grand memorial missionary program, my interest was aroused and I went here and there to listen to the speeches.

I wonder if it's still there today but at the time there was a large theatre called “Gionkan” towards the rear of “Ichiriki”, and there too

20 Nijima Jō 新島襄 (1843-1890) was an influential Japanese educator and Christian. He studied in America at the end of the Edo period and, while there, became a Christian ; he also assisted the Japanese ambassador in a survey of the American educational system. On returning to Japan he established the Dōshisha English School (forerunner of Dōshisha University) in Kyōto ; the educational program of the school was based on Christianity.

21 For details, refer to Part 11 of this autobiography.

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the most grand speech meetings were held. These splendid speech meetings were convened not just at “Gionkan” but at various other venues, and drew some of the top-ranking Christian speakers of the time, such as Kozaki Kōdō from Tōkyō, who had come to head the missionary program, and also Ebina Danjō, and Miyagawa Tsuneteru from Ōsaka, Harada Tasuku from Kōbe, and many others.

I too had taken to attending as many of these meetings as possible to listen to the speeches, and so, when I learned on one particular occasion that there was going to be a speech meeting on the corner of Teramachi in the Go-jō district, I set off with three or so friends to listen. When we enter²² the place where the meeting is held, we find that many if not all of those in attendance are of the bearded gentleman type and that there is something about the audience that seems just a little different to usual. Although aware of this somewhat strange tone in today’s proceedings, we at any rate took our seats and listened to what was being said.

The talk began and Kozaki Kōdō who was visiting from Tōkyō gave a report of his tour of Europe and America that was a most informative speech. However, right at the end of the talk he added, “Today it seems we are joined also by our Buddhist brethren...”, and, sure enough, when we pay a little closer attention to proceedings, why,

22 The Japanese text changes briefly to the present tense here, lending immediacy to the description.

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doesn't the event in fact turn out to be a gathering of Christian ministers. It was at that moment that the realization suddenly struck us. It seems a rather foolish error but I guess I must have seen an advertisement somewhere and mistakenly assumed that the meeting was open also to members of the general public. At any rate that gives you some idea of the enthusiasm with which I went round listening to Christian speeches.

It was in the year after that, 1900, when I had already become twenty four years old²³ that one of the unforgettable events in my life was to take place.

In those days there was a Christian church on the corner of Tomi-nokōji in the Shi-jō district of Kyōto with a devoted minister by the name of Aburadani Jirohichi. He was a truly zealous person and a listener to his speeches could not help but be drawn in by the impassioned nature thereof. I too was one of those attracted by the fervour with which he spoke, to such an extent that I even thought of converting to Christianity and being baptized.

As I have already said on a number of occasions before, I had, through the Lotus Sutra, achieved a sense of peace²⁴ within myself. I

23 Tsunawaki Ryūmyō expresses his age here as “twenty five years old”, using the kazoedoshi way of counting age (see previous Note 1). He was born on 24 January 1876 so that by the Western way of counting age he would have become “twenty four years old” in 1900.

24 The Japanese here is anjin 安心, which might also be rendered as “assurance”, “a resting or peaceful mind”.

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firmly believe that the Lotus Sutra represents the truth²⁵. I firmly believe that the teaching expounded by the historical Buddha Śākyamuni²⁶ in Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra (the chapter entitled “The Eternal Buddha”) in which he urges us to save others through compassion, is the very essence of religion. Furthermore, my belief that “reverent worship of one’s fellow man” as described in Chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra (the chapter entitled “The Never-despising Bodhisattva”)

25 There follows a brief account of what Tsunawaki Ryūmyō regarded as the three pillars of his Buddhist faith.

The first might be termed the “philosophy” of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, the vision of the universe he attained at the age of thirty five while meditating under a Bodhi tree in Buddha-gaya, summed up in the phrases *shohō-jissō* 諸法実相 (“all things are an expression of the real state of the universe”) and *ichinen-sanzen* 一念三千 (“all phenomena of this world can be found within a single thought of a human being”), and expounded in Chapter 2, “The Provisional Teachings”, of the Lotus Sutra.

The second might be termed “faith”, or the expression of Śākyamuni’s “philosophy” in the form of a religion to save (lessen the suffering of) the people alive today. This is expounded in Chapter 16, “The Eternal Buddha”, of the Lotus Sutra, which relates also the concept *kuon-jitsujō* 久遠実成 (“Buddha was actually enlightened in the very remote past, so that the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, who attained enlightenment at the age of thirty five in Buddha-gaya, is no more than a provisional manifestation of that Buddha”, cf. the Law of Universal Gravitation has always existed ; it was only discovered and expounded by Newton).

The third might be termed “ethical behaviour” and is the path of religious practice, called variously *ningen-raihai* 人間礼拝 (“reverent worship of one’s fellow man”) or *jinkyō-raihai* 深敬礼拝 (“adoration with deep respect”), which was patiently undertaken for several decades by “The Never-despising One” and is described in Chapter 20, “The Never-despising Bodhisattva”, of the Lotus Sutra. This Chapter 20 is in the form of a sermon by the historical Buddha Śākyamuni and the reader learns at the end of the sermon that “The Never-despising One” was none other than Śākyamuni himself, who followed the same path of religious practice and urges the reader to do likewise. In a 1948 paper, Tsunawaki Ryūmyō describes the spirit of “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” in the following terms : “it is the very pinnacle of ethics based on a truth which nobody in the world can deny ; it is the most basic foundation of peace for mankind ; it is the peak of democracy”.

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is the path of religious practice that the Lotus Sutra is directing us to follow permeates my whole body to the point where I have not the slightest doubt about it. I also believe in the great truths, related in Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra (the chapter entitled “The Provisional Teachings”), that “all things are an expression of the real state of the universe”²⁷ and that “all phenomena of this world can be found within a single thought of a human being”²⁸.

However, as I have just said, this was a time when I was feeling thoroughly pessimistic about the future of Buddhism which was in an extreme state of degeneration and decline, so that I was drawn in by the Reverend Aburadani’s ardent speech-making and, like one possessed, made an involuntary attempt to leap down from the gallery of the church²⁹ to receive baptism. Although not an especially high gallery it

26 The historical Buddha and founder of Buddhism, Prince Gautama Siddhartha (BC463-383), attained enlightenment at the age of thirty five to become known as Śākyamuni (Sanskrit for “The sage of the Śākya Clan”). Tsunawaki Ryūmyō refers to Śākyamuni here using the Japanese Shakamuni-nyorai 釈迦牟尼如来; Shaka 釈迦 is the name of the Buddha’s clan (Sanskrit “Śākya”); muni 牟尼 means “sage” (Sanskrit “muni”). Nyorai 如来, comprising two Chinese characters, nyo 如 and rai 来, has essentially the same meaning as Buddha, but emphasizes that a person has “come” (Chinese character rai 来) from nyo 如, or the state of absolute truth. The Chinese translators of Sanskrit texts struggled with “absolute truth”, since the usual word for truth (shin 真) immediately implies the existence of its opposite, untruth (fushin 不真), thus rendering the term relative rather than absolute; they eventually settled on nyo, which has been translated into English by Suzuki Daisetsu as “suchness”, “thusness” or “as-it-is-ness”.

27 The Japanese term used here is shohō-jissō 諸法実相 (see also previous Note 25).

28 The Japanese term used here is ichinen-sanzen 一念三千 (see also previous Note 25).

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was nonetheless probably about three meters in elevation. There was also a staircase just to the side. However, as if in a delirium, I made to jump down from the gallery in one go to where the minister was.

It was at that moment that I found myself upended and facing skywards in reaction to my efforts to jump ; it was almost as though there were two ropes attached to my back. I can only imagine that I was being pulled from behind by invisible ropes. Such a thing naturally left me with a rather strange feeling at the time, but I did not go through with the baptism and returned directly to the (Nichiren denomination-affiliated) school.

Shortly after that I set off once more to hear one of the Reverend Aburadani's speeches. And, in the course of listening to his impassioned sermon, I thought that, yes, this time I really will go through with it [the baptism] and once again made to jump down from the second floor but, as before, I was pulled back and felled with a twang. Twice in a row I underwent this strange experience for which no reasonable explanation can be provided.

I came to the conviction that this could only be the force of Śākyamuni or of the founder of our denomination Saint Nichiren pulling me from behind and urging me not to be hasty. And with such a re-

29 The Japanese text reads *kyōkai no ni-kai* 教会の二階 or “second floor of the church” (which would be equivalent to “first floor of the church” in Britain). It was probably a kind of gallery.

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alization, I ran back desperately, puffing and panting, and wondering how I was to be excused for this. It was rather a long road back but when I did eventually return after running all the way, I lost no time in opening the Collected Writings of Nichiren and zealously set about reading them.

Strangely enough, at the time I had at hand the “Shinsensosho” set of Collected Writings of Nichiren compiled by the Reverend Owari Nichimei, more specifically the forty-sixth edition sixty volume set printed in size five characters. Previously I had read it in the order “Risshō-ankoku-ron” which comes at the beginning, followed by “Rokunai”, “Rokuge”, and so on, so that, accordingly, I had not focused that much attention on the latter “Goshōsokubun” [Nichiren’s personal letters]. So this time I began to read from the end. As you know, many of these latter writings are in the form of letters, sent to disciples and believers, and are relatively easy to understand. I studied these writings anew, deeply touched by Saint Nichiren’s kindness and abundant compassion, so evident therein.

While proceeding to read in this fashion, I came across the “Sushun-Tennō-Gosho”, which contains that truly thorough and all-encompassing advice and caution offered by Saint Nichiren to Shijō Kingo [?-1296], and was extremely moved by the words to be found therein.

“It is a difficult thing to be granted life, for it is like the dirt on one’s

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nails ; it is a difficult thing to hold on to life, for it is like the dew on grass. Rather than dying famous having survived to the age of one hundred and twenty, what is really important is to live true to oneself if only for a single day. Nakatsukasa-Saburōemon-no-Jō was lauded by the people of Kamakura for services to his master, for his efforts to spread the Buddhist teachings and for his fine character. Praise be, praise be! The riches of life are superior to the riches of the storehouse, but greatest of all are the riches of the spirit. There is no need to study these writings ; instead go out and gather the riches of the spirit!”

Proceeding to read still further and coming towards the end, I was thrilled to encounter the following unexpected passage which moved me in a way that I was not to forget from that day on.

“The truth acquired by the Buddha is as follows. The essence of Buddhist teachings is to be found in the Lotus Sutra ; and the most important aspect of training or practice within the Lotus Sutra is to be found in the chapter entitled ‘The Never-despising Bodhisattva’. The Never-despising Bodhisattva’s action of showing respect to his fellow man is a most splendid thing. The reason that Śākyamuni, Lord of the Buddhist teachings, came into the world was to instruct concerning people’s behaviour. Praise be, praise be! That which is wise is to be called a human, and that which is empty is to be called an animal”.

Having reached this point, I struck the desk with the full force of my fist, exclaiming “Yes! This is it! This is it!” and, leaping up from my

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seat, was filled with delight and surprise from the bottom of my heart.

It goes without saying that the Lotus Sutra represents the truth and I am fully aware of how great a person Saint Nichiren is. However, the fact is that, on my readings of the Collected Writings of Nichiren up to that time, whilst being deeply and boundlessly moved by that great personality, I nevertheless harboured in a corner of my heart the feeling that there was something missing. The reason is this. I fully believe that, without the “reverent worship of one’s fellow man” set forth in “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” (chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra), the world from now on is done for. However, I am unable to find any place within the Collected Writings where Saint Nichiren relates his thinking on this matter.

Although it is absolutely inconceivable that a person of Saint Nichiren’s stature should overlook such a crucial point in the Lotus Sutra, what is to be made of the fact that his thoughts concerning the matter are not to be found. What did Saint Nichiren think about the “reverent worship of one’s fellow man” expounded in “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” (chapter of the Lotus Sutra)? This kind of question was constantly on my mind. Or rather, I had continued to harbour a suspicion or even fear that there might perhaps be some point over which Saint Nichiren’s thinking and my own thinking run counter. It was something that was causing me a great deal of concern.

However, when I reached the words “The essence of Buddhist

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teachings is to be found in the Lotus Sutra ; and the most important aspect of training or practice within the Lotus Sutra is to be found in the chapter entitled ‘The Never-despising Bodhisattva’. The Never-despising Bodhisattva’s action of showing respect to his fellow man is a most splendid thing. The reason that Śākyamuni, Lord of the Buddhist teachings, came into the world was to instruct concerning people’s behaviour.” contained in the “Sushun-Tennō-Gosho” of the Collected Writings of Nichiren, I discovered that what I had been thinking perfectly matched the thoughts of Saint Nichiren. Can there be any greater delight than this? For I had achieved complete accord with Saint Nichiren.