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The Bodhisattva Way of Peace

(Lay Buddhism's Example)

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Buddhism is arguably the world's most consistent peacemaker¹. Its founder lived and taught how to experience inner serenity and how to apply that peace to a world of suffering². Its message pacified many a warrior, often causing a renunciation of power, prestige, privilege and pleasure for a life dedicated to *nirvana*, that transcendent and immanent peace.

Even so, Buddhism's message of peace and its role as a peacemaker has been impugned, along with all religion. Marx, though hardly alone, concluded that all religion deluded the masses and helped to subjugate them against their interests. So, Buddhism would not be exempted from the charge that it contributes to, rather than alleviates, the sufferings of humanity. It might be allowed that Buddhism could pacify but many contend Buddhism *qua* religion cannot bring genuine peace.

Ironically Buddhism's very role of pacification made it a godsend for the feudal state. Rulers, who escaped its call, used it, manipulated its structures and even occasionally found

¹ But to so argue might beg a number of questions concerning religion and peace as well as might stumble over methodological issues in the realm of religious comparisons, such as the levels problem. ARNOLD TOYNBEE in *An Historian's Approach to Religion* suggested that you make your own religion look good by comparing its ideal level with the real level (historical actualities) found in your opponent's (or neighbor's) religion. ROBERT D. BAIRD cogently argued in *Category Formation and the History of Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971) that comparisons between levels of real and ideal will be inappropriate for numerous other reasons. See also my "Understanding as the Goal of Some Historians of Religions", *The Journal of Religious Thought*, vol. xxvii, no. 3 (Autumn-Winter, 1970), pp. 50-61 and *The Quest for Meaning of Svāmī Vivekānanda: A Study of Religious Change* (Chico: New Horizons Press, 1974).

² GEORGE N. MARSHALL's, *Buddha: The Quest for Serenity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) is but a popular example of Western writers who find Siddhartha Gautama a peacemaker of a more psychological type.

themselves fighting against warrior-monks³. So complex is the puzzle about how religion and peace interact that we will benefit from a sampling of ideas about the relationship between religion and peace. First, there is an ontological problem, obscured by the metaphorical nature of language. What kind of peace or peacemaking is being referred to? Religious language routinely permits more than a single order of reality, so the word "peace" may convey dual orders or levels of reality (transcendent/immanent) or bipolarities of being (as in Chinese thought with inter-penetrating opposites of a grater whole, *yin* and *yang*). Second, there are four logical relationships between religion and peace (and various mixtures): (1) no relationship, (2) true peace is transcendent, (3) peace is only a real or immanent notion, and (4) transcendent and immanent peace may intersect in time and space. Since studying Buddhism and peacemaking excludes the first position, the logical alternatives for Buddhism will be abbreviated as peace within, peace without, and peace within and without. A brief sampling of notions about these relationships will help in the presentation of a particular Buddhist example and suggest why a particular way of peacemaking is chosen for exploration. Various paradigms address these issues; our sampling of notions about the way religion and peace relate will touch a biological informational model (Bowker), a threefold classification of religious cultures (Boulding), and a evolutionary stage theory (Bellah).

But Buddhism's ideal of the *bodhisattva*, an enlightened being who vows to remain in the world of suffering (*samsara*) in order to produce peace (*nirvana*) for all, is our intended goal for study. It is an informationally rich (Bowker), middle ground (Boulding), evolutionarily advanced (Bellah) approach to peacemaking that is being sought as an example of the *bodhisattva* way of peace. That example will be the final object of this essay.

³ In the case of Japan, Buddhism pacified and militarized its monks. Cf., JOSEPH M. KITAGAWA, *Religion in Japanese History* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1966, or DAIGAN and ALICIA MATSUNAGA, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism* (Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1974), 2 vols.

RELIGION AS A SYSTEM OF INFORMATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Constructing an analogy which rests its plausibility upon biology, J.W. Bowker, Dean of Trinity College, Cambridge University, has described the way religions preserve and defend as well as create and explore⁴. Bowker stated that "systems, including religious systems, require boundaries in order to maintain their identity and in order to assure the protection and transmission of information"⁵. They can be metaphorical or literal.

Much more is involved than the transfer of verbal items. What are being transmitted are such things as style, method, wisdom, insight, technique, and behavior; and a great deal of all that is transmitted in the religious case by entirely nonverbal means, by action, liturgy, silence, ritual, dance, decoration, and so on. ... the religious information may be far more important than any other information for which we organize the systematic means of transmission. The information which religions are transmitting is frequently believed by those who are living it, and therefore transmitting it, to be a great deal more important in the long run (and often in the short run) than physics, biology, history, or any of those other systematized transmissions of information, which usually have a higher priority in university budgets⁶.

Religions are "well winnowed traditions" (Joseph Campbell) which are extremely reluctant to change. "... even without revelation religions are predictably always going to be conservative, simply because people within them believe there are important things to conserve"⁷. Thus, as a survival system,

⁴ J.W. BOWKER, "The Burning Fuse: The Unacceptable Face of Religion" in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1986) p. 424. Paper presented at 32nd Annual Conference ("Can Scientific Understanding of Religion Clarify the Route to World Peace?") of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, Star Island, New Hampshire, 27 July-3 August 1985. This is part of his book *Licensed Insanity* (Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1987).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 420-1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

religions will defend themselves. Bowker concludes that "all religions will justify violence in certain circumstances (the nature of the circumstances being differently identified in different religions). This is true, even of religions like Hinduism, which have a reputation for being tolerant, or like Buddhism with its strong commitment to *ahimsa*, non-violence"⁸. Bowker pointed to a two thousand and thirty year religious war between Hindus (Tamils) and Buddhists (Sinhalese) in Sri Lanka. That country's oldest chronicle tells how a Buddhist king was absolved of guilt by Buddhist monks in a bloody conquest of the island. They said to King Dutthagamani (ca. 101-77 B.C.E.):

From this deed arises no hindrance in your way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by you, O lord of men. The one had come into the (three) refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for you, you will bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from your hear, O ruler of men! Thus exhorted by them the great king took comfort. (*Mahavamsa*, xxv.101ff.)⁹.

It is to be inferred that the king's only sin was the killing of a monk (one human) and a lay Buddhist (half a human); there was no bad karma (*kamma* in the Pali language) for killing the non-Buddhists. While this is clearly an inadequate application of the ideal of *ahimsa*, Buddhism's ideals suffer greatly on the real level, as have those of all religions, when applied by worldly religious leaders. And this returns us to part of our dilemma: if a religion's peacemaking is too high (too idealistic), it is accused of being unrealistic (using a standard of "peace" from another order of time and space, such as a Golden Age, or for a different order of humanity, otherworldly monastics); or if a religion's peacemaking is too

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

realistically involved in the world, religious ideals mold to the contours of expediency and religion merely pacifies.

Dean Bowker quickly asserted that his point was made not to slight Buddhism but to illustrate that "all religions, at some point and in different ways, will justify war or violence, even if only as the lesser of two evils"¹⁰. While his argument does not take care to address the problem of the ideal and real in religious ideation, his conclusion that religious involvement on the historical plane entails a strain to its ideals about peace and peacemaking leads us to pursue like criticisms.

TWO CULTURES OF RELIGION AS OBSTACLES TO PEACE

Another way of addressing this problem is found in Professor Boulding's analogy of the garden and the battlefield. Her middle ground will represent the place where the ideal and real are brought together. Boulding postulated that there are two contrasting cultures in every religious tradition, the holy war and peaceable garden cultures¹¹. Examples were given for Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Conflict, she concluded, "is basic to human existence, stemming from the uniqueness of human individuals and their groups. Churches, instead of helping their societies develop the middle-ground skills of negotiation and mediation, have insisted on a choice between two extreme behaviors: unitive love or destruction of the enemy. In international affairs this has led to the identification of the church with the state in wartime and kept it from claiming the important middle ground of peacemaking. Institutionalized religion can pick up its missed opportunities"¹². Drawing from the experience of the women's movement, she concluded that,

The spirit of struggle itself belongs to our psychological nature and is not to be erased. It has to do, as stated

¹⁰ *Ibid.*.

¹¹ ELISE BOULDING, "Two Cultures of Religion as Obstacles to Peace", in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1986) pp. 501-18. Prof. Boulding is professor emeritus of sociology, Dartmouth College.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 501.

earlier, with the unique individuality of each human being, an individuality which has to be protected as over against the other, to retain its integrity. That same individuality also requires bonding with others to make it whole, a lifelong extension of the nurturance every person received in infancy. This means that the terms of relationship with others must be continually established and re-established. It is each person's fate to want, need, perceive, and value different things than her neighbor, but also to feel responsibility for the neighbor's wants, perceptions, and values with the greater bond. The inner *jihad* involves the struggle between self and other. Drawing on the vigor of the struggle for individuality and on the strength for the bonding impulse with the unitive spirit creates the possibility of a peace culture in the middle ground of everyday reconciling behavior¹³.

The two approaches of religion, the holy war culture and the mystical union culture, are both faulted. "The holy war models far outnumber the peace models, in numerical frequency and ease of popular appeal. The conception of the middle-ground peacemaker has to be worked on. The craft and discipline of linking assertiveness and nurturant listening in one set of behaviors (something the women's movement gives a lot of attention to) needs to be brought to the level of consciousness as an empowering model for people of all faiths. The spiritual energy and the charismatic legitimization which only the church [*sic.*] can provide could usefully be channeled into providing this new model"¹⁴.

This old model, incorporating the polarities of human experience, is viewed as a "kind of mental discipline and behavioral training" — scarce in our society¹⁵. But "everyday pragmatic conflict resolution knowledge we acquire on our own just is not enough to deal with the conflict levels that prevail in our society"¹⁶. Boulding forecasted:

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 512.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The social diversity that intensifies the conflict will increase, not decrease, in coming decades. At the international level the familiar and relatively homogeneous political and economic culture of the West, known as the old international order, is being replaced by something very unfamiliar indeed. The new international order has a number of dimensions: economic, environmental, security, culture, information. The Third World is becoming increasingly articulate about the inclusion of their traditions under each of these dimensions. The diversity we deal with now is nothing compared to the diversity we will be dealing with in the future, as more and more hitherto silent communication sources begin to channel new information to the world community. The journey from a fifty-nation Western-oriented world to an over one hundred sixty-nation highly pluralistic world in just a few decades is one that the West has barely begun to fathom, much less assimilate¹⁷.

The position between "warrior and mystic" as the middle ground of true peacemaking was then summarized:

First and last, the skills of listening dialogue, then systems analysis of conflict situations, including analysis of power imbalances and the empowerment of weaker parties; the development of best case scenarios of persistent conflict; the imaging of alternative futures for the parties concerned; and the actual processes of mediation and negotiation. The historic peace churches have been the lone pioneers in the development of peace studies programs through their system of denominational colleges. Non-governmental associations like the World Peace Brigade and the Indian Shanti Sena (nonviolent army) provide training which attracts numbers of church activists. Eventually, if the National Peace Institute develops along the lines envisioned by the National Peace Institute Foundation, there will be peace studies and peace training centers

¹⁷ *Ibid.*.

not only on college campuses around the country but also in noncampus-based community centers. The potential for church involvement is substantial.

The role of international nongovernmental organizations in dealing with pressing social problems at the global level is continually increasing. With the rise of nationalism and the limitations of the United Nations in dealing with the major powers, nongovernmental associations are putting more and more of their special skills and resources, scientific, economic, and educational, into the gaps in the international system. There were only 400 international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) at the beginning of the century. There are now well over 8,000, all committed to working as private citizens' groups across national borders to increase world welfare. The churches constitute a not insignificant proportion of the INGOs and they are gaining more and more experience in working with developmental problems. Yet peacemaking is an area they have scarcely entered, with the major exception of the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the work of the historic peace churches"¹⁸.

(This major exception directs us to the peacemaking effort of the World Conference on Religion and Peace or WCRP which is housed in a lay Buddhist organization in Tokyo, Japan, Rissho Kosei-kai. By implication, praise of WCRP points indirectly to a form of lay Buddhism which has found a middle ground for peacemaking).

A division similar to Boulding's has been suggested by Mordechai Rotenberg¹⁹. Implicit is a version of Boulding's question: why are not all religions peacemakers? Rotenberg divided religions into those who share (missionary) and those with secrets (mystery). Since he found that religions which share are prone to imperialism, he searched for a form which was neither fossilized nor secret. He found two examples of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 516-7.

¹⁹ MORDECHAI ROTENBERG, "Imperialistic Missionarism' and the Kibbutz Paradigm for Coexistence", *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1986) pp. 473-90. His middle ground is the dialogic approach.

religions as peacemakers, the antiproselytizing *kibbutz* of Israel and Japanese Makuya Christianity, both "anti-imperialistic model[s] for mutual contraction facilitating the coexisting *shalom-shalem* [peace-completion] between equals who are *different* but not *indifferent* to each other"²⁰.

For him, the "kibbutz" ideology of dialogic coexistence grants a tolerance which "is possible either through an ideological balance of terror between equal opposing powers or through mutual volitional space evacuating Cabalic style contraction". Rotenberg cites Buber's differentiation between apocalyptic and prophetic eschatologies²¹. Both anticipate humanity's improved future. But an apocalyptic eschatology is determined with people being "swept into it" (Karl Popper's phrase), and legitimates progress through war and conflict (as in a Christian and Hegelian-Marxist dialectic)²².

According to each of these critiques peacemaking will require religions to find a middle ground which is dialogical, present to conflict, willing to come to a new synthesis, and committed to conflict-resolution without violence.

STAGES OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

An analogy to biological development was constructed by Robert Bellah in *Beyond Belief*²³. It distinguished five stages of religious development and posited that religion has progressed from primitive to archaic, historic, early modern and modern. Religions in earlier stages of their maturity, by implication, would have differing relations to violence, just war and peace. Bellah's theory hinges on an observation concerning real differences about world-rejection:

... world rejection is characteristic of a long and important period of religious history. I want to insist on this fact because I want to contrast it with the equally striking fact,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 473.

²¹ MARTIN BUBER, *Paths in Utopia*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

²² ROTENBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

²³ ROBERT BELLAH, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

namely the virtual absence of world rejection in primitive religions, in religion prior to the first millennium B.C. and in the modern world²⁴. ...I think I can account for these and many other facts of the historical development of religion in terms of a scheme of religions evolution²⁵.

The most interesting implications of Bellah's construct relate to the symbolizations of self and world. In primitive and archaic levels world-acceptance is so undifferentiated that "the only possible response to a reality that invades the self to such an extent that the symbolizations of self and world are only very partially separate"²⁶. The world-rejection of the next stage was a positive advance for "the differentiation between experience of the self and of the world which acts upon it" (Lienhardt)²⁷.

Only by withdrawing cathexis from the myriad objects of empirical reality could consciousness of a centered self in relation to an encompassing reality emerge. Early modern religion made it possible to maintain the centered self without denying the multifold empirical reality, and so made world rejection in the classical sense unnecessary. In the modern phase knowledge of the laws of the formation of the self, as well as much more about the structure of the world, has opened up almost unlimited new directions of exploration and development. World rejection marks to beginning of a clear objectification of the social order and sharp criticism of it. In the earlier world-accepting [simple identification] phases religious conceptions and social order were so fused that it was almost impossible to criticize the latter from the point of view of the former. In the later phases the possibility of remaking the world to conform to value demands has served in a very different way to mute the extremes of world rejection. The world acceptance of the last two stages is shown in this analysis to have a profoundly different significance from that of the first two²⁸.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The theory would predict that, at each higher stage, religions will exhibit a different kind of peacemaking (Robert K. Merton's rule of thumb applies: if a theory cannot predict anything, it is not a theory²⁹). While this is yet to be done by Bellah or his students (and with apologies), a sketch can be made to suggest how the stages apply to peace and peacemaking (and applies to our particular example in Buddhism). At the *primitive* and *archaic* stages peace is symbolized mythically as enjoying the pleasure of the gods, a state of being which is experienced directly in ecstatic ritual. In *historic* religions peace and peacemaking has a variety of expressions but with a similar pattern of symbolization: transcendent peace comes only from beyond human power in order to correct the profound rupture between human and divine relationship. Finally, at this stage there can be no peace on earth. The many religions in this transcendent (or historic) stage all look for some type of divine intervention to solve something that humans cannot. Whether there is an apocalyptic inbreak or liberation through insight, each *historic* religion promises a way of salvation. In this stage, holy war and even violence are legitimated means in a world in which there can be no transcendent peace. (Bowker's criticism seems to have a narrower target than he believed he hit. It is not that "all religions, at some point and in different ways, will justify war or violence, even if only as the lesser of two evils", but that earthly peace is not relevant in the *historic* stage of religion).

At the early modern stage, the one which Bellah was not sure if it was even more than a transition to the modern stage that is just now emerging³⁰, peace and peacemaking become a human rather than divine responsibility. Here I see more happening globally than did Bellah, who only found that Christianity's Protestant Reformation institutionalized this stage³¹. By assessing other religious traditions with Bellah's own measurements, we can point out other examples of a early modern phase: the fragmentary emergence of human responsi-

²⁹ ROBERT K. MERTON, *Social Theory and the Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1968 enlarged edition), 701 pp.

³⁰ BELLAH, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

bility for suffering and a concomitant tolerance toward diversity in Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and much later in the radical wing of the Reformation³². Perhaps earlier mystics, in both Eastern and Western traditions, were not reverting to a primitive non-differentiated worldview in their vision of peace and notions of non-injury but were foreshadowing a type of self, transitory and individual, whose injury could be a human responsibility. Despite a widely differing symbology of the "self", there evolves in "early modern" Buddhism a kind of peace which is not just transcendent. The *bodhisattva*, one who obtains the salvation or wholeness sought for in *historic* religious stages deliberately stays in the world and works to alleviate suffering which is of the world. This figure mediates salvation as *prajna* or *nirvana* in no more specific a way than does Luther or Calvin or the ministers who preach the priesthood of the believer. The pattern of *historic* symbolization of mediated salvation has changed to a new pattern, the Mahayana, with much from the previous stages but something so different that its *bodhisattva* way portends a new stage.

Bellah's last stage (as yet manifested in history) is designated *modern* and entails the complete collapse of transcendent dualism. Its symbolization is reflexive: "there is simply no room for a hierarchic dualistic religious symbol system of the classical historic type. ...[Life] has become an infinitely possible thing. ...the symbolization of man's relation to the ultimate conditions of his existence, is no longer the monopoly of any groups explicitly labeled religious. However much the development of Western Christianity may have led up to and in a sense created the modern religious situation, it just as obviously is no longer in control of it. Not only has any obligation of doctrinal orthodoxy been abandoned by the leading edge of modern culture, but every fixed position has become open to question in the process of making sense out of man [*sic.*] and his situation. This involves a more propound commitment to the process I have been calling religious symbolization than ever before. The historic religions discovered the self; the early

³² GEORGE HUNSTON WILLIAMS', *The Radical Reformation* chronicles the fourth wing of the reformation in which both toleration and separation of religion and the state were primary tendencies.

modern religion found a doctrinal basis on which to accept the self in all its empirical ambiguity; modern religion is beginning to understand the laws of the self's own existence and so to help man take responsibility for his own fate"³³.

In this new stage religious symbolization should carry forward a progressively complex form of peace and peacemaking. The notion of noninjury or *ahimsa*, the idea of human responsibility for suffering in the world, the ideas of human cooperation and voluntarism in achieving ambiguous, open-ended versions of the kingdom of God on earth in a context of toleration and creative possibility mark a stage of optimistic pessimism.

In summary, our brief survey has alerted us to familiar problems: a two order language (peace as ordinary or transcendent), relational notions concerning religion and peacemaking, and notions that some types of religion do not seek peace or practice peacemaking, despite seeming to have ideals to the contrary.

So the selection of an example of Buddhist peacemaking which does not reside in the *historic* stage and is not monastic is justifiable; and that choice is a Japanese lay Buddhism group known as Rissho Kosei-kai³⁴.

CONTEXT OF THE BODHISATTVA WAY IN JAPAN

When Buddhism was founded in monastic India, Buddhists assumed that there were two kinds of followers: a type of Buddhist clergy — even though their founder Siddhartha Gautama warned against priestcraft — and a supportive laity³⁵. But

³³ BELLAH, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42.

³⁴ In eleven visits to Japan I have observed, studied, and worked with Rissho Kosei-kai. I have written briefly about their founder, Nikkyo Niwano, in McGraw Hill's *Encyclopedia of World Biographies*. In 1986 I wrote and directed a film and video entitled "The Bodhisattva Way of Peace: Lay Buddhism in Japan", which is available from Hartley Film Foundation (Cos Cob, Conn. 06807).

³⁵ Bellah's paradigm would suggest that during the lifetime of Siddhartha Gautama there is an attempt to reject *historic* religion with its transcendentalism and supernaturalism, its four class system, its mediated way of healing the dualism between the sacred and the profane, between the divine and human, and its dualistic self. But institutionalized Buddhism falls between Bellah's *historic* stage and the

there became a debate within Buddhism over beginner and advanced teachings of the Buddha — the exoteric and esoteric stages which were to lead to enlightenment. The early teachings of the Buddha generally found in the Theravada Canon support a religious structure strictly dividing monastic orders from the laity and expecting many lifetimes to gain enlightenment. But the entire Mahayana or Great Vehicle school of Buddhism arose from an understanding of Buddhism that did not make a fundamental distinction between the world of suffering (*samsara*) and the realm of enlightenment (*nirvana*). Simplified to a dangerous degree, perhaps, one could say that enlightenment was no longer interpreted as a place to escape the suffering of existence but a state of becoming which was not bound by suffering. At first this only produced some Bodhisattvas actively working in the world of suffering for all other sentient beings, but in Japan this Bodhisattva Way would eventually be presented for all to practice³⁶.

The Ekayana Way or the Single Path is mentioned quite early in Mahayana scriptures reconciling both the Theravada and Mahayana paths. Its approach lessened the distinction between those on a serious spiritual path, the *saṅgha*, and the supporters, or laity. However, the major notion to make an important impact on the development of the potential equality of all seekers is the realization that every sentient being already has the Buddha nature within and thus only needs to awaken to or develop that nature. This means that a monk is no closer to enlightenment than a layman, and in fact the lazy monk is not superior to the humble layperson working according to the Bodhisattva Way — for the good of all sentient beings in this lifetime.

pre-modern. It sometimes mixes a two-class system of *bhikkhu* and *upasaka* (monk and layperson) with universal enlightenment for all sentient beings, world-rejection with its Mahayana contradictory of world-acceptance (Narajuna's formulation that *samsara* and *nirvana* are of the same essence, voidness or *sunyata*). This is all evidence for change: the time necessary for the appropriation of a paradigm shift.

³⁶ While it would take centuries of the application of this new conception of life to be articulated, the tendency toward a single social structure, a modern phase social monism (but in Buddhism a *modern* phase monism or interrelatedness of all, sentient and non-sentient), will be working itself out in equality (*tathagata*, suchness) and peace (*nirvana*).

Retreat from the world of suffering into a monastery is not to be criticized but there is no special merit for it. The monastic discipline has less distractions but, even with many distractions, the way of the Bodhisattva requires contact with life and an active role of working for ultimate happiness (that is, the enlightenment) of all beings.

Western scholars have often equated Lay Buddhism — and perhaps not without reason — with less interesting, impure forms of Buddhism which do not require much study. Few courses on Buddhism in our universities devote more than a single lecture to Lay Buddhism and its contributions. (An exception to this neglect has been to equate Lay Buddhism in Japan with Soka Gakkai. Its role in Japanese politics, economics and as a new religion are studied, usually as an example of religion's negative role in Japan. Prof. M. Kiyota's "*Japan's New Religions (1945-65): Secularization or Spiritualization?*" argued cogently against that stereotype³⁷).

"Lay Buddhism" has denoted a less serious Buddhism — spiritually, intellectually, academically. Spiritually, the lay Buddhist follows fewer of the precepts, attempts only to live a moral life, and supports the Sangha. Intellectually, the lay Buddhist has little training to deal with the intellectual profundities of Buddhist doctrine or its experiential subtleties. Academically, the lay Buddhist is seldom, if ever, sufficiently scholarly to handle the languages of primary Buddhist documents (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali) and of the Mahayana tradition (Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese).

When an area of inquiry has been little discussed, the agreed-upon terms for raising the issues are awkward and often misleading. For instance *saṅgha* is the technical term for those who supposedly practice all the precepts, who live the monastic life, and/or who are professional priests in established Buddhist religious institutions. While Buddhism began as anti-clerical in India in the context of the Vedic priesthood, over the centuries the Buddhist clergy has come to incorporate many of the elements that were rejected during the lifetime of

³⁷ From the Calgary Buddhism conference, 1978, in Leslie S. Kawamura (ed.), *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism* (1981), pp. 193-221.

Sakyamuni Buddha. Now, especially concerning Japan, a discussion about lay and monastic Buddhism does not describe the real territory. Lay Buddhism in Japan covers both lay adherents of established sect (*kissey-shûkyô*) governed by the *saṅgha* as well as new religious groups (*shinkô-shûkyô*) such as Risshô Kôsei-kai, a lay Buddhist organization, which is both independent and supportive of the *saṅgha*. Professor Kiyota concluded that the (Buddhist) new religions represent a lay *saṅgha* and not a monastic *saṅgha*³⁸. The discussion of lay and monastic Buddhism again will beg for another term when it is noted that most of the professional clergy in Japan of established Buddhist institutions are non-monastic. Should they be referred to as married *saṅgha*?

While Ekayana Buddhism would suggest a broader realm to search for Buddhist peacemakers, such as among the laity or not specifically within the *saṅgha*, the metaphors of human languages suggesting the nature of Buddhist peace and its peacemakers must be studied.

Ekayana Buddhism in its clearest expression is Lay Buddhism. At the time of Buddhism's very arrival in Japan Prince Shôtoku did not become a Buddhist monk when he became a serious follower of the Buddha; he chose the *ekayana* path and articulated his notion of enlightenment in the world. The redefinition of the *saṅgha* as the order of Buddhist monks and nuns to the community of peacemakers would take centuries; it depended on a revaluing of the conceptions of peace and peacemaking in Buddhism. Its *historic* heritage brought a mortgage from previous stages as transcendent peace (*nirvana* as other-worldly) and peacemaking as transcendental enlightenment. Lay Buddhism will attempt to go back to the radical shift in Shakyamuni's teachings and understand peace with new symbology.

PEACE IN JAPANESE BUDDHISM

Peace is more than the mere absence of war and conflict: *heiwa* is the usual Japanese word for peace as the absence of

³⁸ *Ibid.*

war. Japanese must render a Buddhist word for peace from Sanskrit, one of the languages of Buddhist origin. That word is *shanti* and is rendered by two characters *jaku* and *jo*: "*Jaku* means the state of isolation from spiritual tribulations arising from the instincts. The tranquil state of severance from all sense-cause suffering is what is meant by *jo*"³⁹. In other words, *jakujo* means the same thing as *nirvana*, which, in the Buddha's death, means the peaceful state in which the fire of delusion has been extinguished. In short, the Buddhist idea of peace concentrates on peace of mind⁴⁰. Nirvana is total harmony, absolute peace. Nirvana is absolute peace. Only nirvana is whole and peaceful. "Unfortunately, Buddhist peace can be misinterpreted as a lukewarm state in which the individual is concerned with his own mental tranquility only and is indifferent to the peace of others. Nonetheless, war begins in the mind of man. True peace demands the participation of the individual, the group, the nation, and all humanity. To emphasize any one of these leads to belligerence masking behind apparent pacifism. When this happens, unilateral, hostile criticism takes the place of dialogue; and the essential of love, compassion, and forbearance are wanting"⁴¹.

NIRVANA AS TRANSCENDENT/IMMANENT PEACE

A Buddhist peace that is both transcendent and immanent can easily be found in the practice of Japanese lay Buddhists. The peacemakers of lay Buddhism are chosen because in lay Buddhism *nirvana* has both transcendent and immanent dimensions. Further, Risshô Kôsei-kai, an example of married or lay Buddhism which has full-time religious leadership, will serve as the primary example. Thus, Risshô Kôsei-kai is not monastic *sangha*. Nor does it have legal or ecclesiastical affiliation with an established Buddhist sect. Yet, most author-

³⁹ *Dharma World*, Oct. 1984, pp. 7; 17; Dec. 1984, p. 13, quoting Nikkyo Niwano.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ NIKKYO NIWANO, *A Buddhist Approach to Peace* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1977).

ities classify Risshô Kôsei-kai (roughly translated, the Society for Establishing Righteousness and Promoting Fellowship) as a Nichiren-related Buddhist sect. Risshô Kôsei-kai arose as a new religion in 1939 out of Reiyukai⁴², a lay Buddhist group based on the *Lotus Sutra*, but has affiliated as a member of the Association for New Religions. Risshô Kôsei-kai officially opposes being called a Nichiren sect. Risshô Kôsei-kai, however, acknowledges the influence of Nichiren (1222-1282) and of his understanding of the *Lotus Sutra*, their central scripture. If one is to study Buddhism in Japan as it has evolved, terminological distinctions and ecclesiastical affiliations, as well as doctrine and practice must be recognized.

LAY BUDDHISM'S DEVELOPMENT

Lay Buddhism in Japan has developed within a Bodhisattva ideal⁴³, in a setting of *ekayana* Buddhism, governed by a *hongaku* doctrine and strengthened by the *mappo* theory. Perhaps treating these in the reserve order will work best⁴⁴.

The *mappo* theory asserted that true Buddhism would decline because each succeeding age after that of Shakyamuni Buddha would be less capable of following the precepts and of attaining enlightenment. About the time Buddhism reached Japan, approximately 1000 years after Shakyamuni's *parinirvana* (departure from this life), the age of *mappo* — a period of mere imitation of the Buddha's Dharma (known as *pratirûpa-ka*) — was widely believed to have begun. Few were expected to follow the precepts entirely. In fact, during the Heian period (roughly the 9th through 12th centuries) Shingon and Tendai

⁴² [TSUGUNARI KUBO], *The Development of Japanese Lay Buddhism* (Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1986), pp. 1-56, and TSUGUNARI KUBO, "The Reiyukai Movement: A Potential Interreligious Philosophy of Buddhism", Paper submitted to the Buddhist-Christian Dialogue Conference, Berkeley, August 1987, pp. 1-13.

⁴³ Cf. HAR DAYAL, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1932 [1970], 329 pp.

⁴⁴ KAWAMURA, *op. cit.*, H. INAGAKI, "The Bodhisattva Doctrine as Conceived and Developed by the Founders of the New Sects in the Heian and Kamakura Periods", pp. 165-191.

schools of Buddhism became so secular and degenerate that the Bodhisattva ideal collapsed⁴⁵.

Yet, the *hongaku* doctrine perceived that all sentient beings are originally enlightened and only need to awaken to their real nature. Such a perception, even in a time of spiritual darkness, grants optimism that even lay persons and married clergy can live significantly in this lifetime. This belief dovetailed perfectly with such sutras as the Lotus Sutra which taught the Bodhisattva path to realization of one's true nature.

Finally, the *ekayana* ideal of one path or way to enlightenment, though variously interpreted by Japan's great teachers, underscored the notion that enlightenment is realizable by all by one path — one which does not exclude women, laity, or any sentient being. There is one path, and all are already enlightenend.

Prof. H. Inagaki's brilliant study of "The Bodhisattva Doctrine as Conceived and Developed by the Founders of the New Sects in the Heian and Kamakura Periods" summarized the developments which led into our century⁴⁶. Buddhist sects as Tendai, Shingon, Renzai and Soto Zen, Jôdo, Jôdoshin, and Nichiren had to face the questions of requiring or not requiring the precepts (including celibacy), replacing more difficult practices to attain the *bodhi* mind with only faith, and accepting a specific form of *ekayana* which might lessen the distinction between clergy and laity.

This is the context in which Risshô Kôsei-kai's founders, Nikkyo Niwano and Myoko Naganuma, set into motion what was to become a Lay Buddhist movement illustrating all of the features mentioned. Although Risshô Kôsei-kai began during Japan's Pacific War period and started as a New Religion of a charismatic nature, Risshô Kôsei-kai has evolved into a explicitly Buddhist organization practicing *ekayana* Buddhism in the *mappo* age but confident of the *bodhisattva* way because of the *hongaku* doctrine. Risshô Kôsei-kai based its teachings

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* The weakness of the democratization of spirituality reveals itself in the disciplines or practices which produce the *pre-modern* or *modern* sage; when these are no longer done and living examples are not produced, a reversion in archaic magic and/or apocalyptic expectation seems to follow quickly.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

about the *bodhisattva* way of peace on the Threefold *Lotus Sutra*. This is comprised of the *Muryogikyo* or Sutra of Innumerable Meanings which serves as the introduction, the *Hoke-kyo* or the *Lotus Sutra* itself, and the *Kanfugen-gyo* or Sutra of the Bodhisattva Universal-virtue, which teaches the way of penitence as the practice of the spirit of the *Lotus Sutra*⁴⁷. Niwano has written extensively on the *Lotus Sutra* (monthly in the group's magazine, *Dharma World*, and in various books)⁴⁸.

Its interpretation would allow a very different emphasis concerning peace and the peacemaker. While the *Lotus Sutra* was recognized as important from the very beginning of Buddhism in Japan, it served as the scriptural foundation for a paradigm shift from *historic* religion to a *premodern*, and possibly, *modern* stage of religious development.

For Niwano, serious lay Buddhists could remain in the world of politics and economics and still hope for full enlightenment. Laypersons could even become *bodhisattvas* (enlightened beings) working for the salvation of all sentient beings. There was an equality of result with monastic Buddhists. Whether this a *cheap* grace or a major paradigm shift is the question.

But the realization of *nirvana* would be interpreted to have profound peacemaking implications for this world — a strikingly *pre-modern* or *modern* rendering of Buddhist scripture and practice.

ONE READING OF BUDDHIST SCRIPTURE

In *A Buddhist Approach to Peace* Niwano's seemingly simple homilies on Buddhist scripture will be presented to

⁴⁷ Written in India during the Kushan period (ca. 50 to 150 A.D.) in Sanskrit, the *Saddharma Pandarika* or *The Lotus of the True Law* attempted to reconcile the differences between Theravada and Mahayana. Its synthetic view was known as *ekayāna*, the one or uniting way.

⁴⁸ NIKKYO NIWANO, *The Lotus Sutra: Life and Soul of Buddhism* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1971); *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* (New York: Weatherhill, 1975); *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1976); *A Guide to the Threefold Lotus Sutra* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1981).

demonstrate a paradigm shift from *historic* religion to a clearly bi-polar approach to peace (inner/outer, personal/group, this worldly/other worldly)⁴⁹. The scriptural texts for his *Approach to Peace* assembled passages from the full Buddhist Canon, both Theravada and Mahayana.

Buddhist scripture, primarily the *Lotus Sutra*, outlines the parameters of peace and peacemaking. The characteristics will be suggested in allegorical stories in the *Lotus Sutra*, while more philosophical notions will be expounded directly in other Buddhist scripture.

Ahimsa. In the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 12, there is the story of how Shakyamuni Buddha met the violence and abuse of Devadatta with compassion. Non-violence is shown to be more powerful than violence⁵⁰.

In the *Sutra of the Great Demise (Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra)*, chapter 5, Shakyamuni Buddha condones fighting with the sword to protect the Right Law (the *Dharma*). But one may never kill⁵¹.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 5, from the "Parable of the Herbs" one learns that injuring "the potential attainment of buddhahood" and preventing whatever creature or entity from "perfect manifestation of the innate nature" brings certain injury to oneself⁵².

Peace as more than the Lack of War. In the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 7, entitled "Parable of the Magic City", a leader creates an illusion of magic city in order for his people to rest (*upaya*, skill and means, the method of teaching at the level of the learner). Nirvano concluded that "Such a 'peaceful city' is the symbol of a warless state, a state of generally pleasant life, that is a 'temporary peace'. However, this warless state alone is not real peace. It is not possible to live safely forever in such a temporary peace, even if one wishes to, because this state is not a firmly rooted peace but only a temporary respite. Like the visionary castle, it is destined to disappear someday"⁵³.

⁴⁹ Nirvano, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Peace as more valuable than worldly Power. The *Sutra of King Longevity* tells of a king who gives his life for his country in order that his subjects will not have to suffer a war. His message at his execution is written thus: "If one seeks retribution for vengeance through revenge, it leads only to still more vengeance and the chain can never be broken. But if one party forgives the other, then desire for vengeance will disappear"⁵⁴. This *sutra* contains several key verses for peacemaking: "It is limited thinking to regard sovereignty more highly than the lives of men", "it is better to sacrifice oneself in order to save many others", "if one seeks retribution for vengeance through revenge, the chain can never be broken". Niwano concluded: "These are important teachings that we should be practicing right now"⁵⁵.

Peace as a sacrifice. In the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 20, the "Bodhisattva Never Despise" is a example of the peacemaker whose very message of respectful commendation of everyone ("you are destined to become a Buddha") brings to him abuse and persecution. But his persistence in peacemaking, despite it not bringing him worldly praise or advantage, brings to mind Confucius' teaching of not acting because it will profit but because it is simply right⁵⁶.

Peace as an Attitude. In the *Dhammapada* Niwano found a verse illustrating the attitude which prevents one from attaining the *bodhisattva* way. When one thinks: "He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me", — In those who harbor such thoughts hatred will never cease. 'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me', — in those who do not harbor such thoughts hatred will cease"⁵⁷. Niwano then illustrated this attitude; Mr. Jayewardene of Ceylon is remembered for his call for no war reparations from Japan for his Buddhist nation⁵⁸.

There is a parable which reminds one of Jesus telling a would-be follower to turn the other cheek. In the *Sutra of the*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Great Demise one learns about Virudabha who was the son of a King and a maid. He wanted revenge on the Sakya clan of Kapilavastu. Shakyamuni Buddha stopped him by his spiritual presence. But when this warrior sought revenge against Shakyamuni's clan for the fourth time, Shakyamuni did not attempt to stop him. "Three times even for a Buddha" is a phrase in the Buddhist world for the limits of undeserved grace or protection from consequences of one's actions⁵⁹.

Peace in the mappo age. The *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 13, entitled "Exhortation to Hold Firm", states that in this corrupt age (*mappo*) certain vicious *bhikshus* (monks) will abuse peacemakers⁶⁰. This seems to prepare the follower for a startling conclusion: one cannot trust that the *sangha* (those ordained into the Buddhist Order) will be the peacemakers. (While this *pre-modern* notion may not seem so shocking, it hides a paradigm shift which revolutionizes Buddhism).

Peace base on Equality. The notion of equality of every facet of life arises in the *Sutra of Innumerable Meanings*. It is noted that *bhikshus*, *bhikshunis*, *upasakas*, *upasikas*, high class people, the masses, are all seated on an equal level⁶¹. This parable teaches the true reality of all existence and the Ten Suchnesses. In the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 2, it is stated that "only a Buddha together with a Buddha can fathom the Reality of All Existence"⁶². The fundamental unity of life rests upon its shared essence: voidness, emptiness, *sunyata*⁶³. "There is no deeper peace of mind. There is no greater confidence"⁶⁴. "Voidness is the only one, real existence that makes everything and every phenomenon of the universe. Scientifically speaking, it is the fundamental energy that is manifested in all phenomena, and religiously speaking, it is the great life force that permeates everything that exists in the universe, namely, the Eternal, Original Buddha"⁶⁵. In the *Sutra of Innumerable*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 55, 69, 77-9, to cite a few key passages.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Meanings, which is rather philosophical⁶⁶, and in the *Lotus Sutra*, which in chapter 3 is allegorical, there is the parable of burning house which explains "that it is 'voidness' that creates all things and all phenomena"⁶⁷.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 5, the Parable of the Herbs describes a single, dense cloud watering the entire earth: one cloud, one earth, but many forms. This parable teaches that each develops according to its kind, but that each has the same nature, *sunyata* (voidness)⁶⁸. "It expresses the concept that to manifest completely the innate nature unique to that individual being is, in fact, the attainment of buddhahood for that being"⁶⁹. Such equality of the potential for human attainment of buddhahood is clearly the meaning, but there is a greater meaning — all things, human or animal, plant or inanimate, have the potential for buddhahood⁷⁰. Therefore, peace involves non-violence to nature⁷¹. Injuring the potential attainment of buddhahood injures oneself. Noninjury, *ahimsa*, brings harmony and peace.

Chapter 12 of the *Lotus Sutra* contains the story of a daughter of a dragon king who attains buddhahood and in Chapter 5, "The Herbs", plants become buddhas⁷². These stories teach the equality in potential of every aspect of the manifested world. All life (and, Niwano contends, even all other forms as well) are void and rest in *nirvana* or absolute peace⁷³.

Peace as this-wordly. In the *Lotus Sutra*, Chapter 11 "Beholding the Precious Stupa" Niwano finds justification for working in the structures of this world for peace. In this story "various buddhas take the dirt of the *sahā*-[earth, f.]-world (this world of suffering) three times and change it to a Pure Land"⁷⁴. Niwano concludes: "The reason the land is repeatedly

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

purified is that there is no world other than this world where Buddhas abide, and that, even so, the truth cannot be implemented while the world is as stained as it actually is. There in order to welcome the truth and bring in into the world, the land must be purified⁷⁵. That leads Niwano to say: "The Lotus Sutra asserts that, in order for man to become truly happy, in addition to individual enlightenment and happiness in one's individual life, it is necessary to purify the nation (society), thus going a step further. It is in the spirit of the Lotus Sutra for a person to make efforts not to escape from actuality but rather to positively wrestle with it and strive to purify it"⁷⁶.

There is no apocalyptic vision here, even though one might find such a view in *historic* texts⁷⁷. Niwano finds grounds to reject supernatural intervention from another plane, even teaching that it should not be sought. There are more than enough bodhisattvas for alleviating suffering from this earth. This is found in *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 15, "Springing up out of the Earth". Bodhisattvas who came from other worlds were not needed, but Buddha raises up bodhisattvas from the midst of this earth. Here the three *sâdhanâs* or practices (eminent conduct, boundless conduct and steadfast conduct) are taught to aid in the realization of peace in this world⁷⁸. "The fact that the bodhisattvas issued forth from the midst of the earth can serve as a very important lesson. The person who wants to make this world peaceful should directly touch the suffering of the ordinary people in actual society, coming down to the level of the general public, even though his own mind may be highly enlightened. We also learn that one cannot save others by idealism alone; one must grapple with actual problems"⁷⁹. Furthermore, all bodhisattvas are "bodhisattvas of 'practice'"⁸⁰.

Peace in the Actual World. Niwano sees the concept of a

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷⁷ HENRY CLARKE WARREN, *Buddhism in Translation* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 481-86, citing a Pali text, the *Anâgata-Vamsa* (History of Future Events).

⁷⁸ NIWANO, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

world federation in *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 21, "The Divine Power of the Tathagata". Because it is true that everyone is one (void), and there is "one-buddha land of spiritual life", "if spiritual life reaches this state, the actual world cannot but change accordingly. That is to say, a world of great harmony will appear when all nations, all races, and all classes come to life in accordance with the one truth, so that discrimination among them vanishes, discord and fighting do not occur, and all the people work joyfully, enjoy their lives, and promote culture. In short the whole world will become one buddha-land. Organizationally speaking, it can be said that the buddha-land means the formation of a world federation"⁸¹.

But it does not follow for Niwano that developing countries will be industrialized by Western standards. One must be careful not to do injury to another's nature. Other models of national development might be better. "When each country has sufficiently developed its own fundamental nature, we will find that all nations can coexist without infringing upon each other's rights, that international relations are smooth, and that harmony has been achieved. We would then have found, for the first time, the lasting peace we have sought so long"⁸².

This brief survey of Lay Buddhism's scriptural basis for peacemaking may not seem revolutionary on the surface. Its style is folksy and allegorical. There are numerous ways these stories might be applied. For instance, the story of Shakyamuni Buddha condoning the use of the sword for the protection of the Dharma could be interpreted along the lines of "imperialistic missionaryism" (Rotenberg). The *Sitz im Leben* (life setting) of several of these passages appear retrogressive, others signal a paradigm shift.

BUDDHIST UNIVERSALISM

The *Lotus Sutra* was used by Nichiren to marshal the Japanese to resist Mongol invasion in the 13th century. In more

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

recent times it has been interpreted by Soka Gakkai to justify a type of "imperialistic missionaryism", encouraging *shakubuku* (conversion; necessary force to replace opposing views) to win converts to the true teachings of the Buddha⁸³. Is this peace which Niwano speaks about yet another version of "imperialistic missionaryism"? Is it a peace that will only result when all accept Buddhism and realize their buddha-nature? This is what the thinkers that were referred to earlier would be worried about.

Concept of universal religion. While Niwano affirms an essential unity of all things, human and all other sentient being, living and nonliving, is the universalism of Niwano deeply tolerant? Is this universalism merely an artifact of tribalism? Is the "essential oneness of religion" of which he speaks, which "realization [he makes] the creed of [his] religious activity"⁸⁴, a form of Buddhist egotism? When Niwano finds that the *Lotus Sutra* teaches that "every man is the child of the Buddha", and that "Buddha is the great life of the universe, which is the very root of all phenomena"⁸⁵, is this a claim which Christians, Muslims, Jews, and any one else might accept?

The scriptural foundation of Lay Buddhism is not understood literalistically by Niwano: "...the Lotus Sutra, in its deepest meaning, is not a proper noun but a common noun meaning the highest and most real teaching, which teaches the truth of the universe to all human beings and leads them to the true way of living"⁸⁶. It is a non-idolatrous symbolism of the transcendent which intersects with an allegorical story. The Tathagata, Sakyamuni Buddha, is not a proper noun, either⁸⁷. Both terms are concepts that are transcendent, universal, and absolute in nature. Each points beyond the historical, linguistic and religious contingencies to the unlimited. Each points to a first order of reality which is absolute, which is *sunyata* or empty of suffering. Yet that order, paradoxically, does not vitiate the relative reality of a second order, this world.

⁸³ DAIGAN & ALICA MATSUNAGA, *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism* (Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1984 third printing), Vol. II, pp. 135 ff.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Peace within and without. The experiences of inter-religious cooperation in Japan and in the International Association for Religious Freedom strengthened President Niwano's conviction that a deep-felt religious unity can arise in spite of cultural and religious differences. The *Lotus Sutra* stated that anyone who is true to their real nature and serves life is already on the *bodhisattva* way and is a Buddhist, not in the proper sense of the word but in its symbolic sense. Niwano concluded: "God in Christianity and the Eternal, Original Buddha in Buddhism are quite the same"⁸⁸. All Truth is from the same root. All Truth is grounded in Life; Truth in life is the Buddha-nature. Truths contained in the Lotus Sutra are the Truth of life itself, but again this conviction is not to be confused with a narrow, sectarian view. The Truth of life, the Dharma or teachings of the Buddha, does not refer to a literal or common meaning but to universal truth.

Mutual understanding should be pursued vigorously because all have the buddha-nature. One who works within and without to realize their unique role in life, one's *svadharma*, is already walking the Bodhisattva way. While it is Niwano's hope that a higher synthesis or religious unification should occur, he realistically pursues religious cooperation⁸⁹.

Thus, Niwano came to his conception "that people of religion possess the greatest ability to join together and transcend difference of race and nationality"⁹⁰. This conclusion was arrived at in spite of our record. "However, this apparent contradiction, this historic failure of religions to work together for peace, stems from the fact that until recently, religious people attached importance only to formal differences of faiths, without trying to see the common aspects that lie behind their respective religions. I believe that such narrowness would disappear if they endeavored to think about the essential meaning of all religions"⁹¹. Nikkyo Niwano stated at the

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71, 77.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Kyoto World Conference on Religion and Peace in 1969 in a speech entitled "The Will of God and the Spirit of Buddha"⁹²:

At one time, various religions, precisely because of their own convictions, were unable to cooperate and were even antagonistic to each other. But the times have changed. Improvement in the means of transportation has made the earth much smaller, and progress in science and technology has made it possible for man to see his planet from outer space. In this day and age, the need for unity in the family of man is being brought home with an increase sense of urgency. It is my firm belief that religion alone can provide the motive power to create a peaceful world, not through armed might but through respect of humanity.

Indeed, the time has arrived when religions, instead of antagonizing each other because of what we once thought was a religious conviction, should cooperate with each other in order to contribute to the cause of mankind and world peace, because, in the final analysis, all sectors of religion are and can be bound together by the common aspiration for human happiness and salvation. This must be our responsibility, the responsibility of us religionists we are called upon to realize on earth the will of God and the spirit of Buddha.

Real Activity in a World of Suffering. Quoting the Buddha, Niwano wrote that "Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the single candle will not be shortened thereby. Happiness never decreases by being shared"⁹³. To the Louvain World Conference on Religion and Peace in 1974 Niwano spoke of "Selfless Service to Others"⁹⁴.

⁹² NIKKYO NIWANO, "The Will of God and the Spirit of Buddha", in HOMER A. JACK, ed. *Religion for Peace. Proceedings of the Kyoto Conference on Religion and Peace*. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation and Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973, pp. 30-33.

⁹³ *Approach to Peace*, op. cit., p. 92.

⁹⁴ In HOMER A. JACK, ed. *World Religion/World Peace*. New York et. al: World Conference on Religion and Peace, 1979. Unabridged Proceedings of the Second World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP II) Louvain, Belgium, 28 August/3 September 1974, pp. 1-2.

We must, to face these fast accumulating problems, reform our political and economic systems and structures. It is the mission of us leaders of religion to make people realize fully that we all belong to the human family and that we must all practice inner restraint to prevent social greediness.

In order to make the will of God and the true intention of the Buddha actual, let me quote the creed of my organization, Rishsho Kosei-kai. In part it reads: 'We pledge our best efforts to perfect our character and realize in our lives the Bodhisattva Way. To this end, by improving in knowledge and practice of the faith, in personal discipline, and in leading others, we will endeavor to realize a state of peace for the family, the community, the country, and the world.

Speaking at the Princeton World Conference on Religion and Peace Niwano demonstrated that he could articulate a middle ground approach in peacemaking, one involved in the realities of struggle and arbitration.

Romain Rolland has pointed out that it is not enough merely to long for peace; we must long also for the conditions that make for peace, and we must learn what these conditions are. True, we have not yet reached our goal, and those who adopt a perfectionist approach to the problem of peace sometimes criticize us for being slow. But the world in which we live is not a place where perfection is achieved in a single leap. Progress comes in stages. We must proceed step by step. More important than speed is the question of whether we are exercising sufficient patience and perseverance⁹⁵.

Action for Peace. Perhaps these examples of Niwano's exposition of Buddhist scripture and speeches in the religious

⁹⁵ HOMER A. JACK, ed., *Religion in the Struggle for World Community*. New York *et al*: World Conference on Religion and Peace, 1980, 418 pp. Unabridged Proceedings of the Third World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP III) Princeton, New Jersey, 29 August/7 September 1979, p. 90.

peace movement are sufficient to illustrate the range of teachings concerning peacemaking. He sees his transition from lay Buddhist missionary to Buddhist peacemaker in this way:

During the first half of my life, I devoted myself wholeheartedly to the dissemination of the Lotus Sutra. In the second half of my life, my activities deepened in the social sphere, widening to an international scope, as I became convinced that the Lotus Sutra is the vehicle of world peace. There is no difference at all in essence, and it is quite a natural process for me as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, that I devoted myself to disseminating faith during the first half of my life and have focused my energy on the peace movement during the second half⁹⁶.

Lay Buddhism's attempt to train its voluntary membership to be peacemakers requires disciplines from previous religious stages. Of the three spiritual modalities which prepare Lay Buddhists as peacemakers — teaching, practice, and service — its devotional form of practice⁹⁷ is grounded in recitation of the *Lotus Sutra*, study, *hoza* (a type of group counseling based on the *Lotus Sutra*) and vows of service for peace and the alleviation of suffering of all sentient beings.

Its service for peace in this world is twofold. The *Lotus Sutra* prompts lay Buddhists to seek both peace among religions and between nations — *Nirvana* as the practice of peacefulness within combined with service to every facet of life. It is viewed as irrational for religions to be in conflict. Lay Buddhists want religion's power for liberation and hope to cease to be used in narrow and partisan ways.

President Niwano led Rissho Kosei-kai to explore with other religious leaders why past failures at understanding have been so prevalent. The dialogical process would span many meetings and decades. In the 1960s Rissho Kosei-kai began to venture outside of Japan for contact with other religions. When President Niwano met Pope Paul VI in Rome in 1965, the Pope

⁹⁶ *Approach to Peace*, op. cit., p. 7.

⁹⁷ GEORGE M. WILLIAMS, *Liberal Religious Reformation in Japan* (New York: International Association for Religion Freedom, 1984), Appendix C.

stated that Christians should pray for Buddhists, and Buddhists should pray for Christians.

Concern that religionists work for world peace led to the founding of the World Conference on Religion and Peace⁹⁸. Its first international meeting was held in Kyoto in 1970. It was an organization to bring together the leaders of religious communities. While all religions support peace, concrete work for peace was more difficult to achieve. Gradually a network of religionists who were dedicated to inner and outer peace has emerged.

The work of the World Conference on Religion and Peace has expanded to regional groups like the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace, promoting regional concerns. At these conferences Asian religious leaders, like Mother Teresa have worked to solve shared problems.

The discover was made that concrete work to alleviate suffering promotes cooperation and understanding. Lay Buddhism joined in this work but also kept pointing to the inner foundations for peace as the interconnectedness to all of life.

Dialogue and attempts at religious understanding also took place on other fronts. The International Association for Religious Freedom, originally a liberal European and American group, held conferences to promote mutual understanding. The IARF has expanded to become a truly worldwide religious organization, holding its first Congress in Asia in 1984⁹⁹.

The Niwano Peace Prize became symbolic of a growing network of religionist working for peace both within and without. The first recipient of the Niwano Peace Prize was Archbishop Camara of Brazil. His fearless work for peace among the powerless drew support and praise from Lay Buddhism. Other Niwano Peace Prize recipients include Dr. Homer Jack, former president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace; Zhao Pu Chu, President of the Buddhist

⁹⁸ H. JACK, *op. cit.*

⁹⁹ ELKE SCHLINCK-LAZARRAGA, *Wiedergeburt Schöferuscger Religion im Weltbund für Religiöse Freiheit* (Hamburg: IARF, 1975), 393 pp.

Association, Peoples Republic of China; and Dr. William Potter, former president of the World Council of Churches.

The second area of external peace involved working for peace among nations of the world and for the alleviation of suffering. Members of Rissho Kosei-kai consider it natural for lay Buddhists to be concerned with major world problems. Networking with other concerned religionists in the International Association for Religious Freedom and the World Conference on Religion and Peace allows Rissho Kosei-kai to work as a non-governmental organization in the United Nations and in a consultant status on problems of hunger and malnutrition, unjust use and distribution of the world's resources, refugee problems, and other world needs.

Niwano has stated certain minimal goals for life on this planet: "In specific terms this means that the people must have the right to participate in their government, and that their life, freedom, and a decent standard of living [will] be guaranteed. In addition, a basic social welfare program must exist so that the handicapped and the aged may live in security"¹⁰⁰.

The danger of nuclear war has prompted dialogue and study at the highest levels — bringing nuclear experts, politicians and religionists together. Before the United Nations in 1978, speaking as President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, Mr. Niwano stated:

A society based on the strength of arms is the negation of a community based on justice. ...the most complex, technical problem in the domain of international peace and security must, in the end, depend upon ethical decisions which must be explained and justified to the ... people. ...The very possession of nuclear weapons must become a crime against humanity. ...Such war [nuclear war] is impiety against the sacredness of life itself. Peace does not just mean the absence of armed conflict. It is rather a condition in which mutual help exists among all people, in which there is harmony between people and

¹⁰⁰ NIKKYO NIWANO, "Oral Statement", Representing World Conference on Religion and Peace, delivered to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, June 12, 1978.

their environment, ...[and] the possibility of ...[life] without fear is guaranteed.

We are not perfect. Humankind is a continuum which elevates through constant agony and failure. It is the present situation that such imperfect human beings as us are in an unstable condition where we have neither completely grasped the techni[que] of living peacefully on this narrow globe, nor an outlook of the world and the view of values which have universality and adequacy for truly peaceful life¹⁰¹.

CONCLUSION

What can now be suggested is this: First, Lay Buddhism's work for peace is genuinely religious¹⁰². It is neither an afterthought nor an inconsistency. Peacemaking derives from its worldview that the reconciliation of life can be made — within the individual, within groups, among nations, with the environment, at all levels and among all relationships.

Second, the liberalization of religious symbology would require nearly two millennia for Lay Buddhism to evolve (not revolt) to a new stage of life. Lay Buddhism appears to have evolved in its expressions past the *pre-modern* phase into a nascent *modern* form, Bellah's fifth stage. From the point of view of *modern* religious symbolization this does not come as a surprise; what is surprising is that Buddhism took so long in beginning to express what was clearly there from the start. Its radical denial of the historic self, of transcendent (other worldly) divinity, of caste (the four historic classes) and priesthood (a denial of the two class structure which is the *pre-modern* expression), et cetera, forecasted its evolution but not its timing. It has taken longer for Buddhism to institutionalize *modern* religious symbolization than it took for Christianity — which according to Bellah only began its *pre-modern* express-

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² While this paper has been restricted to only one of its expressions in Japan, other examples present themselves. Also cited above is the similar work for peace of Tsugunari Kubo, President of Reiyukai.

ion in the sixteen century. But both are quite fragile in their infancy. The loss of religious literal absolutes of humankind's first three stages of religious development must be replaced with spiritual disciplines which enable the growth and maturity for each sentient being in the ecosystem, in the *sahâ*-world.

From Lay Buddhism has come a remarkable vision of peacemaking. The *bodhisattva* is not someone specially prepared by talent or circumstance but potentially everyone. Since all have the buddha-nature, all are *bodhisattva*'s in the making. Because we are all essentially equal in potential, one expects peaceful and salvific actions to eventually result in everyone's liberation from illusions and suffering. The special role of persons of religion in peacemaking leads to peace among religions and between nations. From the viewpoint of the *bodhisattva* way the world does not end in a bang or a whimper but in a lasting *nirvana*, a peace that harmonizes all aspects of life according to the full and realized potential of each part of the whole. Peacemaking is not a burden but a joy, the true joy of life. That is the essence of the *bodhisattva* way.

So Niwano could tell a United Nations Symposium in Geneva: "There is an opinion that human nature becomes worse age by age. However, when we see the history of human evolution, I think that humankind is constantly elevating. After the passage of a million years since its birth on this planet, humankind has learned, for the first time, the importance of peace. We are now at the stage to tackle seriously its creation"¹⁰³.

"One can do nothing alone—but until one makes a start, nothing at all can be done"¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰³ NIKKYO NIWANO, undated xerox copy entitled, "Rev. Nikkyo Niwano's speech at the UN Symposium in Geneva", n.d.

¹⁰⁴ *Approach to Peace*, op. cit., p. 83, anonymous quote from a trip.