

**The Call of Beauty across Faiths:  
a Christian Theological Engagement with Japanese Art**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the significance for Christians of the attractiveness of Japanese art, seeking to be true both to its distinctive religio-aesthetic milieu and to Christian believing. Its concern is for faithful, open-hearted living in a plural world. Recognising in the trust which the beauty of the art evokes the operation of the Holy Spirit in redemption, it asks how we may hold together the person of Jesus Christ and the diverse meanings of the faiths.

In answer it understands, from our life in God as ever-extending and necessarily hidden from us, a plenitude of meaning. Drawing on Ben Quash's presentation of Christian living as enhanced theo-dramatics of unframed reading of events with Christ, it offers a practice of juxtaposition. Examples are given from rock gardens, *nō* stage and shrine mandalas. More than dialectics, this is creative poiesis, illustrated by framing the metaphor 'Christ is *ma*', where *ma* is that space marked by trace figuring emptiness, seen in these Japanese arts. The metaphor opens our eyes to evanescence, suchness and nothingness, and the faiths they articulate, as held by God within a field of loving trust. Such practice is dynamic and moral; ways are suggested in which it extends perspective, including in Christian performance of mission, dialogue and inculturation.

Hence the thesis argues for the continuing importance of experience of difference. This is understood by means of Mutō Kazuo's Field of the Inversion of Polarities under the mediating sign of Christ crucified and risen. Difference ultimately derives from and speaks of the dissimilitude between the Persons of the Trinity, origin of God's ever-greater nature as love. The gap of meaning between incommensurate but compelling faiths is to be received as space given by God for growth in love, participant in the loving relations of the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Spend time in the temples and gardens of Kyōto and many Western Christians (and others) can develop a strong, unforgettable attraction to the arts of classical Japanese culture. Eyes look in a fresh way, appreciating subtle detail. The other senses too are aroused by incense, wood grain, the reverberation of a bell. An ambience beckons, leaving the hectic streets and their clashing stimuli out of mind, stilling the heart, placing the self under forgetfulness. These are sophisticated arts which derive their confidence from an engagement of mind and heart far from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

And they pose a question. We can and do enjoy not only what has no connection with the canonical patterns of faith by which we know God, the author of joy and goodness, but also those things which derive from and manifest patterns of faith incommensurate with our received beliefs. And these continue to compel us, to proclaim their truthfulness, as being not diversions from moral living but marks of it. They are formative, but cannot immediately be situated; presence and occasion of meaning which is not to be denied but which is not readily named or assimilated. If I cannot dismiss the delight these arts afford as insignificant, then I need, as a Christian, to ask what of God is manifest through those encounters and with what significance. How am I to account for the effect of Japanese art in a way that is true to the subject and true to Christian believing? The task is to find what explanatory power (and steer for living) Christian teaching can offer outside its accustomed bounds, seeking Christ in far places.

This task involves the particular features of human artefacts, because without these and an appreciation of them in their fashioning and effects, the truthfulness of the experience and what it proclaims ceases. Current understanding of the religious and cultural worlds which caused them to be made has an important role to play, lest we mistakenly assume a likeness to what we already know. What follows draws from recent writing in this area. The study considers the thinking of Japanese theologians, not least because their vision has been composed in a world which displays these arts. And the study reflects on received Christian theological categories. Can such experiences best be located within an understanding of creation or of redemption? Can we speak of the work of the Holy Spirit? Or of the presence of Christ? In seeking answers, the study foregrounds and evaluates our

attraction; questions of the role of beauty, its richer significance and our reception of it, arise. This is a study of the import of the affective. Such questions can only be asked from somewhere, and asking them has wider social and political implications; what follows touches on these also, although it cannot aim to address them in depth.

Valuing the attraction exercised by these artworks raises the question of what theological appraisal can be made of the practices of other faiths. This in turn draws us into enquiring what God asks of Christians - what attitude and action - who are called within a world of many attractive (and problematic) faiths. Can the link this attraction establishes avoid compromising the integrity of those faiths and that of Christian believing? And can it issue for Christians in any fruitful mediation between faith claims? The study examines some answers given by other writers and offers a different approach.

Christian theologians considering the practices of faiths might be tempted to seek for likeness and aim to fit that faith into a pre-existing theological framework. The result would carry a dispassionate and even Olympian tone. That approach would be liable not only to distort the other faith but to be untrue to Christian experience also, to our engagement with those practices. If it is the case that God is in one conversation with all humankind – that the one God is Creator and Redeemer - then this cannot be my conversation alone, not even that of my tribe or transhistorical community. While we need to pay attention to what we have received from our tradition to be able to follow the flow of the conversation, we need also to pay attention to (and ipso facto to engage with) others' contributions to recognise its further depth and what constitutes its oneness. This quest can be no impartial survey. It rests on attraction, and this study must evaluate that attraction while under its influence, considering whether what attracts has at its root God's address to me. Its object is not only to increase understanding but to affect practice.

As theology this is an applied study, working from example to reflection, and bringing together while seeking to avoid premature synthesis. It must be alert to difference, for instance the valuing of transience or the avoidance of conclusion in the arts of Japan, and conversely reticent about analogy. Its questions are located both in theology, who God reveals Godself to be, and in theological anthropology, God's intentions for God's human creation. It cannot aim at completion, any global or self-sufficient comprehension of a theme, but rather encouragement to further exploration. Its goal is less uncovering hidden



truth than strengthening relationship. Such a mode seeks to be true to the non-conceptual nature of the material under consideration and to a point for departure which sees the one setting out not dispassionate but already ardently engaged.

This study is not conversation between faiths or between cultures as such; it is not yet dialogue. Rather its status is self-examination, on behalf of the Christian community, in the light of experience and belief: a prolegomenon to any such conversation, required to discover how Christian theology can explicate our experiential world in its diversity and with what results. It is necessarily provisional and meant as aid for Christians' conduct during their pilgrimage. As its concern is with our reception of the Holy Spirit's guidance of Christian behaviour, it may have implications for every area of the life of faith, but most especially for those relating to different religious traditions: the theology of religions; in what sense the vocation to mission is to be understood, given this attractiveness; how and why to enter dialogue across faiths; and renewal of understanding of the practice of inculturation. The study concludes by considering the consequences for these four areas of Christian activity and they in their turn shed fresh light on the question of the theological import of beauty in the arts of other faiths.

In what follows quotations from the Bible are given in the New Revised Standard Version (hereafter: NRSV). Japanese words are italicised and Japanese names have the family name set before the given name. Reference is made to 'medieval Japan'. Here this refers to those cultures which gave rise to the art-works discussed below, principally (but not exclusively) the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, when Japan continued to be an agglomeration of domains (*han*). Readers may wonder at the reticence here regarding the category of 'Zen art'. So popular has the topic become that its tendency is to appropriate classical Japanese arts from a wide range of spiritual traditions. At the same time it cannot be denied that the medieval Zen monasteries encouraged many arts and that some of these display characteristic qualities of expressiveness and immediacy. While work continues on unravelling medieval Zen from the West-friendly twentieth century presentation of Zen, it seems best to turn attention to less controversial descriptions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical view of the category of 'Zen art', see Wybe Kuitert, *Themes in the History of Japanese Garden Art* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), pp. 129-138.

Our appreciation of difference becomes occasion for us to learn afresh what God intends by allowing us to be formed in a plural world. We can anticipate (with Julian of Norwich) that God's intention is love. The startling realisation is that, when we enquire of our own liking for the beauty we encounter, we find God gives this love through what manifests and awakens us to the experiential heart of another faith, in the case of the medieval Japanese arts considered here, to Suchness. The unfamiliar ways down which we are led by such realisation (and by continuing delight) form the crux of this study.

## Chapter One      ORIENTATIONS

### 1.      The Path to the Tea House

The guests, passing through a small garden of trees and shrubbery, enter the quiet, intimate space of the tea room, which is shaded from any glaring light. In the alcove hangs a scroll, often inscribed with the words of a Zen master. A few flowers are arranged in a simple manner in a vase. In this tranquillity, suggesting the atmosphere of an isolated hut, host and guests recollect themselves and, while carrying on the most ordinary activities of human life, seek to relate to each other and to all the elements of their environment with directness, immediacy and profound appreciation.<sup>1</sup>

The way of tea, *chadō*, (*chanoyu*) has come to epitomise 'Japanese culture'. The virtues of the tea ceremony have been noted by Europeans from the earliest days of the Christian missions to Japan with a mingled sense of surprise and appreciation. In its egalitarianism, in its valuing of the humble, the old and the natural, in the dedication it requires and in the seeming simplicity of its purpose of taking tea together, the missionaries knew they were encountering something of value for the first time. They understood that its practice was associated with Zen, yet Japanese Christian converts were numbered among its leading exponents. According to the sixteenth century Jesuit João Rodrigues (1561-1633):

This gathering for cha and conversation is not intended for lengthy talk among themselves, but rather to contemplate within their souls with all peace and modesty the things that they see there, and thus through their own efforts to understand the mysteries locked therein.<sup>2</sup>

To appreciate the way of tea was to see into the harmonies of things, the depths of the heart and true human relations. Those Jesuit commentators may have wondered incredulously at the prices at which rustic tea-utensils changed hands,<sup>3</sup> but they quickly

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<sup>1</sup> Sen Shōshitsu XV, 'Foreword' to Okakura Kakuzō, *The Book of Tea* (Tōkyō, New York NY, London: Kodansha International, 1989), pp. 10-23 (pp. 10-11).

<sup>2</sup> An extract from João Rodrigues' *History of the Jesuit Mission in Japan* (c. 1620), quoted in Michael Cooper, 'The Early Europeans and Chanoyu', *Chanoyu Quarterly*, 81 (1995), 7-28 (p. 22).

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, pp. 12-13; Murai Yasuhiko, 'Chanoyu and the Early Christian Missionaries and Converts in Japan', *Chanoyu Quarterly*, II. 3 (1971), 27-36 (pp. 32-33).

understood that the practice of tea was disclosive of reality and was so by means of its artistry, the skilfully practised ease with which the masters served tea. Sen Shōshitsu's evocation of *chadō* highlights three aspects of that artistic skill, as follows.

The *roji* ('dewy path') is a garden of a kind particular to *chanoyu* (though subsequently influential both in the grand architecture of *sukiya* and on the domestic scale of Japanese homes and inns). It was named by Sen no Rikyū,<sup>4</sup> echoing deliberately the path to enlightenment in *The Lotus Sutra*.<sup>5</sup> The *roji* does not cover much ground but its divisions and winding ways afford the sensation of spaciousness, as planned by the single eye by which it has been shaped. The guest approaching the tea house has already entered a world formed by the way of tea, its sensitivity to human experiencing and its belief in reverence. Sen no Rikyū's account of the role of water uncovers something of the depths of wisdom embodied in the *roji* and the disciplined practicality of the tea master:

In the *roji*, the host's first act is to bring water; the guests' first act is to use this water to rinse their hands. ... It is precisely so that the person who calls and the person called on can together wash off the stains of worldly dust in the *roji* that the stone basin is placed there. ... Always use water drawn at dawn for tea ... . Dawn water belongs to the beginning of the *yang*, when its pristine spirit surfaces; it is "the flower of the well."<sup>6</sup>

Here Shintō practice, *Inyōdō* (yin-yang theory) and Buddhist reverence coincide.

The interior of the tea room likewise invites the guest into a space which is its own world. It is one not exotically different from that of daily life but which, in the harmonious and practical arrangement of natural materials, presents what is of value, a microcosm designed to uncover a wider reality. Sen no Rikyū followed his *wabi cha* predecessors in designing tea houses that were diminutive and eschewed show, calling to mind the grass huts of Buddhist

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<sup>4</sup> 1522-1591, the most celebrated of the tea-masters, who perfected the way of *wabi cha*, that form of tea ceremony which favours the unadorned.

<sup>5</sup> "Escaping from the fire-stricken habitation of the Three Phenomenal Worlds they take their seat on dewy ground." *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton-Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 57. Jennifer Anderson writes of this selection: "It is a uniquely soteriological reference". Jennifer L. Anderson, 'Japanese Tea Ritual: Religion in Practice', *Man* 22 (1987), 475-498 (p. 484).

<sup>6</sup> De Bary, William Theodore and others, eds, *Sources of the Japanese Tradition, Volume One: from Earliest Times to 1600*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 397-398.

hermits, *sōan*, celebrated in Japanese literary tradition.<sup>7</sup> These rooms, although only four-and-a-half mat size, are nevertheless ordered around directional requirements associated with Daoism.<sup>8</sup> They offer space for an event, a particular (and unrepeatable) gathering aimed to allow each guest to be in harmony with all to the greatest degree possible. The irregularity of design, treasuring what was asymmetrical and unfinished and avoiding brittle and disturbing perfection, has this end in view and draws on a long aesthetic tradition, articulated in the fourteenth century by Kenkō.<sup>9</sup>

After bowing on entering, the guests' next action is to admire the decoration in the alcove, (*tokonoma*) with flower and hanging scroll (*kakemono*). These are chosen for the occasion by the host, with the season and particular interests of the guests in mind. An anecdote of Sen Sōtan (1578-1658), retold by Sen Sōshitsu XV, sheds light on how what is displayed contributes to respect and peaceableness, as it is arranged to convey through the artistry of a discerning tea master a more apparent immediacy.

One day a close friend of Sotan's ... sent a young acolyte to deliver a particularly fine sprig of white camellia blossoms to him. On the way, however, the main blossom fell off its stem. After weighing his alternatives, the boy decided to deliver the fallen blossom and to apologise for his carelessness. ... Sotan's reaction ... was to place the stem in a vase and hang it on the alcove pillar and to lay the fallen blossom on the floor of the alcove. In this manner, out of his respect for his friend's thoughtfulness, the boy's efforts, and the flower itself, the camellia took on a new life within the realm of chanoyu.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For an account of this tradition, see William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley CA, Los Angeles CA and London: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 60-79. For Rikyū's innovations, see Hayakawa Masao, 'The Microcosmic Space Created by Sen no Rikyū', (trans. Misaki Atsuko), *Chanoyu Quarterly*, 80 (1995), 21-37 (pp. 27-32).

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Anderson, pp. 485-486. She adds, "The geomantic orientation of the tearoom identifies it with the celestial plane", p. 493. Other Daoist-related facets to the ceremony include the careful attention to the symbolic representation of the five elements and to yin-yang. Anderson identifies the ranking of guests as a Confucian element.

<sup>9</sup> Kenkō (1283-1350), author of the *Tsurezuregusa*, a book of reflections which became a touchstone of medieval Japanese aesthetics. Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness: the Tsurezuregusa of Kenkō* (trans. Donald Keene), (Tōkyō: Rutland VT and Singapore, Tuttle Publishing, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> Sen Shoshitsu XV, 'Afterword' to Okakura Kakuzō, *The Book of Tea* (Tōkyō, New York NY and London: Kodansha International, 1989), pp. 135-160 (p. 149).

Walking the *roji*, entering the *sōan* and admiring the *kakemono* all precede the making of the tea and contribute accumulatively to the moment identified by Jennifer Anderson as the height of the tea gathering, the first sip by the principal guest, a moment at once utterly ordinary and astonishingly profound, at which all (including disparate religious traditions) is brought to harmony.<sup>11</sup> This is not mythic remembering nor didactic performance; it is an occasion of friends drinking tea and in doing so being present to the reality of things. Sen no Rikyū summarised the virtues of *wabi cha* in four words which have subsequently become almost credal: harmony, respect, purity, tranquillity.<sup>12</sup>

Is drinking tea a religious act? Jennifer Anderson concludes that it is, in that it is a soteriological attempt to order perception.<sup>13</sup> It is also the case that its roots lie deep within religious traditions.<sup>14</sup> In this brief taste of the ceremony, we have glimpsed Daoist and Confucian elements. Shintō (the rites of the *kami* cults) is seen in the reverence for nature and concern for purity. Eisai (1141-1215), the founder of Rinzai Zen, who re-introduced tea into Japan in the twelfth century, wrote that tea “is presented as an offering to the deities.”<sup>15</sup> Naming *chanoyu chadō*, the way of tea, indicates its commonality with other Japanese *dō*, training in particular performative arts, the purpose of which is to realise enlightenment. The thinking behind such *dō* rested on a bedrock of esoteric Buddhism, which sees this cosmos as the body of the Buddha and so holds that awakening can be realised in this life by right action.<sup>16</sup> In esoteric Buddhism the knowledge of such action is power and is secret, which is to say is conveyed by imitation of a master, not via the exoteric way of study and exegesis. Zen was an inheritor of these influences, but with the mindfulness of meditation replacing the knowledge of intricate (and often thaumaturgical)

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<sup>11</sup> “For one moment, both have the opportunity to experience an unfathomable sense of ‘wholeness, health, and holiness’”; Anderson, p. 488.

<sup>12</sup> *Wa, kei, sei, jaku*. Sen Shōshitsu XV expounds these in ‘Afterword’, pp. 138-158, and comments that they are not an original Japanese formulation but occur in the Zen (i.e. Ch’an) literature of China. See also Jennifer Anderson, pp. 491-495 and fn. 28, p. 497, for an account of these as ritual goals.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, pp. 490-491.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore M. Ludwig, ‘Before Rikyū: Religious and Aesthetic Influences in the Early History of the Tea Ceremony’, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 36 (1981) 367-390. See also the chart in Anderson, fig. 2, p. 492, clarifying religious inspiration underlying current adherence to Rikyū’s four qualities.

<sup>15</sup> Ludwig, p. 397.

<sup>16</sup> Richard B. Pilgrim, *Buddhism and the Arts of Japan 2<sup>nd</sup>* revised edn, (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 34-35. For consideration of the view that *dō* functioned as training along the lines of Confucian educational practice and *samurai* neo-Confucianism, see Ludwig, pp. 369-370.

symbol systems such as those of Shingon.<sup>17</sup> Rikyū is reported to have said, “The tea ceremony of the small room is above all a matter of performing practice and attaining realization in accord with the Buddhist path.”<sup>18</sup> In short *chadō*, in what makes it most sincerely affecting, resists classification; in doing so, it illustrates the alignment of religious and aesthetic instinct which characterised medieval Japanese faith. Those who participate engage in a practice which privileges the intuitive illumination of performance and defers interpretation. Anderson quotes Sen Sōshitsu XV: “Tea is the practice of religious faith, no matter what you believe in.”<sup>19</sup>

The development of *chadō* (and its continuing popularity) indicates that in Japan faith has been lived most naturally and sincerely - at its most creatively searching - when it has heeded the call of beauty and found, in doing so, a plastic and open sense of what is real. This brief invitation along the dewy path may be sufficient to indicate that Japanese art can be performatively involving, utterly attentive to mood without being non-cognitive, religiously-rooted and transformative. If Christians wish to heed that same call and stoop to enter the narrow door to the tea-room, can our perception of truth give us encouragement to do so?

## 2. Theology Encounters Beauty and Faith in Japanese Art

It is the contention of the thesis which follows that to encounter such inherited arts of Japan is for Western Christians today, no less than it was for those earliest missionaries, an exposure to self-authenticating worth, a worth inseparable from the aesthetic which presents it and that therefore it is appropriate to reflect theologically on such encounter. Earlier Japanese sought to speak of aesthetics with terms expressive of engendered mood: *aware*, *yūgen*, *wabi* among others. Under the influence of the West, terms indicating beauty have been adopted, terms which seek to carry conviction by being suggestive of a

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<sup>17</sup> *Gozan* Zen cultivated the Song dynasty arts and a Chinese way of tea; the greater simplicity of *wabi cha* aligns it more naturally with a reformed and more popular Zen as urged by Ikkyū (1394-1481). See Ludwig, pp. 382- 389 for the roles of Musō Soseki (1275-1351) and Ikkyū.

<sup>18</sup> *Nanpōroku*, quoted in de Bary, p. 397.

<sup>19</sup> Jennifer Anderson, p. 495.

stronger objectivity.<sup>20</sup> And so prevalent is this aesthetic in Japanese self-understanding that beauty is now spoken of by those with a stake in cultural essentialism as one of the defining characteristics of Japaneseness. The canons of Japanese beauty remain different to those of the West, yet beauty is conveyed and by this the trans-cultural, perhaps universal, nature of the values of those canons is indicated.

These values are religious ones, as will be shown in greater detail in Chapter 3. But it can be noted now that to use the term 'religious' is once again to adopt language which only came into usage in Japan after its nineteenth century opening to the West. It is to risk being locked into a Western mind-set, which includes taking the forms of Christianity of the modern period as indicative norm of the meaning of the term 'religious'. But to characterise these Japanese aesthetic values as religious is at the same time to typify religion as concerned with the aesthetic, with shared human affectivity. Such a way of thinking about religion may only now be re-entering Western consciousness, following the break-down of world views resting on a supposedly autonomous reason and the attempt to know from a single viewpoint and to speak with a single voice. The phrase 'religio-aesthetic system' is now commonly used to indicate patterned ways by which medieval Japanese expressed their relation to an ultimate. Western exposure to the beauty of the arts of medieval Japan requires a response which has a religious dimension and can alter our perception of that dimension of the religious.

All theology starts somewhere; it cannot be *ex nihilo*. Those who penned the words of *Genesis*, "In the beginning, when God created" were themselves already of that creation, looking back. And what they looked back to was the action of God in their experience and that of their forebears. They extrapolated, combining wisdom and faithfulness in a feat of the imagination which has ever afterwards commended itself as divinely-inspired. And even so, by their phrase "in the beginning", they may have had in mind something more like "by means of a beginning".<sup>21</sup> Human beings are not such creatures as confront God face to face, being to being, mind to mind. Rather our being and our knowing are always by means of a beginning; God's beginning is continuously operative in our lives. We only live our lives, come to know God, as God gives us ever-new breath to do so. And if such an account of

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<sup>20</sup> Michael F. Marra (trans. and ed.), *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001) Chapter 1.

<sup>21</sup> An instrumental, rather than punctual, use of 始. Compare *Proverbs* 3: 19 and *John* 1: 1-3.



creation were obscure before, now in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we understand that our hope for being and knowing are only by means of a free act of God which remains substantially hidden to us.

And to be shown, as the new and Easter people, that our beginning remains substantially hidden to us, so that our true knowledge cannot be so much *about* God as *by means of* God, is also and *a fortiori* to be shown that our end is hidden. This end will not be simply the unfolding by our actions of a secure good, as if it were already ours. We who in hope receive this end are still hidden from ourselves, still radically dependent on God, so that not knowing who we are we cannot know what that end will be. Again we follow the biblical writers in extrapolating, using the imagination under God's inspiration. The Resurrection of Christ teaches us that something other, effective, unsearchable stands here also, always in relation between God and our current selves in such a way that the end we do not know is already conditioning in our lives now who it is we shall come to be. We live from a hidden future.

The One who says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega" is necessarily the mystery in whom we are present now to God. Words from *The First Letter of John* encapsulate this: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed." But the succeeding sentence adds to this: "What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we shall see him as he is."<sup>22</sup> Emphasising 'unknowability' is not meant to overturn the epistemological worth of the Resurrection. To take one example, in *The Joy of Being Wrong* James Alison is able to re-work the doctrine of original sin by taking as his point of departure the acknowledgment that the Resurrection gives us new understanding of God, as for example in God's complete separation from death.<sup>23</sup> We may not yet see Christ as he is, but our best hope for knowledge is to look to what we can see of the risen Christ who has been revealed to us. And, before we depart from this text of *1 John*, we should note that it comes in the course of an exhortation to disciplined behaviour; this knowledge gives content to hope and issues in moral response: "And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *1 John* 3: 2.

<sup>23</sup> James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (New York NY: Crossroad, 1998). See especially pp. 105ff.

<sup>24</sup> *1 John* 3: 3.

Theology begins by acknowledging its dependence on this mystery. What I know is under the sign of the risen Christ. It rests on the unknown. What I am is from and to what I am not. And the circumstances I am in are also ones which rest on radical unknowability; they too depend on God. This is to say that the theologian, in attending to the circumstances from which she writes, is acknowledging the presence of God and her reliance on God. This thesis is no different; and it is has any light to shed, it is that of a specific moment of grace.

Moreover, it seeks understanding from somewhere: crucially on the basis of a trinitarian faith nourished in the Anglican tradition. By “trinitarian faith” I mean to indicate understanding in continuity with the Chalcedonian tradition and in particular situated in conversation with Western theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century, whose recasting of Christian doctrine has drawn heavily on renewed appreciation of the resources for understanding human beings in relation to God which are latent in traditional doctrines of the Holy Trinity. The importance of trinitarian understanding for accounting for the effect on Christians of the beauty of Japanese art will become apparent in what follows. “Anglican tradition” includes a continued attentiveness to the operation of grace in nature, shown in seeking a common mind in listening to divergent voices<sup>25</sup> and consequent aversion to any systematisation which is its own good or is in intent exclusively comprehensive. One way in which this has been seen historically is the seriousness with which the voice and questioning insight of poets and other artists have been taken by Anglican theologians. It is characteristic of such Anglican tradition to be provisional, traditioned, weighted to the passage of time, history and temporal change, eirenic, experiential and (in both usages of the word) curious. How these characteristics affect the following thesis will rapidly become apparent.

### **3. Timeliness**

And what is this moment? Many Western commentators discern a collapse of previous certainties, a time of flux. It is not only our thinking which is affected by this sea-change. In the past the sense of a national culture became self-referential and, for many, triumphalist;

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<sup>25</sup> Ben Quash, in acknowledging that he writes as an Anglican, speaks of the need in developing a theodramatics for “sustained and deep conversation” with specific dialogue partners. Ben Quash, *Theology and the Drama of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 8-9.

that sense is now shattered. Not only is culture now no longer unitary in fact or aspiration, but for most in the West it is severely attenuated. We do not know how to value the elderly; we are confused about the child-likeness of children; we are ambivalent about inter-personal relations beyond the contractual. Our forms and images become not invitations to thought but brands offering security. We do not know what ritual actions to do in the face of death; when we sing and dance it is as much to forget as to mark significance; when we seek to be formed in an ability our instinct is to amass credentials. What shapes the human person in wholesome ways is disputed and often ignored. If our lives are cultivated, they are so in what Zygmunt Bauman has identified as liquid culture.<sup>26</sup> The Christian tradition enables responses to many of these challenges, but the Western Christian, seeking to draw from her cultural background when meeting other cultures, is liable to find herself limited by the corrosive power of contemporary Western autonomous individualism. The culture she brings to encounter will be at best eclectic, with severe deficiencies. This, of course, is true, at least in part, for contemporary Japanese also.

But for the Western Christian responding to medieval Japanese art, the encounter is with a more singular and rounded culture. This is not to deny the many variants within the Japanese islands, nor the diversity of influences. Nor is it to claim that the culture so formed is in all respects more able to contribute to human flourishing. The Higashiyama culture, of the last years of the fifteenth century, flowered in retreat from the devastating Ōnin war;<sup>27</sup> indeed its attitude to culture may be seen as symptomatic of the conditions that gave rise to violence. The point here is that like does not meet like: one is a coat home-made and hastily thrown on, the other elegantly styled and worn with confidence.

The Western Christian confusedly, avidly or perhaps humbly and thankfully receives the fruits of plurality. *Sakoku*<sup>28</sup> ended long ago, but its mentality lingered on and not just among the Japanese. Today we are unavoidably engaged with one another; there is unlikely to be any turning back. Among the most prominent of these enforced engagements, and most interesting, is that of the world faiths. Without seeking it, traditions that for centuries

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<sup>26</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Donald Keene in writing of Higashiyama culture dubs it 'the creation of the soul of Japan', Donald Keene, *Yoshimasa and the Silver Pavilion: the Creation of the Soul of Japan* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> The policy of the Tokugawa government that closed Japan to all but the most minimal foreign influence from 1639 to 1853.

have in closed conversations crafted a vision of the significance of human life have now to reckon with interpretive and imaginative worlds which owe nothing to the well-springs of their own insight. In this explosion of horizons, the faith traditions may be recalled to forgotten sources. That Hebrew prophets and sages shared a web of images with Assyrians and Persians now seems newly significant: the role of exile in the mental world of the Hebrew scriptures becomes crucial for fruitful interpretation today.<sup>29</sup> The thought of Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, is earthed in the cross-currents of medieval empires and their trading, the worlds of Maimonides and Ibn Sina.<sup>30</sup>

Ewert Cousins has seen in the contemporary experience of faith to faith disclosure entry into what he dubs a second axial period: a period of jump in human spiritual evolvment comparable to the period around 500 BC.<sup>31</sup> This second axial period will, he suggests, be marked by greater complexity: that is, by both greater unity and greater diversity, which will be mutually causative. John S. Dunne in his thought experiment on encounter with Eastern religions, *The Way of All the Earth*, mapped turning points in time onto the ages of a single life.<sup>32</sup> The first axial period, “the enlightenment and revelation experiences giving rise to the world religions”, he understands in terms of a man who having begun to live on a scale greater than human scale, doing deeds and founding institutions meant to outlast his own lifetime, then returns to the existential and the immediate without ceasing to have an historic consciousness. The solutions he finds to life’s problems and loneliness are solutions for all people.

But there is a further turning point, “the transition from history to world history” as different civilisations enter into communication and their stories become one story. What in a man’s life may reflect this experience, this time? Dunne suggests a spiritual journey of

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<sup>29</sup> Walter Brueggemann writes, “the exile itself was an evocative force in generating the text” (of the Hebrew Scriptures), and “The Western church now faces a like departure from old flesh pots.” Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination: Texts Under Negotiation* (London: SCM, 1993), pp. 63-64.

<sup>30</sup> David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Ewert Cousins, *Christ of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Rockport NY: Continuum, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth: an Encounter with Eastern Religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1973). See especially Chapter V, ‘A Map of Time’, pp. 135-156. Dunne’s title, taken from the dying words of Joshua and David, is a provocation, and riposte, to all who understand human experience as plural, not common.

‘passing over’, “entering by sympathy and understanding into the life and way of life of another”, and then ‘passing back’:

Why pass over? Because he will come back with new understanding and his religion, his culture, his life will be enriched. Why come back? Because otherwise he will lose his own religion, his own culture, his own life.<sup>33</sup>

Such passing over into the life of another and passing back In the life of a single person indicates maturity. On the map of time “to set out to relive as far as possible the events underlying each of the world religions”, the passing over of one civilisation into the imagination of another and passing back, is the necessary transition to world history, and failure to do so, Dunne laments, is what has produced two world wars. This is not merely re-enactment of others’ spiritual journey; since this transition to world history is the spiritual experience of our time, those who engage in such re-enactment are themselves enacting it. Dunne’s exemplar of this is Mohandas Gandhi. It equates with Cousins’ second axial period.

It is now forty years since Dunne wrote that the time for this passing over was “overripe”. Our failure to pass over and back is yet more obvious; the need yet more urgent. Is Dunne right that humanity’s future holds one story? It will be one of the tasks of this thesis to reflect what this may mean. But we can set out by acknowledging that the Christian apostolic witness has been that God’s love is for all cultures and nations. This being so, an age when human communities face common problems and are in constant contact with each other, indeed are dispersed among each other, needs this apostolic witness.

Dunne’s account of passing over and back suggests something other than a detached phenomenological approach. Dunne’s man who has gained a sense of his historicity, beyond one life, is drawn by this sense to pass over. His desire is not for knowledge, not for the kind of abstraction that made phenomenology a precursor of structuralism. It is not by bracketing out his situation and stance, his faith and his hope, that he will fulfil the obligation on him to “go over to the standpoint of another culture”. Rather he will acknowledge all that gives him this impetus and risk it in passing over for the sake of regaining it enriched. As John Webster has summarised Christian teaching, my neighbour is

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<sup>33</sup> Dunne (1973), page 151.

appointed to me by God as part of my vocation to become human.<sup>34</sup> This moral imperative cannot be only about her need but the wholeness of that neighbour. I shall not be meeting my obligation to her if I do not open myself to learn from her wisdom. If I can see wisdom through her eyes, I shall be less distant from the abundance of God and from the scope of my own humanity. So human nature waxes through this peaceable practice and the age of maturity is ushered in. But, as a corrective to suggestions of progress, we should also note that Dunne's comparison of history with a single human life ends not in wholeness but more properly in death. His only question is whether it is to be death we walk towards or one to which we are dragged unwillingly. And his vision is of the completion of a journey, a day's travel: not the failing of light only, but the attainment of the goal of travelling.

Cousins and Dunne have taken the witness stand. A further voice which long has summoned us to attend to those of different faith is that of Arnold Toynbee. In 1956, having lived through the two world wars which Dunne cites as evidence of our failure to 'pass over', Toynbee wrote that "the most crucial episode in the next chapter of the history of Mankind" would be the work of Western monotheists to cure ourselves of the pharasaism of exclusive-mindedness and that in this Indian religions may help winnow it from our hearts.<sup>35</sup> This was an astonishing claim at the time and one that now may at first appear over-cooked. Toynbee wrote in the West's flush of enthusiasm for a Buddhism, especially Zen, which had previously been ignored in the West as backward. In 1956 Zen was seen as displaying simplicity, humanity and lack of ideological combativeness that was the antithesis of all that had drawn the nations into war. Its popularity in the West only grew with the sixties and seventies. Today the energies of Western commentators go into analysing the futures of Islam, while Zen has taken its place as a familiar brand on the supermarket shelf of alternative lifestyles.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> John Webster 'The Human Person', in *The Cambridge Companion to Post-Modern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 219-234 (p. 233).

<sup>35</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *A Historian's Approach to Religion* (London, New York NY, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 282-283.

<sup>36</sup> For the development of a new form of Zen in the West under the influence of theosophy, see Robert H. Sharf, 'The Zen of Japanese Nationalism', in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, Donald S. Lopez, ed. (Chicago IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 107-160. Brian Victoria draws links between Zen and militaristic nationalism in Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York NY: Weatherhill, 1998). And for a summary of Western misconceptions of Zen, see Bernard Faure, *Unmasking Buddhism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), especially pp. 76-82, 'To be Buddhist is to be Zen'.

Nevertheless there are sound historical reasons why Western spiritual search remains drawn to Indian-Chinese traditions.<sup>37</sup> They appear to lead to experientially-based belief, naturally-given harmony and non-dualism. These chime with the West's reliance on inductive science but also with its contradictory search for restored relation with the cosmos, the brokenness of which seems entailed in science's objectifying of matter. The Judeo-Hellenic religions of the word, which have been the West's inheritance, no longer command trust: words divide; they convey undecidability rather than authority. Reason, law and morality share in this mistrust and the suspicion is abroad that they dehumanise us. Such an account, while admittedly broad-brush, commands credibility in the West today. But the reality and indeed our responses are in practice much more complex. The account given above leaves out of the picture counter-examples, such as the history and potential of Christian mysticism or the rites, myths and historical conditioning which underpin Eastern religious practice. The current interest in the inheritance of Christian art, while it confirms the lack of traction words have for us today, suggests Western/Semitic religion of prophecy can continue to engage.

Toynbee's observation, however, was not directed towards general Western fascination with Eastern mysticism but the tighter and more costly engagement of faith traditions that seek to learn while remaining true to their vision. In his synoptic view, they are not competitors but complementary and necessary in the hope they offer globalised human civilisation in spiritual crisis. Hence the timeliness of a reconsideration of the relation of Western Christianity to Japanese religio-aesthetic is then not that of a beggar seeking a hand-out but of a man learning to be comfortable in his own skin by being open to life's changes.

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<sup>37</sup> Keith Ward in *Religion and Revelation: a Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 94-96, gives a helpful account of the distinction that can be drawn between Semitic and Indian religions, taking up the classification of religions by Freidrich Heiler as religions of prophecy and religions of mysticism. Ward plots Greek and Chinese influences on them respectively and discusses four basic images of universal reality and four related conceptions of revelation. He echoes Cousins in suggesting the possibility of a convergent spirituality and further unification under the "imperative of universalization" and the common context triggered by the eighteenth century Enlightenment, while also insisting that this will include an increase in differences. The future will not be one 'super-religion', but increased possibilities for interaction and co-operation.

#### 4. The Challenge of Forms

The list of witnesses to the importance of attending to other faiths could be extended indefinitely. Prominent among them would be the words of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate*, and the documents that have followed, notably *Dialogue and Proclamation*.<sup>38</sup> Most emphasise a moral (or for some, pragmatic) imperative for this, the claim of peace-making. Other motivations include effective evangelisation and, more rarely but strongly present in Dunne and Toynbee, the need felt for the wisdom embodied in other faiths. What is seldom admitted is the attractiveness of other faiths, the admission that if circumstances were different (if the claim of the gospel of Christ had not been received) one could and would wish to be an adherent of a different religion. And further, that this attractiveness is experienced not in the first instance in the quality of insight which the thought of that faith presents, perhaps not even in the quality of shared life its practice inculcates, but in its forms: its art and rites and architecture.

Many attempts at drawing Christianity and Buddhism into convergence have been made on the basis of ineffable mystical experience, presuming common access to an underlying unity.<sup>39</sup> To seek unity on the basis of shared mystical experience relativises the truth-claims of religions and does so on the basis of an assumed a priori. It ignores the quite different accounts of the unitive given by the doctrines of the faiths; its instinct is for homogeneity. And it suggests ability to register and evaluate experience apart from cognitive expression. It prioritises personal experience over the common articulation (and experience) of believers. So it runs the dangers of elitism, incoherence and untruth. None of the above is to deny mystical experience or its relevance to religious truth; rather it is to suggest that that relevance can only be justly comprehended on the basis of received ways of recognising truth.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Abbott, Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (London, Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Rome: The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> See for example Irmgard Schloegl's introduction to *Thomas Merton on Zen* (London: Sheldon Press, 1976, pp. vii-x). William Johnston has presented attractively the case for union in the mystical way drawing on Japanese and Christian sources. See for example, William Johnston, *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion* (London: Collins, 1978).

<sup>40</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar distinguishes 'licit' mysticism - a union of love which maintains the spiritual freedom of God and the salvific significance of Christ, an exuberant 'yes' - from 'illicit', which assumes union without form; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: a Theological Aesthetics. Volume 1: Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis



Few, however, have asked what the religious relevance may be of the attraction to forms or, to name it otherwise, the delight in beauty found through another faith. That one's own faith should attract through the beauty of its forms, the excellence of its culture, none seems to find strange. This attraction, at some level, is likely to remain an important motor for believing.<sup>41</sup> Occasionally adherents speak as if the value of their faith is to be found in and proven by that excellence. But to assume that to belong to a faith is to love its forms and to have little response to those of another faith (or little response of any religious worth) is to assume too much. Our responses to beauty clearly differ from person to person. They can be immediate and can be to beauty from any direction. But they can also be educated responses, ones cultivated and strengthened by reflection. They often need to be so for whole-hearted practice of a faith. And, if we will allow them, such educated responses too can be to beauty from any quarter.<sup>42</sup> The beauty of the art of another faith attracts and, as Christian believers, we can follow that attraction circumspectly but without fear, as those who believe there is nowhere God is not. The operation of this kataphatic way differs significantly from that of the much-heralded apophatic approach. The affirmative too is experiential but it is experience seeking understanding.<sup>43</sup> It walks by the light of open discussion. Its suggestion of a single origin in God is intimated by what seem to be common responses to beauty across the faiths; in this it rests on the reliability of a shared aesthetic discourse. At the same time, it requires a theologically sustainable account and seeks it on the basis of what is particular to one faith community. It is the contention of this thesis that this quest itself is a spiritual practice and means of grace.

The starting place of this thesis is in some such experience. Here is one of mine. My friend and I, as two British Christian missionaries in our twenties, visited an *onsen* village in Kyūshū. In the balmy evening we walked up the lane, relaxed in *yukata* and *geta*. One place

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(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), pp. 124f. and 489; *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Volume II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Even, for example, in the 'dark night of the senses' of St John of the Cross: attraction can be understood still to be operative, in that this privation, in negating it, assumes it.

<sup>42</sup> George Pattison commends the "aptitude for disinterested desire" taught by John Ruskin as necessary for a moral response to beauty; George Pattison, *Art, Modernity and Faith: Restoring the Image*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: SCM Press, 1998), p. 62.

<sup>43</sup> This is not to deny that there are elements which can rightly be described as apophatic in any religious appreciation of the attractiveness of art. See below in the discussion on beauty, p. 134. For an attractive example of the way of affirmation applied to Christian art, see Charles Williams' discussion of the romantic way in Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice: a Study in Dante* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953).

only was dark and we turned aside to see. It proved to be the local shrine. We entered, and discovered there a divergence in our reactions which has exercised me since. Whereas outside was well-lit, a space that was readable, a place for acting openly from the conscious part of our minds, here in the shrine precincts all was shadows, an unseen world expressed in architecture that spoke of an age before our own and of a purpose which went beyond the identifiably functional. Tall cryptomeria hung over the shrine. Water, bell and offerings were in place: expressive signs of the activity of the human senses being given over to what was beyond the human, over and above the natural as we understood it. It felt a place apart, even lonely.

My friend's reaction was to feel spooked. What went beyond the known, expressed in the unfamiliarity of the surroundings and most eloquently in their darkness, suggested what was not of the God whom we could name and trust. The shrine was a place of prayer. But to whom? With what dark thoughts and dark results? His every instinct was to leave and re-enter the light. My own instinct was to stand still and to pray. For me, the enclosure opened a space in which our human finitude could be acknowledged and owned as common between us before all difference and in the face of what was unknown and beyond. At the same time its ritual shapes intimated what was yet to be finished in our common nature, potential. In the shrine's singular ambience the unknown could be allowed. The shadows and symbols promised more than the well-lit scene could have done. Their cavities harboured the prayers of many generations. It was a place of accumulating life, only half-seen but infused with hope. In short, its form spoke of spirit: not signifying it as a notice might designate an area but more viscerally. Or rather, this was an atmosphere conveyed not by the form merely, as if its qualities could be isolated from its surroundings, but rather by the whole, form and space, light and shadow, the understood and the incomprehensible.

Two divergent reactions. Neither could be judged right or wrong. Learning the name of the *kami*, the history of the shrine, the rationale for its rites, as a means of discriminating between the reactions would be beside the point. This experience was not to do with comparative religion nor, quite, with the logic of systematic theology. The words used above, 'suggestion', 'instinct', 'visceral', 'dark', 'opening', 'ambience', belong to a different field. To many they may carry a Jungian ring. But that kind of explanatory account in which one thing means another is not my point here. It may illuminate, but can hardly avoid being

reductive by setting up a controlling plane of interpretation. If there is meaning in such experience, it lies in the existential (as situated in time and place). To express this in other language, God meets us at the precipice of the present moment. And our reactions can teach us of the God who meets us. To say this is to assert that learning from response to the aesthetic (and specifically from what is aesthetically pleasing, from beauty, which was the case also in this experience)<sup>44</sup> requires us to acknowledge the faith which informs that response. Another faith challenges us existentially and never more than when we are instinctively attracted (or repelled) by some aspect of it. It is those moments of aesthetic experience which ask us to learn afresh what it is to trust in the God who is always present.

Two divergent responses, and we can resist the itch to judge between them. But the experience poses the question: when we preach the gospel, for what outcome do we hope with regard to people's practice in temples and shrines? With regard to cultures? The question is one involving our understanding of God, a properly theological question: are these practices, these faiths, these arts in some way disclosive of the character and purposes of God? And if so, how? What is disclosed? Answering this cannot be an exercise in abstract logic, but personal, for if God does disclose Godself through such aesthetics, God does so in us.

## 5. Objections

The foregoing account has relied on the sense of an 'other', and in particular, 'West' and 'East'. Contemporary (post-modern) cultural studies have taught us caution. To position Japanese culture as 'the other' would be to condition perception and response on the basis of a pre-judgment that would then determine the outcome. Cultures are not opposite units in some Hegelian dialectic. A less restricted use would be to speak of what is other in terms of particularity and, deriving from these specifics, in terms of differing. This matters. If the culture is an other, the trajectory will be to synthesise by looking for points of commonality. But when it is difference which is being recognised, then we are positioning the different in

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<sup>44</sup> Shadows, of course, play a vital role in Japanese aesthetics. The classic statement of this is Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991). For a concrete example, see Günter Nitschke on screens in Günter Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando: Studies in Architectural Anthropology in Japan* (London and Berlin: Ernst and Sohn, 1993).

terms of relationship with us rather than as the contrary to us; hence it becomes possible to celebrate what is distinct.

Valuing difference itself requires caution. Phrases we use can domesticate difference so that it reverts to being an other, already accounted for. 'East', Edmund Said taught us, is likely to be one such phrase.<sup>45</sup> To say 'East' creates an 'over there' in the mind as object of desire, fear or sense of superiority. To say 'Far East' only further consolidates the speaker's place as centre. 'East' was never east to itself. China was (and is) to itself and others 'the middle kingdom'; all others peripheral. Japan, after its early contacts with China, was the land of the origin of the sun, *nihon*, which is to say 'eastern land'. To itself it was *yamato*, the name of the province which became the seat of power for the family which would supply Japan's Emperors. But as the Emperors consolidated authority over other provinces, the name gained religious connotation. *Nihon* was the land made for the descendants of Amaterasu, the sun goddess, and the place of her worship. In this way Japan too became a centre, the earthly place most closely associated with heaven. But it will be helpful to remember that a sense of national identity was no quicker developing in Japan than in the countries of Europe. Factors that contributed included the threat of invasion by China's Mongol Yuan dynasty in the thirteenth century, the systematising of *kami* worship by Yuiitsu Shintō in the fifteenth, the responses to European powers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the growth of 'National Learning' (*kokugaku*) in the eighteenth century under the influence of Edo-era Confucian studies. Nevertheless it was not until the Meiji restoration of 1868 and subsequent planned modernisation that Japan self-consciously sought to be a nation in the sense understood by Europeans. The word, 'East' then, if used, should be used sparingly and with a clear definition. In this thesis, it will stand as short-hand for the cultures of those lands from Tibet to Japan influenced by Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is not meant to imply a unified Mahāyāna or a unitary culture, and it recognises there have been other influences which spread over large parts of the region, such as yin-yang theory.

And what of the term 'West'? It has had currency especially in the period of the Cold War and subsequent 'clash of civilisations' thinking. The diversity (and geographical spread) of nations with an European heritage should be more obvious to readers than a uniform 'West'. Used here, it suggests the likelihood of a commonality of approach to Mahāyāna

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<sup>45</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1991).

cultures by those from such nations. But it remains a dubious term: in point of fact, the most concentrated attention given to Japanese culture by the West comes from the USA, which looks West across the Pacific to Japan (the contribution from Hawaii is notable), and from Australia, which looks North. The presumed subject of this thesis, 'a Western Christian', is understood to be one of European heritage formed in the teachings of the Latin Church or its off-shoots.

A related concern aroused by Said's critique of orientalist thinking is the valuing of the exotic, which aims at illusion not truth and creates dependency. A thesis, the starting point of which is the beauty of the different, is particularly open to this charge. Five points can be made. One is that the attractiveness of the different is a reality: as such it is worthy of investigation. The attraction of the new is part of our human spiritual exploring and meant to be so. The move to frame something as exotic operates against this, by creating a category for comprehension which precludes thought. If we are wanting to think about something, we are seeing it not as exotic but as different. Second, indifference or hostility to something because it can be termed exotic is a worse response. Third, beauty affects who we are. That is, whereas we are masters of the exotic, framing it for our own pleasure, in the case of the different we are the material that is worked upon. It is our selves which are changed. Fourth, there is little in the arts we shall be considering that is formally exotic. The tea ceremony illustrates this well, as do the rock gardens: these are composed of the familiar and, far from relying on elaboration or decorativeness, they aim at simplicity. As Sen no Rikyū put it, "The sense of tea/some boiling water/tea steeping/drinking it/come to know it."<sup>46</sup> If we find these forms of the everyday exotic, that response is itself a mis-placed indication of their spiritual power. And fifth, the arts of Japan have now taken their place in the vocabulary and economy of the cultures of all developed countries. Japanese cuisine, animation, film, *sumō* are widely appreciated. *Nō* stages stand in Royal Holloway College and the University of Reading. If there was a time for concern that Japanese arts were being framed as exotic, it has passed. A danger this thesis aims to dispel is the opposite one of assuming such familiarity that we cease to be awakened by these arts.

Why may we assume the arts of Japan are appropriate for a theological response? Their quality and distinctiveness are widely recognised. Moreover, the valuing of aesthetics has

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Günter Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens: Right Angle and Natural Form*, trans. Karen Williams (Köln: Taschen, 2007), p. 155.

been and remains an important aspect of how Japanese see themselves and their relation to life: not decoration but the practice of a way that discloses reality (*dō*). This is to say the practice of the arts (including their appreciation) is more than mere skill or artistic ingenuity. It rests on (or at least is interpreted by) reflective thought which in the West would be labelled religious philosophy, and understands itself as aiming at personal, communal and cosmic transformation, as we saw in the case of *chadō*.<sup>47</sup> If Western Christians find themselves affected by these arts in ways beyond momentary pleasure, we need to ask about the Japanese explanation for this and whether it can find a place in Christian thinking.

The particularity of Japanese religious experience strengthens the case for theological reflection, since it precludes assumptions of comparability of form between religions. We are not able to contrast like with like. Recent Shintō scholarship, for example, has turned from searching for continuity of essence over time and retold the story of Japan's shrines with the help of sociological perspectives, seeing common elements creating 'religious systems'. Inoue Nobutaka describes this approach as exchanging "the metaphor of religion as an organism for that of religion as an ecosystem."<sup>48</sup> It tends to emphasise co-temporal likeness over trans-temporal unity and this is especially relevant for medieval Japan with its associations of buddhas with *kami*. Japanese history invites us to rethink the sense of a distinct faith, the connection between religious and cultural environments, and use of a term such as 'syncretic', in ways that may prove helpful when considering how Christian doctrine could be enriched by the experience of those beyond the boundaries of Christian cultures and hence the relation of God to other faiths.

The further objection may be raised that to enquire in this way about Japanese arts is to aim to colonise them. If I wonder on entering the *roji* where God is in that place, then why mention God? Is it not presumptive, arrogant and imperialistic even, to do so? This thesis

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<sup>47</sup> William LaFleur, *The Karma of Words* Chapter 1 gives an account of the understanding of the practice of poetry as realisation of enlightenment, and the challenges this understanding faced in medieval Japan.

<sup>48</sup> Inoue Nobutaka, 'Introduction: What is Shinto?' (trans. Mark Teeuwen), in Inoue Nobutaka and others eds, *Shinto – A Short History*, trans. and adapted Mark Teeuwen and John Breen (London and New York NY: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 1-10 (p. 5). He elaborates in this introduction on the 'religious systems' approach and the common elements under enquiry: constituents, network and substance. The contributors to the volume seek to apply the approach to Shintō history.

itself must be the answer to that charge; whether the danger of colonisation has been avoided will be in the judgment of the reader. But I find I cannot avoid the question, where is God? This is because where I am, I am there as one of a community addressed by and called into being by God, witness to God's love for all creation and drawn into eternal fellowship with God. This is not a matter of cognition only, of assent of the mind. The person of the Christian, the one I bring to that place and event, is formed through bodily participation in ritual and through converse with other believers. And the encompassing reason for confidence in the Christian assembly's receptivity to God lies with the gift of the Holy Spirit to each of the baptised. I am continuously exposed to truth by the operation of the Holy Spirit through others and within. As was indicated earlier, the Resurrection of Christ remains the interpretive key for understanding experiences of life. Christ cannot be bracketed out. So if the tea-room becomes a place of affective experience for me, that experience is one which invites me in some way to deeper faith in God. It poses the questions: in what way; can I say there is that in its form and tradition which affords this; and does this way of tea present such invitation to faith to others?

We may also ask: what would be the implication of suppressing this line of enquiry? It would be that beliefs must remain fixed in separateness. Governments through the ages have attempted to impose such separation to preserve their own power. But all such insistence also seems arrogant, a judgment on the basis of some extra-religious criterion, such as cultural purity. In this case the result would be untrue to Japanese experience of believing, against the Christian witness to the universality of God's love for the world and in practice aimed at objectifying (and diminishing) religious believing to become an heritage asset. The way forward must be not to suppress such questions but to reflect on the practice of answering them sufficiently rigorously to avoid forced assimilation.

## **6. The Journey Ahead**

To characterise the direction of the thesis as a journey may be helpfully illuminating. Among the many observations by Western travellers to Japan, the account by Laurens van der Post of his voyage in the *Canada Maru* from Port Natal to Kobe in company with William Plomer in 1926 and of their subsequent exposure to Japan ("the first civilised country that I was to explore in depth that presented me with landscape after landscape

without the spire of a single church to draw the eye simply up to the sky")<sup>49</sup> remains among the liveliest and most penetrating. Van der Post was a Christian of no conventional stamp; the reader finds that when he is moved by some new experience, van der Post not only records in a vibrant and sensitive way his impression but also the reflections it raised in him from his Christian roots. On his first day ashore in Kobe, his escort persuades him into climbing a hill: "He did so, I believe, out of an instinctive conviction that the proper introduction to Japan should be through not man but the Kami". The exertion leads him to ponder (not without humour) on harmony, meaning and the first chapter of *John*.<sup>50</sup> On learning of Zen from stories of Zen masters, van der Post reflects on why Christ did not write down his teaching, and is then led to mull over words from Okakura Kakuzō's *The Book of Tea*.<sup>51</sup>

Among his recollections, that of the journey stands out, the slow acclimatising to another culture under the influence of ship's captain and crew. An apprentice presents a note to the Captain "as if it were an Imperial Summons": "There was an over-riding master value of quality straddling great and small alike".<sup>52</sup> Or again, "It was extraordinary how few commands were given ... [a]n implicit love of form and order seemed to be in everyone ... one could enjoy and marvel at the atmosphere of liberation and freedom derived from it."<sup>53</sup> Van der Post hears the sound ("sparse and devout") of the *shakūhachi* for the first time,

the bamboo flute which participates ... in the symbolism which informs the spirit of one of the few peoples left who still lead a symbolic life ... it was charged with nostalgia; a nostalgia just as much mine as it was Japanese. At once I was glad I had come so unprepared to this new experience ... [f]or the first time I was unconditioned to let what had to happen come to me unimpeded and be received in my own natural way."<sup>54</sup>

These lines indicate how experience of another culture can give the heart the sense of something so unshakeably true (and memorable) as to extend beyond the self and be held

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<sup>49</sup> Laurens van der Post, *Yet Being Someone Other* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984) p. 189.

<sup>50</sup> Van der Post, p. 216.

<sup>51</sup> Van der Post, pp. 232-233.

<sup>52</sup> Van der Post, p. 173. That the impressions are a literary creation, published over fifty years later, by no means negates the value of the reflection. Rather it strengthens the case presented here that aesthetic impressions can carry lasting consequences.

<sup>53</sup> Van der Post, p. 152.

<sup>54</sup> Van der Post, p. 125.



in common between people, and which precedes (but by no means precludes) education about the culture. The present study seeks some such journey in understanding.

Allan Grapard in *Protocol of the Gods*, his study of the Kasuga cult, quotes from the record of another journey, the visit of the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō to Nara, as recounted in his *Pilgrimage to Ancient Temples* written in 1918, just a few years before van der Post went there:<sup>55</sup>

the pilgrimage we were making was a quest for 'Art' and not a quest for the Buddha whose purpose is the salvation of living beings. If it happened that in front of a statue we would, from the bottom of our hearts, incline our heads in reverence, or that, struck by the radiance of compassion, we would wipe tears from our face, it was not from a feeling of conversion to Buddhism but rather because we were vanquished by the power of art to express the spirit of Buddhism. We did not go beyond our senses to the point of becoming religious.

Watsuji deliberately directs and limits the possibility for his journey by labelling it "a quest for 'Art'"; he distinguishes it from a religious quest and indeed, in labelling it a pilgrimage, situates it as replacement for religion. Grapard quotes this passage to illustrate dramatically the effect of the Meiji era forced separation of temple and shrine, making of formerly living beliefs a cultural heritage to be looked at and studied as examples of national spirit, not a form of life to be lived. This may also be characterised as the imposition in Japan of religion in a Western sociological sense. Watsuji's pilgrimage, then, reflects Japan's journey as a nation. Watsuji himself, who japanised ideas learnt from Heidegger and popularised thinking of the Kyōto school of philosophy in his theory of distinctive *fudō* and their effect on national character,<sup>56</sup> makes an appropriately symbolic pilgrim.

But what Watsuji's account here highlights is the ambiguity of that journey. Inclining the head in deep reverence and recognising not just compassion but its radiance remain spiritual responses appropriate, not to an art whose function has been limited to exemplifying aesthetic excellence or national élan, but to an occasion of religious self-

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Allan Grapard, *Protocol of the Gods: a Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History*, (Berkeley CA, Los Angeles CA and London: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 254-255.

<sup>56</sup> See Koyasu Nobukuni, 'Watsuji Tetsurō and his Perception of Japan', in *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. by Michael F. Marra (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), pp. 187-196.

giving. He expresses with subtlety what provokes this; it is the power of art which is felt, not some pre-conceived notion of what religious conversion should feel like; this power of art is not accepted as a feeling of choice, rather it vanquishes; this power of art does not merely illustrate or signify Buddhist doctrinal teaching about compassion, it expresses its spirit - as we might say, it manifests it. Watsuji comments, "We did not go beyond our senses to the point of becoming religious." No, indeed, but had they become religious (for that moment and in recollection) without going beyond the senses and without naming the reality of it to themselves? In Watsuji's understanding to become religious was to be converted to Buddhism, but the art to which he was responding dated from a period of greater integration of life than that phrase allows; his pre-reflective response to the art suggests its continued capacity to convey the reality of that integrated life. Watsuji came looking to possess the experience of art; what he found vanquished him. Laurens van der Post describes his own experience, how affecting was the smile on the face of a statue of Kannon in a convent in Nara: "a clear and full statement of the meaning of meaning, and stated with a beauty and authority I had never seen in any sculpted form. Its impact was immense and I believe I would have lost all inner self-possession and burst into tears had I been by myself".<sup>57</sup>

Later Watsuji walked in Kasuga Park, the environs of Nara's temples and shrines:

attention is drawn by large and ancient cryptomeria and cypress trunks standing in the foliage. The wisterias were in full bloom, one could see their blossoms all the way to the tops of the trees. I had the impression that the vision of old, according to which this was the Deer Park of Benares, could be realised right then in these woods. But walking a few steps to the main street that borders the Park, we suddenly found ourselves in a totally different world, and entered the realm of popular entertainment ... .

He concludes, "the mood ... was most obscure." Here again is experience that may be dubbed 'being religious without going beyond the senses'. The occasion for this may be called natural beauty, but it is a beauty deliberately cultivated by human agency and done so as response of reverence. The contrast Watsuji discloses is not that between religions, Buddhism and Shintō, nor between belief and unbelief, but between Park and High Street, that is between mood which unfolds, one that comes freighted with the associations of

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<sup>57</sup> Van der Post, p. 221.

past generations, and mood that dislocates because deliberately imposed as obviousness. Eight years later, Laurens van der Post also walked among the cryptomeria of Kasuga Park:

Mr Tajima [his escort], of course, was not, he declared, a superstitious person. But most people still believed the forest was a home of Kami whose voices could be heard on the wind ... . Only the sacred deer who shared the forest with foxes, birds and gods moved freely between it and the world of man as emissaries of concern of the world beyond for living things on earth. I was aware, as Mr. Tajima spoke, of more emotion to his rendering of the popular regard for the forest than his worldly-wise attitude would have admitted.<sup>58</sup>

Under the conditions of fragmented religious self-consciousness, it is mood which instructs. Our feelings inform us more truly than our attitudes, and nowhere more so than in Japan, where delicacy of atmosphere has for long been regarded as the epitome of sensibility. 'Mood' in this usage is not romantic self-suggestion, but a shared capacity for transformation of perspective in response to external stimuli, Watsuji's 'not going beyond the senses'. It is perhaps not surprising that Watsuji, who has set limits to his transformation, begins, "We arrived at Nara at dusk", whereas van der Post, who seems open to all that comes, notes, "Appropriately I saw them [the pagodas of Nara] last at dawn."<sup>59</sup>

This excursion to Nara has illustrated some of the characteristics of an investigation into the transformative potential of religious art that follows a path which may be likened to a journey. The journey to Emmaus also springs to mind (*Luke* 24: 13-35). This begins from a sensory experience, one which commands attention, "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said", but also provokes perplexity and a sense of a hidden 'more': "but they did not see him." The journey is one in which the disciples were "talking with each other about all these things that had happened." They are trying to puzzle it out, while heading towards the familiar, home. But that journey also becomes one in which the scriptures are opened to them. New understanding is available, but it takes another sensory moment to unveil it, the moment of the breaking and distribution of bread. This conclusive moment is one of both seeing and not seeing, "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight", in such a way that it becomes a moment of insight, of conviction of the life of the Lord,

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<sup>58</sup> Van der Post, p. 217.

<sup>59</sup> Van der Post, p. 224.

beyond what is familiar to them. The destination of their journey proves to be not the enclosure of home but the eucharistic communion into which they are drawn, uniting their past and present, heaven and earth. Their response is not to stay at home; they have no doubt this insight can and will be shared. Theological investigation as journey can also start with human experience, the sensory. It places hope not in the expected destination, the familiar thought, but in what is not yet seen, and in being accompanied in ways that open the scriptures and set the heart burning. And these things are not for their own sake, as the theological journey proves to be not for its own sake, but undertaken in the expectation that all faithful journeying will prove eucharistic; that is, not conclusion but instantiation of God's covenant in Christ with the earth, which is to us both transformative communion and commissioning.

## 7. The Theme of Space

The theme which will be the focus for this investigation into the call of the beauty of Japanese art and the theological implications of our response, is one of the treatment of 'space'. It is a theme which resonates with the analogy of a journey. As that analogy indicates, our appreciation of space does not deny but interacts with an appreciation of time. To picture this, we could think of one of the hand-scroll maps that became so popular in eighteenth century Japan; unroll it, and the route of the Tōkaidō and its famous sights emerge graphically before your eyes.<sup>60</sup> 'Space' and its representation is an appropriate theme. Entering a culture suggests a new world. Art deliberately creates space, opens up room that was not there previously, makes some 'where' for us to inhabit with our senses and imagination. And if we are looking to make sense of the difference between different cultures and different faiths, then we are looking for some 'where' - a 'between' which is not the intermezzo of a half-way house, nor any partial overlap, nor a higher vantage point from which to look down on them but the opening up of a space which allows each truth claim to be lived as fully, and critically, as possible. It is not unreasonable to ask whether our response to the beauty of the art of another faith offers such a space between. If it does so, our experiencing of it over time is likely to be significant.

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<sup>60</sup> See Timon Screech, *The Shogun's Painted Culture: Fear and Creativity in the Japanese States 1760 - 1829*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).

And the theme of space has a further, theological resonance. This ‘between’ suggests something of the unsoundable depth of love mutually given and lovingly received by the Persons of the Trinity. The venture of love of the Persons of the Trinity to hold in perfect unity two and three is continuous endeavour in self-giving, continuous making room for each other. The literal space we experience in creation can be read as analogy and expression of the relations of the Persons of the Trinity. God creates from God’s character and according to that character: love that ever deepens as Persons hold each the other in ever-closer union, Persons ever mutually enriched in love and therefore ever more themselves, in that sense ever more distinguished from one another.<sup>61</sup> God in God’s loving makes this form of room for us, an ever-widening circle of love. As space, this love is room, place and hospitableness. It welcomes difference. Which is to say, love welcomes what will always be in some way dark to it, unassimilable, as also what is light.<sup>62</sup>

We can ask what quality of response space in the art of Japanese faiths prompts in us and whether this is consonant with God’s expressive hospitable love in creation. Does the art depict space as ‘between’ in the way here we are noticing what it is to be between faiths? If so, how does it so depict it? Do we enter space that is hospitable to us? Does it prompt hospitableness in us? If so, of what kind? Does it welcome difference? Or does it tend to absorb us or entice us to make use of it? In other words, is the way that space in Japanese art, in appearing to mediate a ‘between’, can suggest to the Western Christian the love given and received by the Persons of the Trinity coincidence only or real connection? I may respond to its attractiveness by living in and from that space, a form of existential commitment which shapes the world around me along the contours of that experience of space. If the connection of this space with the loving arena of the Persons of the Trinity is a real one, then such existential commitment holds potential for a true participation in the life of the Trinity; in other words, it has prompted a response in me consonant with God’s expressive hospitable love in creation. And we shall need to go further than this and ask

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<sup>61</sup> This is to suggest the plurality of the world depends on its unity and its unity is known not despite but necessarily in its plurality – difference as implication of relations. So, we may legitimately ask, does this include the faiths? See also Rowan Williams, ‘Afterword: Making Differences’, in *Balthasar at the End of Modernity*, ed. by Lucy Gardner and others (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), pp. 173-179, on difference as underwritten by God’s character as self-bestowing love and therefore to be loved, attended to and engaged with.

<sup>62</sup> Von Balthasar discusses the unity of rest and motion in Gregory of Nyssa’s presentation of life in God in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Volume V: the Last Act*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1998) pp. 397-399.

what kind of participation, if any, this artistic space has, not only in the order of creation, but in the mystery hidden through the ages, God's plan for the fullness of time. Is this beauty in any way salvific? Does the space articulated by that art manifest the mansion of love,<sup>63</sup> prepared and held in existence by Christ? To suggest it might is to say that we need to pay attention to it, to its contribution to living between cultures and between faiths, as we would to something sacramental, somewhere where Christ himself shows us he is to be found. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also."<sup>64</sup>

Space as different cultural experience; space as artifice conveying imagination through beauty; space as common ground: the space of the four-and-a-half-mat tea room with which we began, exemplifies these three aspects of the theme of space. Does it also exemplify the fourth, the theological? Let us set out along the *roji*.

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<sup>63</sup> The reference is to *John* 14: 2.

<sup>64</sup> *John* 14: 4. And we do well to listen to Thomas' anxiety in verse 5 ("Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?") and to Christ's answer in verse 6.

## Chapter Two      PRECURSORS

The aim of the current chapter is to appraise some of the approaches that others have followed in appreciating the many faiths and their practices, especially their arts, and in reflecting on these from the perspective of Christian believing. This survey will offer a steer when considering theological value in Japanese art but will also map out something of the unexplored territory which this thesis intends to enter.

### 1.      Two Contemporary British Theologians and an American Cultural Philosopher

George Pattison and David Brown have both written briefly but suggestively on East Asian art and provide a helpful starting place. Pattison in *Art, Modernity and Faith*, is concerned with “the actual bodily thereness” of a work of art as establishing a space for meaning and interpretation, much as was suggested here in the previous section. Having offered theological reflection on the development of art and art theory in contemporary western culture, he turns to consider wider horizons and selects the contribution the theology of art may make to the dialogue between faiths.<sup>1</sup> He starts from experience (Thomas Merton’s reaction to viewing the reclining Buddha of Polonnaruwa: “such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination”),<sup>2</sup> which opens us to “the reality of another spirituality (the art-work being such a reality).”<sup>3</sup> Pattison terms it, “an extension of the double-perspective whereby one looks at other faiths and at one’s own.” However, his own concern here is how “the image is open to the word”; “engagement with the doctrinal and conceptual dimensions of another religious community.” What follows is an account of the fascinating comparison made by George Rombach, Tsujimura Kōichi and Ōhashi Ryōsuke under the title *Being and Nothingness* of two religious pictures, Hans Baldung’s sixteenth century *The Crowning of Mary* and L’iang K’ai’s thirteenth century *Sakyamuni Descending the Mountain*. Ōhashi notes regarding the centrality of the moment

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<sup>1</sup> George Pattison, *Art, Modernity and Faith: Restoring the Image*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: SCM Press, 1998), Chapter 9 ‘The Theology of Art and the Meeting of Faiths’, pp. 155-176.

<sup>2</sup> Merton, *Asian Journal*, (London: Sheldon, 1974) p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> Pattison, p. 158.

of crowning, the space between crown and head in Grien's painting, that it manifests the unitive nature of 'moment' as being both in and outside time. From this he is able to conclude that the difference East and West is not between different metaphysics, nothingness and being, but one reality, one world view, mediated in two ways (negation and comprehensiveness), two different modes of representation.

Pattison's expectation is that the 'thereness', the 'space' of art, will transform our bodily sense of being-in-the-world, shape our desires towards disinterestedness and goodness in the world (he commends Ruskin's 'theoria') and anticipate the messianic Kingdom. It is, as he writes, a theology of redemption.<sup>4</sup> The present thesis will follow a similar track. However, his use of art in this approach to dialogue (and that of his art critics cited here) is a comparative one. They seek in this practice not so much the space art opens, the transformative effect of art, as refining of concept. The momentum becomes one towards uncovering unity in present experience and, especially, theory. They have used it to enlightening effect. But there are dangers inherent in this method. We can acknowledge that they succeed in demonstrating an equivalence through critique of the art-works, but they also operate with an assumed (and prior) uniformity, as if the faith traditions were two branches of one tree of wisdom. It is a perspective that comes from detachment rather than engagement and an evacuation from the art of its experiential validity.<sup>5</sup>

It is otherwise when Pattison turns his attention from the capacity of art to reveal the values of faith traditions to the role of art within those traditions. His witness to this is Yanagi Sōetsu (1889-1961), who developed the curating of craftwork (*mingei*) in Japan

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<sup>4</sup> Pattison, pp. 149 and 153.

<sup>5</sup> As an exemplary comparison of the art of two faiths, one which avoids smoothing out difference, see John D. Eusden, 'Chartres and Ryōan-ji: Aesthetic Connections between Gothic Cathedral and Zen Garden', pp. 9-18 of *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 Autumn 1985, to which Pattison makes reference. Eusden demonstrates how the affective impact of art can cause us to "catch" meaning which is amenable to (but not reducible to) conceptual reflection. He says that such understanding is open to "the common eye" even when we lack instruction. He writes of a 'between', made manifest by the "call" of such art, which will be an important topic later in this present study. In Eusden, this is "between attraction and fulfilment", a between "accompanied by doubt, turmoil, frustration, anxiety", but one in which the affecting beauty of cathedral and garden encourages us in religious journeying and "sustains and nurtures" us through its difficulties. His plea is for "becoming 'more than one thing' in our understanding of affecting presence." The present thesis attempts to understand what this may involve when undertaken from within one faith tradition.



under the influence of a Zen influenced by Daisetz Suzuki and the Kyōto school, and who was friend and mentor to the potter, Bernard Leach. Pattison finds inspiration in Yanagi's Zen-informed insight that true beauty is beyond the duality of beauty and ugliness. But in reaching his challenging conclusion that we need a kind of Christian worldliness ("a revolution no less dramatic and no less paradoxical than Nāgārjuna's teaching of the identity of *nirvana* and *samsara*"),<sup>6</sup> Pattison is not attempting to synthesise Christian and Zen understanding. Rather, in placing the two side by side, he is jolted by the power (attractiveness) of Yanagi's insight into seeing fresh application of what he terms the "real structures, traditions and disciplines" of his own faith tradition. It is from these that Pattison comes to look for "God's promise in the material of messianic fullness." Yanagi's Zen acts as stimulus for Pattison. It does not need to be assimilated, but can remain of its own sphere.<sup>7</sup>

For writing which highlights difference between European and East Asian cultures while keeping open the question of whether such difference is fundamental or (as Pattison suggests) presentational, this thesis will draw on the work of Thomas Kasulis. In *Intimacy or Integrity* Kasulis posits cultures as recursive, forming complex systems by habitually repeating small but significant choices.<sup>8</sup> Hence, he suggests, Western (male) culture repeatedly displays its preference for understanding forms as individual integers which then relate by external connection (and, as in the case of American workers, have to work at making and servicing these connections). Language is referential and knowledge is objective, attained through correspondence. In contrast Japanese (male) culture thinks of forms as holographs of a whole by which each in its form intimates the inter-related

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<sup>6</sup> Pattison, p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> A problem in Pattison's presentation, however, lies with his reliance on Yanagi. Undoubtedly Yanagi has been and remains very influential. Nevertheless his legacy has come under criticism recently, not least in his reliability as a purveyor of Zen thought. He shares with Suzuki the tendency to promote an ahistorical Zen which meets his interpretive need and is comprehensible to the West. For Yanagi's own presentation, see Yanagi Sōetsu, *The Unknown Craftsman: a Japanese Insight into Beauty*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, trans. and adapted by Bernard Leach, (Tōkyō and New York NY: Kodansha International, 1989). For these criticisms, see Kikuchi Yūko, *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism* (London and New York NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004) and Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007). In other words, Yanagi's writings may not convey enough of the obstacle that Zen tradition can be to Western spiritual searching; rather, Pattison is likely to find in Yanagi's writings what he wishes to see there.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

structure of all. Relating is understood as innate (and in the case of Japanese workers the effort which relating requires is understood as being put into displaying what is already naturally – intimately – present).<sup>9</sup> Knowledge is personal, is expertise, attained through practice, as in the discrimination of connoisseurs (Kasulis terms it ‘dark knowledge’). There can be no ‘meta-orientation’ beyond these two cultural reflexions by which to discriminate between them. Rather they act as languages do. Each orientation can speak of things of which the other can have no knowledge. For our part, we can learn to become bi-lingual. In what follows here, reference will be made to recursive cultural choice, Integrity and integers, Intimacy and holograph, dark knowledge and becoming bi-lingual.

David Brown, in *God and Enchantment of Place*,<sup>10</sup> also writes of Japanese arts. His concern is with the structured way experiences of the transcendent in everyday life correlate with belief and, as a Christian theologian, with belief in the incarnate Christ as sacrament. Religious experience, he argues, is no extra (and dispensable) layer. Nor can it be understood as mere ‘feeling’ with context and culture boiled away. Rather, as we pay attention to how societies have applied imagination to what has been given them in nature and culture, we can increase our understanding of the sense which Christian trust in God makes of “the great range of human experience”. It amounts to a recovery of “natural” or “implicit” religion as experience of God.

When Brown writes of his “important objective” – “interest in the experiences themselves and their recovery to human consciousness”<sup>11</sup> – I hear an echo of the call that holds me. Beyond all reflection and explanation, beyond the benefits which come from reframing thought, there remains the irreducible immediacy of life itself. Experiences can catch hold of us as more than we have known. They meet us as the face which wholeness wears. In this we appear to be excavating similar ground. However, Brown resists making beauty his interpretive key. His concern with structure to certain daily experiences as manifesting transcendence allows him to posit common but inchoate experience of God. In that

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<sup>9</sup> Kasulis suggests these two cultural preferences may tend to work oppositely for women in each culture, and - intriguingly - that amid the West’s Integrity culture, the Church is one arena of Intimacy-based thinking. He also illustrates such Intimacy through an account of Rahner’s understanding of sacramental symbol (in contrast to Tillich’s); Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Brown, p. 413.

context, to speak of beauty would suggest some objective and manipulable effect; it would reduce transcendence to aestheticism. Hence Brown prefers to make use of Max Weber's term for the presence of mystery: 'enchantment'. There is a difference in the area of enquiry for this current thesis in that this is explicitly religio-aesthetic.<sup>12</sup> But the more significant divergence of approach is with regard to commonality. This is key for Brown's argument for enchantment of place. But in what follows here, there remains a continuing deferral of judgment regarding whether experiences are common. Aesthetic judgments can converge, as by Kasulis' dark knowledge. But what is held in doubt is whether the experience of one whose recursive practice and world-view flow from belief in Christ will be the same as that of one whose practice and world-view are formed by Mahāyāna. Which is to leave open the question of whether God the Holy Spirit uncovers truth to Christians whose minds are being re-made in Christ in the same way as God does to those who have not received the sign of Christ. And so it is also to leave open the question of David Brown's structured correlates and any 'natural religion'. The matter under discussion in what follows is the experience specifically of Christians, to refine our understanding of what it is to which beauty calls us across the faiths. One advantage of this reticence is that it will allow us to value the practices of another faith while not presuming to assimilate them.

Brown writes of dry (*karesansui*) gardens such as that at Kyōto's Ryōanji,<sup>13</sup> acknowledging that the metaphysics by which a Zen mind sees them differs from that of Western thought. He makes two points. The gardens help correct Western mis-understanding that talk of no-self entails undervaluing present reality, in that the gardens can be understood to increase value in the present moment insofar as they need constant re-creation. Second, he tackles the question of compatibility with theistic religion. "Zen's claim that ultimate reality lies beyond all such oppositions" (as between the aseity of God over against all other forms of existence) need not be the way the gardens are experienced: "perhaps, more frequently they suggest the oppositions and contradictions of this world losing some of their force in

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<sup>12</sup> Brown recognises this aspect of Japanese art when he writes "reverence for aesthetic simplicity seems to slide naturally into an expression of religious values", p. 378.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, pp., 375-379. The other Japanese arts of which Brown writes are martial arts, pp. 387 – 391 and the work of the architect Ando Tadao in creative use of the nature of light to offer experience of transcendence in the design of his 'Church of the Light' in Osaka, p. 342 and Plate 11. Günter Nitschke also considers Ando's church architecture and its adaptation of Japanese aesthetic forms within the setting of a Christian world-view in *From Shinto to Ando*. For further consideration of the Ryōanji *karesansui* garden, see here below, pp. 91-92.

the face of a greater, all-encompassing reality.” Christians should be encouraged to this as part of their own experience. He concludes: “So, if the metaphysics defies agreement, it is not clear that practice does to the same degree.” What Brown writes is neither necessarily unhelpful nor wrong. But what his presentation demonstrates is that it is not after all clear that practice is necessarily more in agreement than metaphysics. Despite the thrust of his argument, thought remains an important aspect not only of our interpretation of experience but also thereby of the experience itself. Further, the experience of these gardens is likely to re-compose Christian understanding in ways that are more challenging than Brown seems to admit: it is not clear that any “greater all-encompassing reality” shown by the gardens would be closer to a Christian metaphysics than is Zen non-duality. We can take from this discussion two possibly contradictory elements of the experience of these *karesansui* gardens to which Brown only indirectly alludes: the power over us of their attractiveness and their strangeness.

## 2. Japanese Exemplars

The reader may ask how others have reflected theologically on Japanese culture. Foreign Christian writing has often been from the perspectives of inculturation, missiology and dialogue.<sup>14</sup> These can be valid and helpful in their own terms, but tend to start from a position which problematises Japanese religion. Unsurprisingly it is Japanese rather than foreigners who have attempted to make links between culture and their Christian faith, including attending to the claim of the arts. Here follows notice of four approaches to doing so, with a closer look at two further Japanese Christian theologians whose accounts offer direction for the interpretation given in this thesis.

One response by some has been to employ traditional forms with Christian content.<sup>15</sup> Takenaka Masao (1925-2006) has written several attractive works meditating on Christian

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<sup>14</sup> For an example of this done well, see Franco Sottocornola SX, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass: Towards Inculturation of the Liturgy in Japan’, *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, 44 (1990) 11-27. For more on the practice of inculturation by Fr. Sottocornola, see below, pp. 244-245. Chapter 6 as a whole provides the perspective of this present study on these topics.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the print-making of Watanabe Sadao, discussed by Anne H. H. Pyle, ‘A Christian Faith in the Tradition of Japanese Folk Art: the Art of Watanabe Sadao (1913-1996)’, pp. 20-29 of *Arts Magazine*, April 2000. Viewed on-line

themes in response to and illustrated by Japanese cultural symbols. His underlying approach is to suggest that central Japanese aesthetic motifs can remind us of biblical themes (and illuminate our interpretation of them).<sup>16</sup> Takenaka's intent is more devotional and pastoral than theological. The inference of his method appears to be that such multivalent symbols are not to be received as isolated instances but manifestations of wider guidance by the Holy Spirit of a culture, which will form the basis for Christian learning from other faiths and critical assessment in the light of them.<sup>17</sup> But the closer implications of such an understanding of culture for Christian valuing of other faiths remain unspoken. And the suspicion must be present that Takenaka's reminders rest more on occasional semblance driven by homiletic concern than on inherent correspondence. To take one example, Takenaka writes of the hollowness of the bamboo as figuring both Zen *mu-shin* (no mind) and christological kenotic thinking, which he then equates under the theme of humility.<sup>18</sup> Takenaka does not offer any theology of cultural difference, but his celebration of artists, poets and many others and willingness to reflect on their labours from the perspective of his Christian faith are a type for any beginning in hearing the call of beauty across faiths.

Kitamori Kazō (1916-1998) in his *Theology of the Pain of God* (1946),<sup>19</sup> meditating on scripture in the light of human experience of war and loss, makes a connection with a theme in Japanese literature, especially *kabuki*. *Tsurasa* is that quality of pain found in sacrifice of self or loved ones through love (and Confucian duty). While the suffering of war

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<http://www.artsmag.org/files/Anne-Pyle.pdf> (29. 11. 2011.) Also *nō* of Kadowaki Kakichi, "The Baptism of Jesus": Noh Play and Mass', *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, 44 (1990), 3-10 for an example of this with liturgical intent.

<sup>16</sup> Takenaka Masao, *God is Rice: Asian culture and Christian faith* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986); Takenaka Masao, *When the Bamboo Bends: Christ and Culture in Japan* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002); Takenaka Masao and Yoshida Megumi, *Consider the Flowers: Meditations in Ikebana* (Tōkyō: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1990). For another example of such correspondence method, see John J. Keane SA, 'Religious Influences in the Tea Ceremony', *The Japan Mission Journal*, Winter 2005, 246-251.

<sup>17</sup> Takenaka, *When the Bamboo Bends*, pp. 27-31. He writes, "in accepting the crucified and risen Christ we can come to the wider view that divine grace operates in all realms of life, including in peoples of other faiths and of no faith." p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Takenaka, *When the Bamboo Bends*, pp. 58-61. However he distinguishes these from Confucian reserve or modesty (*enryo*), which he sees as directed towards maintaining the status quo. p. 258. See also the "nine articles to indicate a Christian expression of the meaning of the tea ceremony" which Takenaka quotes approvingly from Uwoki Tadakazu, *God is Rice*, p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> Kitamori Kazō, *Theology of the Pain of God* (London: SCM, 1966).

disposes Kitamori to concern himself with the theme of divine passibility, it is the strength of this historical and literary trope in Japanese culture which gives the theme its shape for him, a shape of Japanese drama of human feeling. By this meditative exegesis, Kitamori was uniquely able to break free from the “German captivity” of Japanese theology<sup>20</sup> and offer something sufficiently powerful in its originality to affect a world-wide audience. It is not the adequacy of his trinitarian theology which concerns us here,<sup>21</sup> but his method with regard to the influence of Japanese art. In the use he makes of *tsurasa*, Kitamori is not attempting to fill a Japanese vessel with Christian content nor developing a theme from mere semblance. Rather he is making an explicit analogy: we can know something of the God who reveals Godself in scripture from what Japanese culture teaches us of pain, and can do so because Japanese *tsurasa* derives ultimately from the character of God. In doing this, Kitamori also draws the distinctions necessary to analogy: *tsurasa* lacks the understanding of loving the unworthy, retains elements of selfishness and is only productive and truthful when it serves God’s pain.<sup>22</sup> Kitamori’s pioneering method of valorising Japanese culture in theological discourse depended on a form of ‘dynamic equivalence’ translation: reading one thing (scriptural accounts of God’s anguish) in terms of another (the father’s *tsurasa* in *kabuki*). It is powerful, but once again can mask difference.

Endō Shusaku (1923-1996) wrote novels, short stories and plays in which characters experience acutely, across the span of history, fractures between Japanese society and the Catholic faith he professed. The tones vary: sometimes elegiac, sometimes comic, not infrequently tragic. Endo’s protagonists are, often to themselves, anti-heroes, crushed by expectations they cannot meet. Much of his oeuvre concerns two worlds in conflict, the *deko* and *boko* worlds (convex and concave), related to the internal struggle between the command of a father and the embracing love of a mother, as characterising the psychology

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<sup>20</sup> The phrase refers to its dependence on Western theology, especially that of Karl Barth. For the history of this dependence, see Furuya Yasuo ed. and trans., *A History of Japanese Theology* (Grand Rapids MI, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997). Furuya attributes the phrase to Ōki Hideo, p. 6. For the account of Kitamori see Yagi Seiichi, ‘The Third Generation, 1945 – 1970’, in *A History of Japanese Theology*, Furuya ed., (pp. 83-111) pp. 86-89.

<sup>21</sup> For a critique of Kitamori in favour of a passibility which God “himself has willed”, see von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama V*, pp. 231-234. Von Balthasar characterises Kitamori’s theology as centring on the cross but also taking its direction from “the context of the attempt to overcome Buddhism”. Von Balthasar stays within the terms of Western ontological categories which Kitamori finds wanting.

<sup>22</sup> Kitamori, p. 138.

of Catholicism and Japanese cultural believing respectively. By the time of his final novel *Fukai Kawa (Deep River)*,<sup>23</sup> the Christian witness of the emblematic character, Otsu, is to a single stream of life and death which is manifest through many faiths. Mark Williams notes this strand in Endō's thinking he attributed to John Hick.<sup>24</sup> There is debate over the irreducibility of the religio-cultural opposites in Endō and the way in which his own thinking changed.<sup>25</sup> But what remains constant in Endō's imaginative perception is the valuing of suffering. It is not that the suffering which the protagonist undergoes is unambiguously redemptive but that in bearing suffering, however unwillingly in conscious thought, the possibility of the presence of God, the seemingly undiscoverable subject of the protagonists' professed belief, begins to emerge. This is to say that any transcending of conflict between received faith (in the *deko* world) and socialised perception (from the *boko* world) is for Endō dramatic, and therefore temporally conditioned and of the moment. This is not so much resolution in the terms of European drama but, as we shall meet again in considering *nō*, insight stimulated by faithfulness to deep emotion. Even in *Fukai Kawa* it is the transitory events of a tour party which are catalyst for eternal themes. And these themes are projected on the image of ever-moving water, the Ganges. If Kitamori, in considering suffering, was willing to contemplate some re-casting of received Christian meaning by analogy with Japanese cultural experience, Endō goes further. His dramas uncover the fault-lines between that Christian meaning and experience. They lead us to ask what of the former is also culturally conditioned and therefore partially blind and to find through this limitation what enables us as grace to pass beyond.

Another Japanese Christian who understands truth as "suffered truth" is the theologian and missionary, Koyama Kosuke (1929-2009).<sup>26</sup> He has written several well-known books drawing Christian insight from Japanese historical experience, notably *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai*.<sup>27</sup> As the title suggests, Koyama continues to look for truth dialectically. His

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<sup>23</sup> Endō Shūsaku, *Deep River*, trans. Van C. Gessel (London: Peter Owen, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Mark Williams, *Endō Shūsaku: a Literature of Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 255 fn. 9.

<sup>25</sup> See Adrian Pinnington, 'Yoshimitsu, Benedict, Endō: Guilt, Shame and the Post-war Idea of Japan', *Japan Forum* 13 (2001) pp. 91-105. See fn. 2. Viewed on-line 1. 12. 2011 at <http://www.slideshare.net/route66mn/yoshimitsu-benedict-end-guilt-shame-and-the-post-war-idea-of-japan>

<sup>26</sup> The phrase is from Koyama Kosuke, *No Handle on the Cross: an Asian Meditation on the Crucified Mind* (London: SCM Press, 1976), p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> Koyama Kosuke, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: a Pilgrimage in Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1984).

version of the *boko* and *deko* worlds is one between cosmological religions (such as the Shintō of the *Kojiki*) which view life as self-existent and eschatological ones (Koyama includes Buddhism) where vitality is in change. It is not that Mount Fuji is the locus of error and Mount Sinai of truth. Either can be sources of error. The cross judges this, and the pattern of believing associated with either mountain can illuminate for the other its neglect of the way of the cross. Koyama's unifying theme is overcoming idolatry, that magnifying of self-interest that left Tokyo in ruins in 1945. He moves back and forth between scripture and experience. In doing so, he not only keeps a clear eye on specifics of culture and religion, but treats them with great sympathy, as being the locus of God's experiencing and as such open to redemption.<sup>28</sup> What for Koyama transcends dialectical opposition is Jesus Christ, understanding of whom is primarily neither conceptual nor emotional but moral. This discriminatory faculty relies on a traditioned practice, the fruit of the life of a community, which Koyama equates with the Hebraic mind and scriptural witness. It is Christian faithfulness lived with a sense of an impassioned engaged God, which takes precedence both over other faiths and over Christianity itself. This method incorporates a habit of mind which (while not fearing to be sharply critical) ultimately respects the particularity of human experiencing more than do the assimilative instincts of Takenaka, Kitamori and Endō.

### 3. Mutō Kazuo (1913-1995)

Certain Japanese theologians have sought to uncover inherent correspondence between Japanese thought and Christian orthodoxy on the basis of nothingness (*mu*).<sup>29</sup> This represents an engagement with the Kyōto School of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945). No longer need Japanese theology depend on the models and concerns of Europeans. Concepts inherently alien to the Japanese mind, such as substance and objectivity, would be scrutinised and where necessary abandoned. It was liberation from the 'German Captivity'. However, there are criticisms which can be levelled at this approach. Their writings, while

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<sup>28</sup> He quotes with approval Heschel's dictum: "What concerns the prophet is the human event as a divine experience." Koyama Kosuke, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Among them, Takizawa Katsumi (1909-1984), Yagi Seiichi (1932- ), Odagaki Masaya (1929- ) and Mutō Kazuo. See Odagaki Masaya, 'Theology after 1970', in *A History of Japanese Theology.*, ed. and trans. Furuya, pp. 113-140. Odagaki terms this form of knowledge 'meontological' and understands links with the epistemologies of Whitehead and Derrida.



claiming relevance to a Japanese cultural context, have been drily abstract, seeking philosophical universality. In this they overlook (in contrast to Koyama) the particularity of Japanese experiences as data of theological investigation. Furthermore, the Kyōto School of Philosophy was itself influenced by German Idealism and was developed in response to Heideggerian Existentialism.<sup>30</sup> While it engaged explicitly with Zen thought, this Zen thought, for example of immediacy, is an unusual rendering of Zen teaching, lay-led and unlike the more scholastic (and gradualist) teaching that prevailed in the monasteries. Indeed, the determining influences on the Zen of the Kyōto School have been convincingly traced to Western, and especially American, romantic individualist experientialism.<sup>31</sup>

A key term for many of these theologians is 'field' (*ba* or *basho*), a term taken from Nishida, whose philosophy of the identity of subject with object in the 'field of the self-identity of absolute contradiction' seemed to them to offer a way of speaking of God which would allow theologians to take the insights of Buddhism seriously. Behind it lies its use in Mahāyāna teaching to speak of a vast but finite area in which the Buddha, in his Enjoyment Body (*sambhogakāya*) exercises infinite compassion, a Pure Land.<sup>32</sup> Myriads of these appear in the sutras, *the Lotus Sutra (Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra)* and *the Kegon Sutra (Avatamsaka Sūtra)*, to name but two of the most prominent in Japanese Buddhism. This current, impure world in which the Buddha has appeared came to be understood as not other than the Pure Land of Śākyamuni who could see it as such because he is pure. So the Buddha field can be understood to comprise two opposites, impure and pure. Moreover in Mahāyāna thought these are not ultimate, rather they are phenomenal illusions constructed out of compassion. It is the Intrinsic Body of the Buddha (*svābhāvikakāya*, the *dharmakāya*) which is ultimate, "non-dual flow of consciousness".<sup>33</sup> The Buddha field, then, which comprises all of which we can have cognisance, is itself comprehended in what is beyond all knowledge because beyond any duality - Suchness: self-being without origination, dependence, conditioning or inherent identity. However, in Mahāyāna thought

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<sup>30</sup> For cultural and philosophical difference between Watsuji Tetsurō and Heidegger and discussion of Augustin Berque's commentary on this, see below, pp. 166-168.

<sup>31</sup> Robert H. Sharf, 'The Zen of Japanese Nationalism'.

<sup>32</sup> On Buddha Fields (*buddhaksātra*), see Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Doctrinal Foundations* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London and New York NY: Routledge, 2009), pp. 214-218. Also David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York NY and London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), pp. 116-138. McMahan follows the pattern of the Buddha Field through "imaginative evocation" (p. 130) in the visions of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*.

<sup>33</sup> The definition is from Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 179.

stemming from the four-fold negation of Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika,<sup>34</sup> it is to be remembered that non-duality implies that the non-dual cannot claim ultimacy over the dual. They are reversible. The Buddha Field, then, comprises all things and is nothing, held in perfect equilibrium.

It was regarding the matter of reversibility that Christian theologians had much debate when they applied the term 'field' to God's activity.<sup>35</sup> While they could accept the provisionality of 'the bearers of names', each regarded it as necessary to assert, against their Buddhist interlocutors, something absolute, a final irreversibility. Takizawa and Yagi both attempted to do so by finding in what is common in human experience an overarching reality by which to comprehend Christianity and Buddhism in the one field (for Takizawa 'primary contact' or 'Emmanuel'; for Yagi the 'Transcendent' within a 'field of integration' known by 'pure intuition'). Odagaki and Mutō, however, prefer to speak of the field in ways that allow us to remain with the provisional and, in Mutō's case, with a tension which remains creative.

Mutō Kazuo's theology displays a concern for philosophy of religion; an emphasis on nothingness; a hope for dialogue. He was a friend of Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990), the Zen philosopher of Nothingness, and drew also on Nishida. And he engaged sympathetically with a range of theologians, Schleiermacher as well as Barth, Bultmann and Rahner, Kierkegaard and Tillich, seeking to further Troeltsch's perception of Christianity as culturally conditioned without succumbing to relativism (as he believed Troeltsch had done).<sup>36</sup>

Mutō quoted favourably Nishitani on nothingness, that creation *ex nihilo* can be linked with God's presence in all things: "this nihil is more immanent in that thing than the very being

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<sup>34</sup> Nāgārjuna's 'tetralemma': not being; not non-being; not both being and non-being; not neither being nor non-being. See G. M. Nagao, *Madhyamika and Yogācāra: a Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies*, ed. and trans. L. S. Kawamura (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 179-181.

<sup>35</sup> This presentation on irreversibility follows those of Yagi Seiichi, 'The Third Generation, 1945-1970', and of Odagaki Masaya, 'Theology after 1970', in Furuya (ed.) *A History of Japanese Theology*.

<sup>36</sup> Mutō Kazuo, 'Theologism and Religionism', trans. Claus Spennemann, *Japanese Religions*, 15.4 (1989) 1-14, (p. 1).

of that thing is 'immanent' in that thing itself."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless Mutō did not rely on Zen construal of nothingness to mediate understanding of nothingness for Christianity. He saw them as disparate, with Zen so identifying activity and passivity, swallowing up the distinction between self-power (*jiriki*) and other power (*tariki*) as to leave no room for objective faith.<sup>38</sup> The Christian sense of the immanence of nothingness ('immanent transcendence') in creation out of nothing is known in self-awareness (including as sin). In love it is known in not seeking itself but neighbour; it is known in Christ's kenosis, which shows a virtue that negates virtue understood as a power of being. And this immanence of nothingness is known also in death, especially in Pauline Christ mysticism by which we bear in the body the death of Jesus. This nothingness in Christian understanding leads to its reversal, in a relationship that Mutō characterises as 'inverse polarity,' so that death dies and the resurrection life of Jesus is shown. Christians attest this reversal in themselves and so awaken (the word invites reflection on Buddhist expectations) to the mediating activity of self-negating love. In Mutō, while there is recovery of origins in such reversal of nothingness, it is not put forward as a more primal reality or religious consciousness than the negation (against Tillich who, Mutō asserts, sees non-being as a thing to be conquered and against Barth, for whom nothingness, covering sin and death, is always only negative).<sup>39</sup> The two are held together. Dialectic continues to be important in Mutō's construal of our perception of truth. He speaks of a mystical dialectic which is a synthesis of our being in Christ, which is mystical (and may be thought to manifest as religious consciousness), and of dialectic as already described, the repetition in our life and will of the death and resurrection of Christ.

This pattern of mystical dialectics can be seen also in Mutō's account of Christian ethics: not the Idealists' 'you can for you ought' but a 'you ought for you can' that relies not on materialism but what he terms 'the sublated truth of idealism'. We live 'as if not' (the emptying of self) and 'as' (what in Christ we are), in death and resurrection. And while the imperative is based on the indicative, "both are united in mutual mediation". There is dialectic here and mystical being; nothingness finds its moment in this practice. Two key

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<sup>37</sup> Mutō Kazuo, 'Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness', trans. Jan van Bragt, *Japanese Religions*, 21.2 (1996) 199-227 (pp. 220-221), referring to Nishitani Keiji, *Religion and Nothingness*.

<sup>38</sup> Mutō Kazuo, 'Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness', p. 219. *Jiriki* is especially associated with Zen and *tariki* with Jōdō and Jōdō Shinshū's *nenbutsu* Amidism.

<sup>39</sup> Mutō Kazuo, 'Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness', pp. 210 and 204.

terms stand out. One is ‘as’, which Mutō repeatedly uses. ‘Nothingness qua love’; ‘faith as awakening’; ‘radicalisation qua sublation’: states of consciousness are what they are and, by the operation of mediating negation, are also something other, what they are not. ‘As’ implies inverse polarity. The word in Japanese is *soku* (如). It carries freight from Buddhism. Another reading of the character for *soku* is *nyō* as in *nyōrai* (如来), Buddha or tathāgata, the one thus come from truth, and *shinnyō* (真如), Thusness. The thought is of dharmas being none other to the awakened mind than what they are and as such being universal ultimate reality.<sup>40</sup> Mutō adopts this Buddhist thought pattern to explain mystical dialectics and Christian ethics.

But he does not fail to point up the distinction from Buddhism by also using the second key term: ‘mediating’. Things are not simply to be understood in terms of other things. The dialectic implies relationship and lasting difference. The foundational question is how something can come of nothing, creation *ex nihilo*. There is that which mediates between is and is not, Mutō suggests, and this mediating is always at root other power (*tariki*) and irreversible. In Christ that other power is knowable objectively to us. In Christ God becomes absolutely relative and we become relatively absolute: this again is inverse polarity. We may say it is this other power which mediates by inverting the polarity.

Mutō’s preservation of the other and the transcendent is seen also in his discussion of eschatology. He rejects as insufficient Bultmann’s eschatological present, “a self-identity of the contradiction of the transcendent and the immanent”, which he compares to Nishida’s ‘eschatological everyday’. Rather he maintains a futuristic eschatology: this rejects immanence in present eschatology while becoming immanent in it, “immanently

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<sup>40</sup> Graham Parkes has commented on *nyō* in the context of ‘likeness’ in *karesansui* gardens. He quotes Nishitani, that each thing, thanks to its oneness with emptiness is “an image without an original” and thus ‘like’ itself alone. Parkes also cites a poem on the subject of *zazen* by the Sōtō Zen founder, Dōgen:

This water is clean, right down to the ground  
Fishes are swimming like [*nyō*] fishes  
The sky is wide, clear through to the heavens,  
And birds are flying like [*nyō*] birds.

Graham Parkes, ‘The Eloquent Stillness of Stone: Rock in a Dry Landscape Garden’, pp. 44-59 of in *Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation*, ed. by Michael F. Marra (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), pp. 44-59 (pp. 55-56). For *soku* in *nō*, see LaFleur, p. 128: “The principle of *soku* pervades Zeami’s thought.” Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443), is the leading *nō* dramatist and theorist.

transcending' all reduction to immanence, while radically mediating it."<sup>41</sup> The thought is that the nothingness out of which all things have their being and which is thus known in all things prevents any ultimate resting in the present, while perception of the nothingness that, being in all things, draws all things forward to completion is the root of our awareness of their created nature (and of this as incomplete). Mutō introduces this future work of other power in the course of a discussion of God as hidden, not only on the cross and in our own suffering and faith but in that God in Godself transcends the mediation; the knowledge of faith has eschatological limits.

Here is Mutō's field, a Field of the Inversion of Polarities. It holds together dialectically as poles our religious distinctions and our inchoate experiencing of our existential situation while mediating and transcending them both in Christ. So it affords a locus for appreciating difference and for dialogue. It is one that avoids resolution. Odagaki points out that, for Mutō's philosophy of religion, in mystical union "we cannot separate ourselves from the pole confronting us while it continues to do so."

Where has Mutō brought us? Mutō's thought holds together what is particular and what is other without diminishing all into an amorphous philosophical whole. Its dialectics do justice to the drama of Christian living and its mysticism to the tradition of the vision of God. And his theology, while steeped in immanence and nothingness, retains the distinctiveness of transcendence at every turn: in his account of nothingness, in his futuristic eschatology, in his foundation in other power and in his account of Christ as more than example but mediator. This field which Mutō describes for us, characterised as it is by continuing tension, mediating inversion and transcending in mystical union will prove valuable later in the discussion, especially when we come to ask how the art of another faith may manifest to us the presence of God.<sup>42</sup>

To see what will become of the role of nothingness and the notion of field in the hands of a theologian more wedded to the particularities of cultural life we turn to the Catholic theologian, Inoue Yōji.

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<sup>41</sup> Mutō Kazuo, "'Immanent Transcendence' in Religion", trans. Jan van Bragt, *Japanese Religions* 12.1 (1981), 1-20 (pp. 11-12).

<sup>42</sup> For further engagement with Mutō's thought, especially on hiddenness and the inversion of polarities, see below, p. 156.

#### 4. Inoue Yōji (b. 1927)

Inoue Yōji has been a long-time friend of Endō. He spent some years in France as a Carmelite and, like the protagonist Kudo of Endō's 1965 novel *Ryūgaku (Foreign Studies)*,<sup>43</sup> felt the pull of sensibilities nurtured in Yamato ("those gentle-lined green hills") and alienated by Europe's culture of stone ("which I felt rejected me every time I tried to join it"), the culture that has most eloquently given expression to his faith. "I felt as if there were two different selves within me." To express "the matters Jesus wanted to hand on to us at the risk of his life", "to receive them within the sensibility of Japanese everyday life – I even came to think that it must be the task assigned to me as my life work." The following reflections are drawn from his best-known work, *The Face of Jesus in Japan*.<sup>44</sup> This is a sustained meditation with a pastoral heart, expounding a way of thinking that has enabled Inoue to bring together his faith and culture. Much of the book is taken up with re-telling of gospel stories, interspersed with personal reminiscences, with appreciations of natural beauty and with references to Japanese poets and holy men. With its circling themes the whole has a simple air which both conceals and carries its profundity.

Face plays an important illustrative role. Inoue writes that, as we look out on the world making discriminations between objects, what we cannot see is our own face.<sup>45</sup> This stands as an image of the unimaginable, of that which precedes (and predicates) subject-object division, but which can be experienced and lived. This, he tells us, is *mu*.<sup>46</sup> And, by a surprising move, Inoue equates this unseeable ground of experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit (like magnetism moving iron filings in a magnetic field)<sup>47</sup> and with the Kingdom of God. Interpreting Inoue, the face of Jesus is the unity Jesus of Nazareth enjoys with the Holy Spirit who makes present among us the eschatological joy. This presence is no mere intimation of salvation; what the face of Jesus in the cultural history of Japan tells us is that the Kingdom of God is already here. Inoue does indeed seek out instances of loving mercy

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<sup>43</sup> Endō Shūsaku, *Foreign Studies*, trans. Mark Williams (London: Peter Owen, 1989).

<sup>44</sup> Inoue Yōji, *The Face of Jesus in Japan*, trans. Akamatsu Hisako (Tōkyō: Kindai-Bungeisha, 1994). The quotations in this paragraph are taken from the Introduction, pp. 1-4.

<sup>45</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 77ff.

<sup>46</sup> Inoue uses *mu*, as favoured by Zen (and carrying Daoist overtones) interchangeably with *kū* (Mahāyāna śūnyatā) and drawing on the Heart Sutra, denies that it is mere vacancy but rather the obverse of forms; Inoue Yōji, pp. 106-107. "A plum tree is a plum tree and I am I owing to the vacant, infinite emptiness which is not a plum tree nor me", p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 117 and pp. 123ff.

in Japanese experience,<sup>48</sup> but these are presented as no isolated cases; they emerge from a cultural milieu, *fūdo*,<sup>49</sup> which we can thus understand in its integrity to be held in mercy, a vehicle for human trust in God. Here is Inoue's construal of field. It is field of *mu* and Field of Love. To express this, the phrase Inoue frequently adopts is "eternal life – the field".

"It is impossible for us to grasp it as a concept. We can only grasp and *experience it through the act to respond* to the work of the field."<sup>50</sup> Truth, removing the covering (Greek: *aletheia*), is to be perceived, not by removing the covering of the object which would be to try to capture the reality of life by concepts, but by removing the covering of the subject - and Inoue says we do so by deeds.<sup>51</sup> He is suggesting that what is inherent in being has the power to draw us from the illusion of the self (and from the examples he gives, it is clear that beauty is a primary form of this power), but that we have the choice whether to cooperate by giving it our attention. To know sweetness, we must taste sugar. It is experiential.<sup>52</sup> It is a "respond-depending relationship". The notions that the field does work and that we are in relationship with it through response, lead Inoue to say of the field that it is "something like a large river of original Life which flows holding us all living things, and out of which we can never be."<sup>53</sup> This "large river of original Life", then, is the field of God's action in relationship with all beings. Inoue chooses not to discriminate between original life and eschatological life. Life is lived in the field of God's loving acting. Our difficulty is that we are not fully aware of it: "we cannot be fully soaked in the eternal life overflowing through the universe, the very base sustaining our life."<sup>54</sup> But in Jesus we are given the sign we need; Jesus is the one who has been completely one with God's love and 'eternal life – the field'<sup>55</sup> and his death on the cross is *hi-ai* made visible.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> By using the term *hi-ai* for agape, Inoue equates this with the compassion of the Buddha.

<sup>49</sup> Inoue explicitly borrows his understanding of *fūdo*, with its implication of climatic conditioning of culture, from Watsuji Tetsurō; Inoue Yōji, pp. 52-53.

<sup>50</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 148 (original italics).

<sup>51</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> And we may note that the characters for *basho* (場所) can mean either 'field' or 'experience'.

<sup>53</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 35.

<sup>55</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 191.

<sup>56</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 165.

Inoue's gospel is then one of *tarikī*, other power. It is no surprise to find him admiring Hōnen.<sup>57</sup> But, just as in the full compass of Mahāyāna doctrine it becomes difficult to draw any ultimate distinction between *tarikī* and *jiriki*, so Inoue's Christian version reflects this pattern also. As we are drawn by the wind of the Spirit into the Field of Love we experience it as answering to our deepest understanding, our true nature. Inoue's vision is of a return from a fall into duality to the one indivisible (and so ineffable) origin. This is presence of mind, or rather of heart, *kokoro*, since it comprises the rational and the affective. And further, this response (of dependence) is act, a moral decision to welcome the consequences of living according to mercy-giving love. And it is one that Inoue, with his encompassing vision, sees enacted throughout Japanese history: "Japanese spiritual history seems to have been continuously seeking for the large river of life, something before the confrontation of subject and object, vacant as to be called in no way but Nothingness or Emptiness." The conclusion is that "the stream of Japanese culture has been unconsciously seeking for the kingdom of God".<sup>58</sup>

What aspects of Japanese culture come to mind for Inoue when he is considering the call of God to self-conversion? Whereas the *haiku* poet Bashō (1644-1694) was a creator of beauty for its own sake, Inoue sees the attitude of the founders of Sōtō Zen and Jōdo-shinshū, Dōgen (1200-1253) and Shinran (1173-1263), also great literary figures, as more like that of agape, "the back-bone of which is self-negation and self-conversion" in *mu*, since their aim was not simply creating great beauty, but through their sincere living to lead people to religious experience.<sup>59</sup> Inoue praises another *haiku* poet, Ryōkan (1758-1831), as advocate of having the child's mind, noting that Ryōkan himself suffered in childhood and that such a mind is not merely by nature, but involves a trust (in 'eternal life – the field' and in pneuma) that comes after a long period of pain and searching. Beauty and suffering are often intertwined for Inoue.<sup>60</sup> And whereas the statues of Yakushi Nyōrai in his temple are "wonderful" (*subarashii*) and those of Amida Nyōrai in Jōruriji give him a feeling of peace, there is a further experience to be had. He feels "a kind of inexpressible warmth" in "a

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<sup>57</sup> Hōnen (1133-1212), founder of Jōdo-shū, advocating simple reliance on the saving vow of Amida Buddha through recitation of *nenbutsu*.

<sup>58</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 108.

<sup>59</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 160-161.

<sup>60</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 203-208. He quotes (p. 116) Ryōkan's *haiku*:

A maple leaf falls  
Casually showing  
One side or the other.



weather-beaten, abraded Ojizō-sama” that “has been standing there patiently on the outskirts of a village for many tens of years, hundreds of years, shouldering the sorrows and painfulness of the villagers.” In such a statue, beneath the persimmon tree, surrounded by *susuki* grass, “I feel I can see the essence of agape the merciful love.”<sup>61</sup> These statues are plentiful across Japan and their particular form would not draw any artistic comment, but Inoue wants us to realise that they more perfectly display true beauty as it is seen and known through the gospels, which is also the flow of eternal life.

Is Inoue right? Does Japanese culture through the ages unconsciously witness to a search for the Kingdom of God? It may be concluded that Inoue has not proved his point, but his vision is something other than a simple fulfilment theology. The occasions he selects as examples of *hi-ai* are drawn more from consensus regarding Japanese culture than from any straightforward match with the gospels. This is a dialogical route: not seeking to acquire insight by a raid on what is other but continually re-submitting to being affected by the other, as means of being altered rather than of altering. Inoue offers Christian theology a vision of human living called by God to be radically dependent on all being and to be trusting, holding fast to the continuing value of response to the aesthetic as meaningful beauty indivisible from religious perception, source of new comprehension of truth. If we throw ourselves into the flow of eternal life and “live to the end with all our might, there will be true human perfection, joy and solidarity in love.”<sup>62</sup> It is a vision permeated by a Mahāyāna sense of emptiness and so offers a bridge to Christian reception of meaning from Japanese culture. The present study could be considered a development of these insights of Inoue. As returned exile Inoue walks once again in the green hills of Yamato reciting ancient poetry; as priest he muses on the words of Jesus in the gospels: “for me these two worlds are firmly combined into one deep in my mind.” He insists that this is a conclusion “born at the very limit of my own experience of life.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 193-194.

<sup>62</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 100.

<sup>63</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 107-108.

## 5. Monchanin, Abhishiktananda and Panikkar: Christian Theology Learns to Attend to Different Faiths

The writers cited above have in common the attempt to discover how to live responding to God in the light of the attractiveness of a culture which rests on different religious beliefs. The question is likely to look different when that culture is not one's native imaginative language but adopted, chosen perhaps for its worth. There are many interesting writings but few which offer truly salient examples. William Johnston SJ (1925-2010), for example, has written extensively and attractively on the correspondence of Japanese meditative practices with Christian ones, and stands in the wake of Hugo Lassalle (1898-1990) and Heinrich Dumoulin (1905-1995), both of whom sought to adopt into Catholic devotional practice insights from Zen. Johnston published his autobiography *Mystical Journey* in 2006.<sup>64</sup> While the reader gains here a lively sense of the challenges and joys involved in committing one's life to Christian service under the sign of another culture and what it is to have one's understanding of God shaped imaginatively by this, there is little to express the existential challenge of abiding theological search. Semblance and assimilation are again the order of the day.

The following section will consider, as a measure of the task, three of those who in the twentieth century began consistently to live a combinatory form of believing and thereby influenced the thinking of Vatican 2 and subsequent Roman Catholic practice of inculturation. The examples come not from Japan but from India and are responses to the attractiveness of religious practice more than to artistic excellence. Nevertheless they are notable in that they do not rest with semblance but trouble over difference; in seriousness and depth they have hardly been surpassed today. They could fairly apply to themselves Inoue's words and say that their understandings came to birth at the very limits of their own experiences of life. Their experiences and their assessments stand as measure of the task. And for this present study, to travel from Europe to Japan via India may be a not inappropriate reflection of the way in which Japanese culture and faith were first encountered by Europeans in the age of Francis Xavier.

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<sup>64</sup> William Johnston SJ, *Mystical Journey: an Autobiography* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2006).

While the question of the salvation of those of different faiths is not central to this study, the search for a theology which allows for Christian believing to be affected by their practices requires some account of the significance of those faiths for theology. This leads through the writings of those theologians, many of them Catholic, who have in the previous half century looked to hold together the beliefs that Christ Jesus is the Saviour of the world and that God wills that all shall be saved.<sup>65</sup> There were two strands of such theology evident at the time of the Second Vatican Council. One, usually termed 'fulfilment theory', saw the faiths as natural human strivings towards God, destined to drop away when the individual embraces the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The other is found in the writings of Karl Rahner and, differently, in the earlier writings of Raimundo Panikkar. In their writings there is a universal presence of the mystery of Jesus Christ, with whom the adherents of other faiths may have relationship in the sincere practice of their faith, but in an unconscious and fragmentary way.

In a theology of fulfilment, it was thought that the particulars of other faiths could be distinguished from truth expressed in the lives of their adherents. Those following other faiths potentially could discover that truth and goodness are mixed with error in their religions but unmingled in Christianity, in such a way that they would come to see the Christian following of Christ as the fulfilment of their highest aspirations. This theology, associated with Danielou and de Lubac, built on the Catholic understanding that grace perfects nature. By our nature made in the image of God we seek what is good and perfect. The faiths are our natural expression of this compulsive human searching. But as natural phenomena they do not attain their end. They are not themselves bearers of grace that saves. They are at best a preparation for the gospel and fall away when the light of the grace of Jesus Christ dawns in human hearts. Such thinking allowed Christians to maintain the belief that the fullness of revelation is only in the Church without placing the religions in opposition to this revelation. It allowed the approach to people of other faiths to be respectful and it welcomed a non-polemical study of the religions. As such, it was a strong, though not exclusive, influence on the documents of Vatican 2.

The theology associated with Karl Rahner was an intellectual departure from a theology of fulfilment. Rahner combined a Thomistic emphasis on habitual grace with an existentialist understanding of conscious but pre-conceptual self-giving. And this allowed him to see in

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<sup>65</sup> Cf *1Timothy* 2: 3-6.

faithful members of other religions those who had accepted the grace of God and gained a justifying self-transcendence. Nor was their faith peripheral to this. Rather, it must be a vehicle of this grace since human beings are historical, social beings: the religions are concretisations of the grace. Christianity is not the fulfilment of this movement of self-transcendence, but the explicitation of it. Theoretically those who refused such explicitation and held on to their own religion could be understood as refusing the grace. But we would never be able to say with confidence that any one person had truly refused the grace made explicit in Christian teaching. There remain problems in Rahner's account, and in it the faiths are incomplete vehicles of truth, theoretically destined to drop away. Yet this goes beyond a theology of fulfilment by allowing salvific importance to the faiths, an importance which, this vision acknowledges, in practice continues, while it still maintains the uniqueness of Christ and the fullness of Christianity. It also was reflected in the documents of Vatican 2.

The Second Vatican Council has been described by Jacques Dupuis as "the first council in the two-thousand-year history of church councils to speak positively of the religions".<sup>66</sup> The Council aimed to offer a place for understanding people of other religions, and Pope Paul VI used the word 'dialogue' (*colloquium*) in the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964).<sup>67</sup> In speaking in this way, it is clear that even the Council did not expect understanding to stay still, but rather was opening up an avenue for further thought. At the same time, as Jacques Dupuis admitted (pointing up the contrast with his own thinking), the Council had no thought to suggest a lasting significance to the religions.

### SHANTIVANAM<sup>68</sup>

When Jules Monchanin (1895–1957) and Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktananda) (1910-1973) founded Shantivanam ashram in Tamil Nadu in 1948 it was the possibility of a theology of fulfilment which underpinned their work and which made the intention of using Indian writings, symbols and practices to adapt the Benedictine tradition to Indian culture so compelling. Tamils would learn of the gospel in forms that they could appreciate and find

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<sup>66</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: from Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman (London: DLT, 2002), p. 258.

<sup>67</sup> Discussed in Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 2002, pp. 66-67.

<sup>68</sup> See Shirley du Boulay, *The Cave of the Heart: the Life of Swami Abhishiktananda* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2005) and J. G. Weber ed. and trans., *In Quest of the Absolute; the Life and Works of Jules Monchanin* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1977).

their deepest aspirations met. Had India been drawn to acosmism? Then through the life of Shantivanam, Indians would find, in an expression that they could recognise, that acosmism informs Christian life. And in Christian monastic contemplation of the Trinity Indians would find the fullness of their own advaitic wisdom. This approach did not seem like a European imposition; the love of Hindu wisdom that held both men prevented such a thought. They hoped to claim the seed-bed of oriental religious wisdom for the Catholic faith.

It was challenging to the Church of that era, and personally challenging for both men. They recognised that the use of terms from another faith tradition would alter, perhaps by expanding, the understanding of elements in traditional Christian theology, not least the doctrine of God, especially of the Trinity. Their experience helped to shape the debate in Europe and eventually to initiate policies of adaptation in the Church's mission fields. It was this hope that found its finest expression in *Saccidananda*, Abhishiktananda's book on advaita and the contemplation of the Trinity, which drew on their joint reflection and the earlier thinking of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1867-1901).<sup>69</sup> It argued that the reality of the experience of advaitin non-duality could be transcended by the revelation of differentiation-in-unity in the God of Jesus Christ. Contemplation of the Trinity fulfilled the aspirations of the sannyasi in a hitherto unlooked-for way.

This was also the case in the first edition of *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, published in 1964, by their friend Raimundo Panikkar. Panikkar read a classic text from the Brahma Sutra: "Whence the origin etcetera of this", and discovered in it a principle he termed 'cosmotheandric' and which he found secured in the mystery of Christ. Is the Christian act of identifying Christ with Jesus the son of Mary a stumbling block? Not if Christians realise that this is an 'identifying identity', not a 'differentiating identity'. Hinduism is a Christianity in potency; it already has a Christian seed.<sup>70</sup> These are not works of apologetics, directed to Hindus. They are theological arguments designed to convince Christians. But to convince Christians of what? Not so much that in Christ is all the fullness of God; Christians did not need convincing of that. Rather Abhishiktananda and Panikkar sought to convince Christians that the things of God could be discovered in the faiths, that Christ could be discovered in the faiths. And this logic had a dynamic different to that of the fulfilment

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<sup>69</sup> Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1974).

<sup>70</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), p. 59.

theory it purported to expound. It made of the faiths not something incidental to the truth of the gospel hidden within their ways, but each a unique vehicle of it. But unlike Rahner who could hold the line with such a thought, for Monchanin and Abhishiktananda and for Panikkar, all of them in daily contact with people of other faiths, these were an intuition and a logic which were to lead to questioning, to new theological speculation and to a parting of the ways.

Both Monchanin and Abhishiktananda came to reject fulfilment theology. Both came to see the Indian non-duality of advaita as an abyss that admits of no second. For Monchanin this abyss was a danger, a distraction from the mystery of God. Hinduism would need to reject its ātman-brāhman equation and be resurrected as Christian. Or, using metaphors from the natural sciences, he wrote that there should be a reversion to a virgin point in Indian religious experience at which the nucleus of the gospel would be inserted and Indian civilisation undergo a mutation to a new spiritual reality.<sup>71</sup> There is still here a welcome for what is true in all that lies outside the Church: if India is to be re-thought as Christian, then it is also the case that Christianity needs India to understand itself. Indeed it may be because Monchanin takes Hinduism seriously as a vehicle of grace that he thus argues for its transformation rather than anticipating its falling away. But this is still not a return to fulfilment: it is not that the Christian gospel will fulfil aspirations to God already present in an error-strewn religion. Rather it is that Hindus must allow the gospel radically to purify their aspirations and the religion which is the necessary vehicle of those aspirations if they are to share in the complete reality of the pleroma, the fullness of Christ. Monchanin allows less hope of fulfilment through another faith as it stands, but he makes a significant move towards recognising that truth cannot be separated from the symbolic clothes in which it comes. When India comes to believe, it will be through a Hinduism purified by the gospel of Jesus Christ not through a Christianity which has cast out its predecessor but kept those clothes. This Monchanin believed and at times despaired of, as he understood the force of Hinduism in its integrity.

Abhishiktananda moved in another direction. He could never deny the truth of advaita. But all attempts, as in *Saccidananda*, to relativise this truth in the terms of a more complete truth, or even to express this truth in any way that the expression might be confused with the truth in itself, he came to see as an empty conceptualising and, worse, as false. At the

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<sup>71</sup> Jules Monchanin, 'Christianization of Oriental Cultures' in J. G. Weber, pp. 123-125.

same time he could not turn from the symbol of Christ. And so he came consciously to live most fully in two modes, the freedom of non-conceptual advaitin experience and the freedom for embracing religious symbols. At times he found this life between 'two banks of the river',<sup>72</sup> the world of manifestation and the world of the unmanifest Absolute, excruciating. But in his final months he gained an awareness that seemed tantalisingly to include some reconciliation between these two. Abhishiktananda came to see in the forming of loving community, with the symbols this entails, an experience of non-duality that encompasses the sannyasi's advaitin practice. "I think that this duality between advaita and dvaita is precisely our mistake," he wrote, and again, speaking of people who live simply but deeply the life of loving union that Jesus taught, Abhishiktananda wrote, "in the absoluteness of their self-giving to God and the neighbour, the non-dual Absolute is found and lived with far greater truth than in Vedantin speculations."<sup>73</sup>

#### THE JOURNEY OF RAIMUNDO PANIKKAR (1918-2010)

However, incommensurability would always be one potential response to recognising two authenticities, though few have chosen to live this incommensurability as Abhishiktananda did. In 1981 Raimundo Panikkar republished *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.<sup>74</sup> His thinking had changed; had become, as he said himself, much more radical. No longer is Christ implicit in classical Hindu texts: indeed, if he is unknown in Hinduism, this Christ is even more so in Christianity. Christians cannot conflate the accidents of history, even the life of Jesus of Nazareth, with what is ultimate which must necessarily be acosmic. There is no further mention of 'identifying identity'.

His thought continued to develop. In *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978),<sup>75</sup> Panikkar drew a distinction between 'faith' and our belief systems. He posited a human unity in faith, an existential reality and "constitutive human dimension" in connection to the transcendent as the ultimate purpose of religions. Differences are to be located in our belief-systems. We should take the relativity of our beliefs seriously in contrast to any reality-avoiding relativism, which would equate all beliefs. But we may expect a certain dynamic

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<sup>72</sup> See for example the title of a collection of the essays of Abhishiktananda, *The Further Shore* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1975).

<sup>73</sup> James Stuart, *Swami Abhishiktananda: His life told through his letters* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1995) pp. 293-4. Letter of 12. 4. 73.

<sup>74</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, revised and enlarged edn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981).

<sup>75</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

equivalence between the religions as belief-systems. We are called to a dialogue in which we do not bracket our beliefs but rather honestly acknowledge their differences, bring them into question and allow them potentially to be altered. Future expression of human unity depends upon religious growth, the transformation of all belief-systems. It is this transformative growth in belief-systems which Panikkar advocated and he said that it is likely to come from an intrareligious dialogue, i.e. internal for each person, as we recognise that we each have experiences in more than one religion, as did Panikkar's friend and partner in theological conversation, Abhishiktananda.

By 1988, in *The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges*,<sup>76</sup> Panikkar was less sanguine about this dynamic equivalence between the belief-systems. For example the 'christic principle', which Panikkar had earlier detected in all religion, he came to understand to be a principle for Christians alone. The religions as belief-systems remain incommensurate. But our meeting place continues to be our existential capacity to participate in reality. And the convention for meeting at this place is a refusal to regard any formulation of faith as ultimate. Our understanding must remain dynamic with the potential for transcendence.

Monchanin, Abhishiktananda and Panikkar all go beyond Rahner's characterisation of other faiths as concretisations of a natural grace and which are therefore passing phenomena, ultimately defective, that have nothing to offer to the completeness of Christian revelation. Each sees in other faiths new and therefore necessary disclosures of reality. For all three, the advaitin experience of Indian wisdom is the irreducible instance, although for Monchanin, it is to be re-conceptualised, almost *ab initio*. For Panikkar, the existence of other faiths requires the re-conceptualisation of each faith. For Abhishiktananda, it is the programme of conceptualisation which is brought into question.

Having considered something of the range of response that is possible to the question whether God reveals Godself through the symbols and practices of the faiths, the remainder of this chapter will examine in greater depth the writings of two recent theologians. Each has absorbed the lessons of those discussed above and each seeks to further Christian understanding of a plural world while maintaining Christian doctrine. They can be taken as representative of those in the van of Christian thinking on the role of other

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<sup>76</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, 'The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges'. In J. Hick and P.F. Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM, 1988), pp.89-116.



faiths in God's economy. Each holds that the beliefs and practices both of Christianity and of other faiths are not relative but will continue to have significance. They differ as to how they reconcile these and therefore as to where the significance of other faiths lies for Christians. The thinking of each is to be taken as a whole, but for the purposes of this thesis there are also particular questions to put to them. How willing are they to see other faiths as bearers of a call to Christians also? Does this come from the mere existence of other faiths or from the practices and symbols specific to each? What resources in Christian thinking allow for this? And how does each see Christian theology – and living – being affected?

Underlying these questions are certain working assumptions. One is that the faiths are not lesser lights to be absorbed, neither by orthodox Christianity nor by a yet-to-be-realised universal religion that places scant value on the concrete instances of religious belief and practice. Another with opposite thrust is that the faiths are not hermetically sealed, as people and communities are not. But to assume this is not to posit an unlimited plasticity to any religion, even to those whose inner dynamic most encourages blending, as some aspects of Buddhism and of Shintō give the impression of doing. Rather than absorption or inviolable separation, the assumption, borne out by the witnesses we have heard so far in this study, is that there is something good in the diversity of faiths and something of beauty. This is not the equivalent of that argument for conserving bio-diversity which predicts we shall find some future use for a percentage of what is distinct. If there is value in diversity of faiths it must for a Christian rest upon an expectation that God wills such a rich spectrum of human religious believing as in itself a means of grace. They exist in their diversity not for our use, but as a call for us to know God.

## **6. Jacques Dupuis (1923-2004)**

The first of these two theologians is Jacques Dupuis. He has his place in the late twentieth century among those Christian theologians who responded to a variegated world by taking context seriously. And in his case the context again was India; he was an associate of both Panikkar and Abhishiktananda. Yet he was not a contextual theologian. His aim was to write a universal theology of religions, and he drew on universal authorities, on legitimate developments of conciliar thought, on the theology of the Holy Spirit of John Paul II, and on

post-conciliar documents defining dialogue as belonging to mission and as being distinct from proclamation.<sup>77</sup> In all this Dupuis referred to central Christian doctrines of trinitarian and christological thought, in particular locating his theology of religions within the currently expanding theologies of trinitarian and pneumatological Christology. Dupuis was a member of the Society of Jesus, of a generation influenced by Karl Rahner and by existentialism; he wrote in the light of the Second Vatican Council, and was ready to extrapolate from its intuitions. His considered understanding is set out in two works, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* published in English in 1997 and *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* published in English in 2002.<sup>78</sup> This latter has a dual purpose: a slimmer volume originally designed to bring Dupuis' vision to a wider audience, its writing became bound up with the need to respond to Vatican criticisms of his earlier work.

Dupuis wrote his theology of religions, as many others have done, within the framework of three fundamental perspectives linked with three basic positions: ecclesiocentric exclusivism; Christocentric inclusivism and theocentric pluralism. But for Dupuis, it is the perspective or paradigm, that which is at the centre, which commands his vision, rather than the more slippery category of positions to be adopted. Christ is at the centre. And Christ is not to be separated in our theology from God: there can be no division between Christocentrism and theocentrism. Likewise Dupuis dismisses recent attempts to create a space for the faiths by dividing Jesus Christ from the Word ("logocentrism") and by dividing Jesus Christ from the Spirit ("pneumatocentrism"). They refer back and forth to one another in a single divine economy of salvation.<sup>79</sup> As for ecclesiocentrism, the Church should never have put itself at the centre and its de-centring is a fruit of interacting in a plural world.<sup>80</sup> Later he takes some trouble to explain the true relation of the Church to salvation as he apprehends it. Dupuis is not prepared to surrender the term 'pluralism' to those such as John Hick and Paul Knitter who would relativise the faiths before some greater reality; he draws a line between their "neutral and indifferent" pluralism and his

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<sup>77</sup> Principally *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Rome: The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1991).

<sup>78</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997); Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: from Confrontation to Dialogue*.

<sup>79</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 82.

<sup>80</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 77.

own “inclusive pluralism”.<sup>81</sup> The god whom their theocentrism envisages is not the God of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>82</sup> Jesus Christ is not merely normative but constitutively unique for our salvation.

#### WORD AND SPIRIT

In his pluralism, Dupuis himself wishes to go further than Rahner, whose experience was shaped by Europe, not India. Dupuis makes room for the salvific action of God beyond the confines of the Church in the religions. He notes that God’s covenant with the nations, made to Noah (*Genesis* 9: 1-17) has not been revoked. And he suggests two ways in which this covenant is still being fulfilled (corresponding to the way God saves “with two hands” borrowing the expression of St. Irenaeus). One is the Word, from the Logos theology of the Fourth Gospel and the early Fathers. So Dupuis distinguishes the action of the Word before the Incarnation, the action of the Word incarnate (either in the state of kenosis or the glorified state) and the perduring action of the Word as such. Jesus Christ in his (necessarily limited) human nature, even now glorified, cannot exhaust the Word himself<sup>83</sup> and what of the Word is not seen in Jesus Christ may be known through the faiths of the world. So Dupuis draws on two natures Christology to undergird his pluralist inclusivism.

The other ‘hand of God’ is the Holy Spirit. In speaking of the Holy Spirit in relation to the religions Dupuis draws on the teaching of Pope John Paul II where he sees this teaching going beyond what the Council could affirm. The frequent text is *John* 3: 8: “The Spirit blows where he wills”. Dupuis acknowledges that the Spirit in scripture is often termed “the Spirit of Christ”. This, he writes, usually refers to the communication of the Spirit made by the risen Christ, making others children of the Father through the Son in his risen humanity. But a more frequent appellation is “the Spirit of God” and Dupuis understands the Spirit so named as exercising saving action beyond the confines of the Church. He emphasises the distinctiveness of the Person and activity of the Spirit found in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. So the perduring Word and the Spirit of God are responsible for a saving function of the faiths in “communicating to their adherents the offer of God’s grace and salvation and in giving expression to their positive response to God’s gracious self-gift.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 253.

<sup>82</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 79.

<sup>83</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 159.

<sup>84</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 190.

## THE CHURCH AND THE REIGN OF GOD

What, then, can be said of the universal significance of Jesus Christ and his Church? Dupuis is careful to rule out-of-court any use of the term 'absolute' which does not refer to God in his unknowable totality. But this does not mean anything goes. The fullness of God is in Jesus Christ, as it is written in *Colossians* 1:19. Yet we should realise that the fullness of revelation is "a qualitative rather than a quantitative fullness".<sup>85</sup> This is once again because of the necessarily limited human nature of Jesus which must remain so even after his transhistoricising glorification at the Resurrection and Ascension. Jesus Christ is sign for us: the perfect sign to which all others refer, but nevertheless belonging to the order of symbol. Jesus Christ is the human face of God. And the Church is a derived mystery, the enduring sign of the sign. The universal applicability of these signs is inextricably bound up with their particularity: Jesus Christ and his Church have universal applicability just because they perfectly reveal under the conditions of history the God who is not bounded by them.

And for a Church that might claim absolute significance in God's plan of salvation Dupuis substitutes the term 'Reign of God', developing the 'Kingdom of God' theology of Vatican 2. All may find their salvation realised in the eschatological Reign, which is already present in part in history. This presence of the Reign in history is known through the life of Jesus Christ and in the Church but is also present though unknown in the lives of loving members of different faiths.

And it is so present through their religious practices and beliefs. Human beings develop socially, contextually, and so it is not despite but in their religions that they experience "seeds of the Word", drawing them on to God. Other faiths are to be understood as salvific for their members and this just because God is the trinitarian God who may act in distinct ways which yet remain perfectly self-identical and who shows no partiality but wills that all be saved. The faiths are in God's providence. For Dupuis to suggest that it is not despite but in their religions that people of different faiths experience "seeds of the Word" was no more than Karl Rahner had said. But in contrast to Rahner's existentialist concentration on what is always transcendentally true, Dupuis' eschatological orientation to the Reign of God as absolute allowed him to go further than this. He did not shrink from suggesting a lasting salvific significance to the faiths. Members who practise their religion sincerely and offer acts of charity are prompted by the Logos and the Spirit of God working through their

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<sup>85</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 131.

religions to do so to their salvation. And the necessity for the Church is of limited scope. He quotes Jerome Theisen: “The Church mirrors, articulates and makes intelligible the process of salvation that is being accomplished anywhere in the world”.<sup>86</sup> For Dupuis, this is something less of a claim on others than Rahner’s account of the Church as the explicitation of God’s salvific purpose, if only because the Church is not yet what she is to become. In Dupuis’ theology both Church and the other religions point towards the universal Reign of God at the end of time. To connect Church and religions he quotes conciliar documents that speak of being ‘oriented’ (or ‘ordained’) to Christ and the Church,<sup>87</sup> but in doing so he effectively uses such accounts, not to show the affinity of the religions toward Christianity as was their original intention, but to secure space for the religions to enjoy their own distinctive validity within God’s plan of salvation. *Christianity and the Religions* is written using a neat footwork to neutralise those official documents which attempt to set boundaries and in defence of an openness to different faiths in which Christians may expect to find their God in the face of the other.

Having followed Jacques Dupuis this far, are we able to say whether he is a helpful guide to those Western Christians seeking a way to recognise the presence of the God of Jesus Christ in the faith and practices of other religions? The theology of Dupuis is not available as an official guide, as he doubtless hoped that it could be. The Vatican declaration *Dominus Iesus* of 2000 and the notification given in 2001 to *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* have prevented that.<sup>88</sup> But his attempt at this, entailing as it does the effort to judge it, must, as he desired, shift the debate onto the ground of whether “other religious traditions have by themselves a positive significance in the divine plan for humanity”, a pluralism *de principio*.<sup>89</sup> Dupuis insists that God’s covenant is with all humanity, indeed, all creation. The God of Dupuis is stranger, more omnipresent, than we have cared to think. We may meet him in the furthest flung and most unlikely of places. We cannot reduce him

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<sup>86</sup> Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 216, quoting from Jerome P. Theisen, *The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation* (Collegeville MN: St. John’s University Press, 1976), p. 134.

<sup>87</sup> But translated as ‘related’ in e.g. *Lumen Gentium* 16: “those who have not yet received the gospel are ordained, in various ways, to the People of God” in Flannery, p. 367.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church’ (Rome: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2000).

‘Notification of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding the book *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J.’ (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000).

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 161.

to our thoughts about him or set limits to his grace. At the same time as Christians we shall never find what we have known of God in Jesus Christ to be falsified. The Christ we already know is the fullness of the revelation of God; yet we have hardly begun to know God's fullness. It is a theology of 'already' and 'not yet', a qualitative already and a quantitative not yet, where the qualitative is the punctual event of the Logos in history and the quantitative is all the many events of the Logos in all of history. In making this distinction, Dupuis casts the Church as interpreter of this future, not its arbiter, and so allows different faiths to play their part. Our call is one to dialogue, which he characterised as one of 'mutual asymmetrical complementarity', the practice of which would necessarily be inductive. All of this vision carries much potential. Dupuis' suggestion is that just such a theology of religions may be within God's will for his people in our day.

#### ASSESSING DUPUIS' CHRISTOLOGY

But there are ways in which it fails to deliver what it promises, and one of these may be Dupuis' central plank of a trinitarian and pneumatological Christology. If there are resources in Christian thinking for this dialogue and for recognising the presence of the God of Jesus Christ in different faiths, then wherever else they are to be found, they must also be present in our Christology. This was an important area of concern to the curia. The notification included the phrase: "it is erroneous to hold that such elements of truth and goodness [as exist in other religions], or some of them, do not derive ultimately from the source-mediation of Jesus Christ".<sup>90</sup> But for Dupuis these good elements are to be associated, not with the particularities of the Word incarnate, but with the perduring Word. Dupuis has to make this distinction because he wants to make room for God acting in unknown ways and at the same time he insists on the knowability of Jesus Christ; we recognise him in his acts.

In making space for the activity of God outside the boundaries of Christianity, does Dupuis drive too great a wedge between the seemingly necessarily limited humanity of Jesus and the eternal Word? Is the Word not eternally the transhistoric glorified Christ, the human nature not confused with but equally not divided from the divine? May it be that the pre-incarnate Word and the Word as such are in no way to be distinguished in their eternal being from the risen Christ, so that any operation of the Word wears a human face? And further it may be asked whether Dupuis rightly interprets Logos-Christology, when he

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<sup>90</sup> 'Notification', paragraph 4.

writes of the Logos without reference to the Johannine narrative to which this name is attached as the interpretive key. Likewise Dupuis' account of the Spirit, in which he distinguishes the functions of the Spirit by the terms 'Spirit of Christ' and 'Spirit of God', may place too great a distance between the persons of the Trinity. The Spirit indeed blows where he wills but as he does so there will be no un-Christlikeness in him. And Dupuis, when he refers to God and to the Father, can use these terms interchangeably. In this he follows common Christian practice, but it can serve to hide the degree to which the work of the God who is Trinity is always touched with the humanity of Christ Jesus.

Dupuis' trinitarian and pneumatological Christology serves him in creating space to understand God as working also outside the bounds of the Church. But in making such a distinction of functions, Dupuis has to struggle to keep touch with the person of Jesus Christ. He does so by looking for Christlikeness in other religions and it is at this point that we find his creative Christology in practice constrains Dupuis in the openness with which he approaches other religions and compromises his avowed inductive method. For example he writes: whereas

other religious traditions can find, and are destined to find, in the Christ event their fullness of meaning - but without being absorbed or dispossessed - the reverse is not true; God's self-manifestation and self-giving in Jesus Christ are not in need of a true completion by other traditions.<sup>91</sup>

Such an expectation fits well within orthodox Christian thinking and may seem to be an inescapable implication of a christocentric basis for any Christian theology of religions. But this expectation carries with it the danger of replacing an intended inductive method with an inner drive towards *a priori* deduction; as, for example, when Dupuis is on the lookout for the practice of agapeic love in the faiths as a mark of the work of the God of Jesus Christ.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, despite Dupuis' disclaimer recognising that members of other faiths will understand different ultimate realities, the Christian is to be alert to the activity of the God of Jesus Christ when encountering the religions. And the religions "must continually be converted to God and his Reign".<sup>93</sup> So we find that Dupuis' Christology becomes a measure that sets limits to the understanding of, and perhaps acceptance of, the difference of another faith rather than the encouragement to a fuller humanity he intends, one patient

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<sup>91</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 257.

<sup>92</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 190ff.

<sup>93</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 194.

with eschatological hope. In contrast to such a Christology, we can be bold to say that if the person of Jesus Christ is always present where God is at work, then we may not be afraid to wander in the far lands. If our acts of recognising the risen Christ continue to occur through the initiative of grace, then we may 'pass over' into the world view of the other, certainly without bracketing our faith,<sup>94</sup> but also without looking over our shoulder to check the way we have come against a list of Christian markers, in order to find out for ourselves whether we have yet reached the end point. God, we may trust, will reveal our Saviour to us at the right time.

This tendency in Dupuis' Christology to provide limits by which to assess other faiths is compounded by the centrality he gives to salvation as the end of religion. Other faiths are to be valued as far as they can be understood to be salvific for their members and Dupuis offers a measuring-line of "saving values",<sup>95</sup> one calibrated to an *a priori* Christian understanding. But is this an orientation those members would own? If not, who is to say that they should do so? Here also we are asking whether such an *a priori* Christian standard should be privileged as we come through dialogue to seek to understand anew and more fully the work of the God of Jesus Christ. If, as Dupuis says, 'dynamic equivalence' between the religions is not to be assumed in dialogue,<sup>96</sup> if the religions are to hold their own integrity, must they not be allowed to define their ends also? Dupuis, however, is quick to dismiss this with the comment that such a 'pluralism of orientation', championed in the thinking of S. Mark Heim,<sup>97</sup> is "scarcely compatible with Christian tradition".<sup>98</sup>

#### MUTUAL ASYMMETRICAL COMPLEMENTARITY?

What then of Dupuis' helpful characterising of good dialogue as marked by 'mutual asymmetrical complementarity', as noted above? Dupuis contends there is 'complementarity' because the one God is at work in different ways, so that encountering the religions through dialogue can purify Christian theological understanding. The work of God in the faiths is good not only for their members but also for Christians. This is an underdeveloped side to Dupuis' argument.<sup>99</sup> It is 'mutual' because both may learn; there is

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<sup>94</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 228.

<sup>95</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 190.

<sup>96</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 234.

<sup>97</sup> For whose theology, see below, pp. 68-77.

<sup>98</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 182.

<sup>99</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 257.



to be no absorbing or cancelling of the other. And at the same time it is 'asymmetrical' because Jesus Christ is the punctual event of the Logos in history and the only such punctual event, the one to which all other works of God are oriented. Jesus Christ is always the qualitative fullness of God's meaning, where the quantitative fullness will be all the many events of the Logos in all of history. Dupuis is surely right to introduce this term 'asymmetrical'. To suggest otherwise, that dialogue will necessarily reveal equivalence between the partners, would be to assume that we know the sum of the dialogue before it is begun. Rather, the method is to be inductive; God will reveal Godself through this praxis. However, 'asymmetrical' for Dupuis also means that the proper end of the dialogue is a common conversion to the God of Jesus Christ.<sup>100</sup>

But it may be questioned whether Dupuis' theology achieves such a mark. Dupuis champions an inductive method for any theology of religions, a method which sits easily with his emphasis on the role of experience. But his writing is almost entirely devoid of the influence, language and imagination of the faiths. In fact Dupuis does not demonstrate a concern to practise a theology of religions as he outlines it. He wants to rest dialogue on what Christians already believe of the character of God. The method is deductive and the dialogue partners whose queries have most formed his work are professional theologians and the curia. So it becomes difficult to gain a sense of the value of Dupuis' vision of the relation of Christianity and the religions. His writing in *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* places its argument entirely within the discourse of the one faith, as witnessed by the emphasis on looking for marks of the Christ we already know and on salvation as the common end of all religions. We can agree with Dupuis that mutuality may be asymmetrical, but the asymmetry may also be allowed to be mutual.

In summary, Dupuis has produced a theology of enormous worth. Its starting point is a steady valuing of the human experiences of religious believing, acting and thinking. Such valuing, Dupuis argues, rests not on being impressed by human endeavour, but derives from a right understanding of God. The God who in Jesus Christ reveals Godself as knitting together the eternal and the temporal, the divine and the human, discloses fullness in the particular and, in doing so, God's activity in all particularities. Such a God has made irrevocable covenants with all the people and indeed with all creation. And Dupuis issues a call the Church, to those who can name this God, to witness not to the name only but in all

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<sup>100</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, p. 234.

circumstances to the reality of God's activity. The vocation of the Church is to affirm across all cultures and faiths human response to the active grace of God, that all may come to benefit from the fullness of God's Reign. It is a theology of religions which encourages humility and thankfulness; it combines a sharp sense of religious identity with an expansive welcome to the unknown. It holds promise. But to the extent Dupuis was able to develop it before his death in 2004, it fails fully to carry through its agenda. It rests on a weakened and defensive Christology. And it shows a tendency to prefer *a priori* theological certainty to attentiveness to the specificity of other religions, especially in the matter of the meaning of the ends of the religions. This last is crucial, because the dynamism and integrity of a religion depend on the orientation to its end, as we shall see when we turn presently to the second of these two contemporary inclusivists theologians, S. Mark Heim. But we may welcome from Jacques Dupuis, who holds to the undiminished orthodoxy of a faith in Jesus Christ as the qualitative fullness of God's meaning, the insistence that other faiths are bearers of revelation, including to Christians. And also we can welcome the theological prominence he gives to God's covenants and to an eschatology that firmly refuses to allow us to make any proximate truth absolute. And finally we can bear away from this engagement with his thought the phrase 'mutual asymmetrical complementarity', and the challenge to pursue a dialogue marked by this.

## 7. S. Mark Heim

S. Mark Heim equally seeks to hold an orthodox Christian doctrine while welcoming different faiths.<sup>101</sup> In his case, this welcome extends to the plurality of stated religious ends, an abundance that he links with the fullness, *pleroma*, of God, as seen in the title of his book on the subject, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*. Heim too has experience of India. He is a Baptist pastor and Professor at Andover Newton Theological School in Massachusetts. This is a background of independent thought and of struggles between trinitarian and unitarian beliefs which fits well with the boldness of his reinterpretation of Christian theological tradition.

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<sup>101</sup> See S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1995); S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: a Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

## ENDS

Central to Heim's thesis is the understanding that the accounts which religions give of their own ends have their own integrity. This includes Christian accounts of salvation. Salvation is not a catch-all term for any desirable human destiny. Both John Hick and Jacques Dupuis from their different perspectives are willing to link salvation/liberation as two sides of the one coin: the meaning ultimately is one. For Hick this meaning is change from self-centredness to the Real; for Dupuis it embraces the Christian concept of freedom for love and a share in the divine life: "the combined notion is easily applicable to diverse traditions, no matter how different their respective concepts."<sup>102</sup> Heim maintains, in distinction to this, that not every change is the same and that the Christian understanding of love has a particular value: we know what love is by the love God showed us in Christ Jesus. Heim reserves the term 'salvation' for that communion with the triune God for which Christians long, a communion we have through Jesus Christ. "Communion is the way Christ saves, and it is the salvation that results."<sup>103</sup> This communion as such is necessarily predicated on what is personal and what continues to be differentiated. Such an extrapolation of the personal and of difference would be anathema to the Vedānta of Śaṅkara, to name but one tradition. There is no prima facie reason to suppose that Buddhist nirvāṇa or advaitic experience of the union of ātman with brāhman correspond to salvation in Jesus Christ.

Correspondence rather is between a way and its intended end. So the Muslim who seeks perfect obedience to Allah will already know something of this in her practice. The sannyasi expecting advaita will realise a certain non-duality in the pattern of his living. The purpose of the religious way which we encounter is to lead to its end, not somewhere else. And so it is fitting that we take these ends seriously. This is a simple observation by Heim. It derives from giving due respect to the other person. But its implications are profound. It invites Christians to consider whether such variant human ends may exist and, following from this, whether these ends and the religious ways that lead to them are of God's providence. If they are, have we understood aright the God with whom we have to do and the nature of the salvation we seek? And if Heim's observation is correct, it has two immediate consequences. It allows Christians to approach another faith in its integrity, rather than being obliged to re-write that faith's objective, understanding it as code for a different, hidden Christian purpose. And it requires Christians to face afresh the particularity of

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<sup>102</sup> Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, pp. 309 and 306.

<sup>103</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 53.

salvation in Jesus Christ. As Heim insists, we have a real choice to make about the destiny for which we hope.

#### KNOWING THE DIVINE TRINITY

Heim's thesis is underpinned by insights from his doctrines of the Trinity, of creation and of the nature of human beings. And it makes space for potentially creative encounter between people of differing faith traditions. Asking whether ends other than salvation may also be perceived as good, that is, understood as deriving from the triune God, he answers with an emphatic and intriguing 'yes'. Heim's trinitarian understanding draws on the work of Ninian Smart and Steven Konstantin.<sup>104</sup> Rather than distinguish human relations with the triune God according to which Person of the Trinity is most to the fore, this thinking reflects Eastern Orthodox emphases on perichoresis, and the understanding of communion rather than ontological substance as the essence or nature of God. With this perspective, Heim suggests human beings may recognise and cultivate response to what of God is impersonal, the flux of the relations of the divine Persons and the self-contraction which allows the creation its integrity. Such a response may prompt Buddhist awareness of emptiness: as in Heim's citation of Panikkar's attribution of kenosis to the Father who makes way for the Son.<sup>105</sup> And response to what of God is "anonymous immanence", sustaining the cosmos, may lie behind Hindu awareness of Brahman, the one unshakeable reality pervading all things.<sup>106</sup> Or, Heim continues, a human culture could respond not so much to the relating of the three divine Persons but to the single will or common 'I' of the Trinity and Heim sees in Islam such a response.<sup>107</sup> These responses would be real and good as responding to God. And they would shape the human culture and the individual persons formed by that culture in aspects of the likeness of God. And Heim contends that Christians, made aware by revelation of the character of God as communion of Persons, seek just such a likeness, one of personal communion.

Christians naturally understand the Christian end of personal communion as an appreciation of reality fuller than those of other religions. But members of other faiths equally naturally view their own insight as a more satisfactory account of reality and see in

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<sup>104</sup> Ninian Smart and Steven Konstantin, *Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991).

<sup>105</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 187.

<sup>106</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 189.

<sup>107</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 193.

any Christian distinction of Persons a lower level of understanding. Heim goes a step further than this to suggest that the Christian account does greater justice to the range of religious beliefs in that it can accept the ends of other faiths as corresponding with reality, whereas members of other faiths are more likely to place the religions into a hierarchy of beliefs, the lower not corresponding to any reality in themselves but having merely a propaedeutic value.<sup>108</sup> Also, the whole thesis establishes a place for dialogue (at least from the Christian side): what we can learn from other faiths has reality in that it concerns the reality of the triune God. Other faiths are likely to have insights that escape Christians: Heim cites Buddhist analytical sophistication and existential focus.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore the thesis secures a place for witness and conversion: there remains a real choice to be made.

With regard to God's act of creating, Heim notes that God chooses to create beings with the capacity to respond. Enabling this capacity requires from God a certain reserve or withdrawal so that the will of the creature is not overwhelmed by the will of the Creator. And when should this withdrawal end? The personal reality of the creature and hence the creature's capacity to realise the image of God by responding with love would seem to require a continued distinction between the will of the creature and the will of the Creator. In other words, the efficacy of God's will always continues to depend on the creature's capacity to choose, which must imply the possibility of choosing an end other than salvation. God's attitude to us and our response "condition each other reciprocally if asymmetrically."<sup>110</sup> And if the creature chooses another end, Heim asks, will the creature's loving Father refuse it? "Every relation with God that is sought is fulfilled. Everything is offered. Nothing is denied."<sup>111</sup> We can note that Heim uses the same term 'asymmetrical' as Jacques Dupuis, but whereas in Dupuis it is characteristically the relations between the faiths which are asymmetrical, for Heim the term primarily refers to the relations of God and human beings. And Heim's bold thinking shows when he suggests that the exercise of human will can in some sense 'condition' God.

God gives space for human development, and Heim's reading of human nature is that we become what we do. So for example, the aim of the practice of Buddhism is to form a human being in the mindfulness of nirvāṇa. A Buddhist who has serenely accepted the

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<sup>108</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 41.

<sup>109</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 219.

<sup>110</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 75.

<sup>111</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 256.

ultimate reality of nothingness, once he has awoken to this, has reached the perfection of his way of living life. To will a different perfection, to welcome that communion among differentiated persons which is salvation in Christ for example, would require that he take a step back and follow a different path. But could he? As Heim has stressed, the appearance of other ends, other ways, could only be interpreted as illusory. To take such a step would be to become someone other. And, returning to Heim's doctrine of the Trinity sketched above, each perfection participates in a truth of the God who is Trinity: each is real.

But this is not quite the full story. In a renewed natural theology, Heim asserts that the deck of life is stacked. It is stacked in favour of the realisation of our desires. It is stacked further in favour of the realisation of a religious end that fulfils a true relation with God. But further still, it is stacked in favour of salvation in that since "each dimension of relation with God is rooted in the trinitarian nature, any particular connection with the triune life can flow increasingly and ultimately into that communion with all the dimensions of the triune God which constitute salvation."<sup>112</sup> If a Muslim is in relation with the unity of will known to the triune persons, then that relation with the unity of will can flow increasingly to communion with all the dimensions. This is not likely to be a description of the end of Islam that Muslims would be happy to accept. Nevertheless, Heim argues, there are some suggestions in the history of Islam which can be read in this way, in particular various Sufi understandings of what constitute the relationship of obedience to Allah.<sup>113</sup> This gives some strength to Heim's insistence that his thesis provides reason for "thick description and careful attention" on the part of Christian theology to the study of other faiths.<sup>114</sup>

#### ANSWERING JACQUES DUPUIS

Jacques Dupuis strongly criticised the orthodoxy of Heim's thesis, writing: "What is at stake here for Christian belief is not merely the efficacy of God's will to save. It is, even more profoundly, the unity of the human race".<sup>115</sup> Heim does not tackle these points directly, but his thought gives indications as to what answers may be mounted.

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<sup>112</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>113</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 237. But note the insistence: "this does not mean that Islam and Christianity do not present real alternatives." Cf. Kenneth Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian: a Question of Response* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), chapter 8.

<sup>114</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 291.

<sup>115</sup> Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 312.

“What is at stake here for Christian belief is ... the efficacy of God’s will to save”. Does Heim’s thesis undermine our confidence in this efficacy? Scripture paints more than one picture of what shall be. Heim attempts to hold fast to two biblical strands: the one that witnesses to God’s universal salvific will and the one that in seeming contradiction witnesses to different ends according to the choices we make. Rather than attempt to reconcile these, Heim recommends what he terms a stereoscopic imagination. If God’s grace can be understood to be operative in either of these ways, then we need to keep both before us to see God’s grace in 3-D. And, as Heim justly points out, his thesis precludes neither the views of those who believe some remain excluded (or self-excluded) from the grace of God nor the views of those who believe that God will include all.

Second, not only do we not know what shall be but also, Heim argues, we cannot know all things. There are matters which are beyond our knowing. This has to do, not so much with the limited capacity of our created nature, as with the continued distinctiveness that Christian understanding of person implies, which Heim, following Zizioulas, derives from the distinction in unity of the three divine Persons, perfect unity requiring perfect distinctiveness.<sup>116</sup> For each human person the efficacy of God’s salvific will is to be known in the never-to-be-finished experience of self-offering and the receiving of selves from God as God’s creation. It is this relation of persons in communion which endures, not an end understood as a fixed state. Indeed, while Heim speaks of ends, his meaning may be better captured by his phrase, ‘orientational pluralism’. He argues that we can have confidence that there is divine reality to the differing directions to which the practices of the faiths point, even if we cannot know for certain whether there will be many ends or a single end for human beings. God’s salvific will is eternal; to know this is to understand its efficacy.

What of Dupuis’ second objection, that what is at stake here “is, even more profoundly, the unity of the human race”? This human unity can be understood in different ways. The Church, in speaking of the possibility of eternal separation from God, has always been willing to entertain the notion of distinct human ends.<sup>117</sup> Our unity and, what is most important for how we live our lives, our unity now, rests not in our end but in our common creation in the image and likeness of God. The call to realise this likeness is present to all

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<sup>116</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, pp. 168ff.; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).

<sup>117</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 81.

and the ends of those religions which Heim discusses all rest in the truth of God. Our paths and our ends may be different, but our humanity is experienced as common in our shared responsibility to choose our end. And in the providential character of the plurality of faiths which Heim delineates Christians find further reason to recognise the unity of human beings seeking to realise truth. However this may be regarded by members of other faiths, Christians continue to need the insights that other faiths afford. If we are called into the likeness of the one God, then our responsibility is to open ourselves to be shaped by every available account of this likeness, by every living image of this God. "The Christian mission thus involves a 'piecing together' of the unified action of the triune God."<sup>118</sup> In many instances these will be truer images than I am myself.<sup>119</sup> The humanity that is mine is mediated to me through others who are differentiated from me, and in this way I cannot realise my humanity without recognising and recovering the unity that is the sum of the whole. Nor can I know the salvation God intends for me without embracing union in difference, which is the very character of Christian salvation. Heim's thesis does not undermine contemporary concern for a common humanity. Rather than making definitive a clash of civilisations, as Dupuis seems to fear, Heim gives the strongest reasons to respect and understand other faiths. They offer, he says, "a spectrum of parallel perfections, a plenitude of differing ultimacies."<sup>120</sup>

#### THE RICHES OF HEIM'S THEOLOGY

Heim may be cleared for the time being of the charge of unorthodoxy, even though his conclusions are startlingly new in Christian theology. Does he help us as we seek to recognise the presence of the God of Jesus Christ through and in the faith and practices of other faith traditions? He clearly values other religions and his trinitarian theology of communion in difference requires more than an apartheid of different truths, as noted above. "Christians need humble apprenticeship to other religions in regard to dimensions of the triune life that those faiths grasp with profound depth."<sup>121</sup> And it is clearly in the specificity of other religions, including through 'thick descriptions' of them, that we must seek God: communion in Christ, he writes, must embrace the various dimensions of relations with God "as they may be found concretely in other religions." His expectation is not that such understanding will overthrow what Christians have known of God but rather,

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<sup>118</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 147.

<sup>119</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 284.

<sup>120</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 255.

<sup>121</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 213



in its content and also in the practice of seeking it in difference, this understanding will tend towards a more complete revelation of the divine nature and of our common human calling. There is “a need to ‘fill up’ the incarnational revelation of the Word through its appropriation in various cultural and religious contexts.”<sup>122</sup> Such a phrase invites further reflection on the connection between the Incarnation and the relation with impersonal aspects of God that Heim sees. Nevertheless, the theology of S. Mark Heim lends weight to an expectation that the call of God can come through the Japanese religio-aesthetic.

But there are reservations to be borne in mind as well. They can be summed up by saying that Heim’s thesis is too neat. This is the case for human choosing of religious ends. It does not seem true, as Heim asserts, that “God offers all persons, in their actual individual lives, the same opportunity for salvation”<sup>123</sup> when we are, as Heim acknowledges, conditioned by our cultures. And it is rare for the following of a religious end to flow from as clear an action as ‘choosing’ implies. Indeed the ends followed are themselves rarely as neatly distinguished as Heim pictures. And these considerations in turn invite us to question the (admittedly tentative, but still striking) association of the avowed ends of different world religions with distinct aspects of the triune God. If Heim’s suggested associations are also too neat, are we left with any guide for discerning the presence of God in the practices of the world faiths, or confidence to believe that it could be done?

#### A REALITY CHECK: THE EXPERIENCE OF SWAMI ABHISHIKTANANDA

Swami Abhishiktananda, referred to above, is a helpful measure of the reality of Heim’s position. In holding up Abhishiktananda’s letters to the mirror of Heim’s thesis, we find one who has lived in perhaps as great an awareness and intensity as any the possibility of variant human ends. These came to Abhishiktananda through experience, not theory. His own theory in *Saccidananda* matches Heim’s in that it sees communion-in-difference learnt through a trinitarian theology of revelation as the highest human understanding of the Absolute. But this theology he later came to think of as no more than a play of phenomena, amusing itself with concepts. Does his experience of the truth of advaita and the unrelinquishability of the sign of Jesus Christ bear out Heim’s thesis? No. If these were indeed two variant human ends, then Abhishiktananda would have had to have chosen between them. His anguish came precisely from his inability to do so without loss, so that

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<sup>122</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 147.

<sup>123</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, pp. 246-247.

choosing was experienced as an impossibility since any choice would leave the chosen end falsified by the loss of what had not been chosen. Abhishiktananda could deny neither advaita nor Jesus Christ. He strove to hold them together.

At another level Abhishiktananda's experience does offer support to much of Heim's contention. In Abhishiktananda we meet one who repeatedly witnessed to the varying realities that different religious ways proclaim. And whose life became one of stereoscopic imagination. Heim does not only posit the reality of variant human ends. The thrust of his thesis is to argue for a deepening of Christian understanding of salvation by careful attention to what other faiths, through the participation of their ends and therefore of their ways in the reality of the triune God, can teach us about the God who saves. Abhishiktananda repeatedly attempts to understand Jesus Christ more closely through the reality of his own advaitic experience. For example: "To call God 'Abba' is an equivalent in Semitic terms of advaita, the fundamental experience."<sup>124</sup> Or again: "The Christ that I might present will simply be the I AM of my (every) deep heart, who can show himself in the dancing Shiva or the amorous Krishna!"<sup>125</sup>

But there comes a point where Abhishiktananda parts company from Heim. For Heim the doctrine of the Trinity is the central insight into reality that is deepened by our contact with other faiths. And other faiths are deficient to the extent that they have an incomplete apprehension of the trinitarian structure of reality. The reconciliation that Abhishiktananda tantalisingly suggests at the end of his life is not a better insight but a liberating practice or experience (*kaivalyam*) that holds no distinction between *advaita* and *dvaita*. No signs, no insight nor theory, not even that of the Trinity, can take this place. Abhishiktananda has rejected a fulfilment theory that still lingers behind Heim's thesis. He eschews theory in order to hold more radically to the irreducible nature of reality known in experience, the truth of which cannot be comprehended under the terms dual or non-dual. Abhishiktananda's life bears witness to the passion, contradictoriness and anguish in human religious searching which Heim's theorising paints over.

Heim himself is aware that neat theory will do justice neither to human searching nor to the mystery of God. He writes of comparative theology, "It is the tension, the distinctiveness,

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<sup>124</sup> Stuart, p. 283. Letter of 16.1.73.

<sup>125</sup> Stuart, p. 311. Letter of 4.10.73.

the recalcitrance of the reading in both directions that is the continuing source of light and satisfaction.”<sup>126</sup> And he summarises the question in this way, “the primary issue is not whether my accounts are definitive ones, but whether this *kind* of perspective holds promise for an engagement of religions in which both our own distinctive Christian witness and the validity of the other religions’ witness can be credited in concrete terms.”<sup>127</sup> Despite the unanswered questions (and a new one raised by this quotation, namely what we can understand by “concrete terms”), Heim’s kind of perspective does offer such promise. By taking seriously variant ends, Heim does away with patronising assumptions that practitioners of other faiths have not truly recognised what they are about. In the same way, he reminds Christians of the distinctiveness and grace of salvation. He invites Christians to value other faiths, not as inferior vehicles of salvation, but in their own terms, in their specificity. And he recalls us to the graciousness with which God gives reflexivity and choice to human beings. In all this, Heim places the Trinity at the centre and, despite the dangers of reductionist conceptualising, any Christian vision must issue from this point and return here. So Heim witnesses to the breadth of dimensions in the life of the triune God of whom Christian theology speaks and shows us that we need to know the faiths to know this God. Heim summons Christians to a religious seriousness in our relations with other faiths and to the expectation that our vision of God will be expanded by our neighbour.

We take from Heim the sense that each faith in its specificity witnesses to realities of the life of the triune God and that we need to know them to know the fullness of God. We take from Dupuis that the faiths, including in their practices, point to the coming Reign of God, the God whom we know with qualitative fullness in Jesus Christ. Dupuis says only a little on the ways in which the practices of the faiths partake of this fullness found in Christ and it is here particularly that it will be necessary to press the question. Heim says more by abstracting the practices from particular reference to Christ and substituting what is impersonal of the Trinity as the referent of these practices. This too asks to be questioned further in the light of God’s meaning in revelation: if God reveals Godself through the faiths, does this not embrace the personal? Both Dupuis and Heim emphasise that the faiths are asymmetrical and complementary. But we must also keep aware of those like

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<sup>126</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 221.

<sup>127</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 220.

Abhishiktananda whose lives speak painfully of the incommensurability of different faiths while remaining unable to deny them. And so we turn to enter the landscaped garden of Japanese religiously-inspired culture, ready to be transformed by its beauty and, listening carefully to its account of that beauty and that transformation, search for a gardener.

## Chapter Three BEAUTY AND FAITH IN JAPANESE ART

### 1. *Kenmitsu* Believing<sup>1</sup>

The tea ceremony and the other Japanese arts to be considered in this chapter - *karesansui* gardens, the *nō* stage and shrine mandalas - took their forms during the medieval period (*chūsei*) when the Minamoto shogunate ruled from Kamakura and later the Ashikaga shogunate from Kyōto. While the Higashiyama culture, often linked with Zen, was central to the development of many of these arts, the religious outlook which fostered this culture can be considered as extending from much earlier and as continuing to affect the vision of later artists, Sen no Rikyū and the *haiku* poet Bashō among them, even as its devotional forms were passing into history.

That religious outlook formed an unbroken (although not always unchallenged)<sup>2</sup> unity with the artistic, as outlined in Chapter One. At its heart lay Mahāyāna esoteric (*mikkyō*) teaching, either in its more doctrinally defined form, Shingon, or its more inclusive and influential form, Tendai. Mahāyāna, following Nāgārjuna's fourfold negation,<sup>3</sup> emphasises freedom from duality (including the duality of duality and non-duality). Based on such non-dual reasoning *mikkyō* understands that all observable phenomena (dharmas) participate in

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to those noted below, this account draws especially on the following presentations: Kuroda Toshio, 'Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion', trans. James C. Dobbins and Suzanne Gay, in *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 7:1 (1981), pp. 1-21; Kuroda Toshio, 'The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System as Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy' trans. James C. Dobbins in Paul Williams ed., *Buddhism: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies* Volume VIII *Buddhism in China, East Asia and Japan* (Abingdon and New York NY: Routledge, 2000), pp. 259-290; Inoue Nobutaka (ed.), Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun and Mori Mizue, trans. and adapted Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, *Shinto – A Short History* (London and New York NY: Routledge Curzon, 2003); John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (eds.), *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000); Mark Teeuwen and Bernard Scheid (eds.), *Tracing Shinto in the History of Kami Worship*, Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, Special Edition 29 3/4, Autumn 2002; Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli (eds.), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* (London and New York NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) ; also Royall Tyler, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 71ff.

<sup>2</sup> LaFleur introduces the debate through the monk-poet Saigyō (1118-1190); LaFleur, pp. 7-9. Note also the criticism levelled at Musō by another monk: "People practising Zen should not construct gardens": quoted and discussed in Kuitert, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 44.

the Dharmakāya, the one true nature of all reality encompassing buddhahood and nirvāṇa, and that living beings share in the potential of Buddha-nature and therefore can attain Buddhahood. In contrast to earlier exoteric teachings, *mikkyō* asserts that what we do matters, not only in the long term but that enlightenment can come in this life. Therefore right action furthers that participation - classically in Shingon: of body through mudras, speech through mantras and mind through meditation, including the visualisations connected with mandalas. Here is the esotericism of *mikkyō*. It is an encouraging outlook which swept up exoteric teachings (including ordination practices and key sutras, such as Tendai's *Lotus Sutra*) into its compass; in medieval times the exoteric practices remained an out-working, not the heart of this faith.<sup>4</sup>

If all living beings share Buddha-nature, these include not merely the seen but the unseen also. And any may help another to enlightenment. In particular *mikkyō* furthered the incorporation of *kami* rites into Buddhist philosophy and practice, *shinbutsu shūgō*. These constituted the most popular form of exoteric practice. There were many paths to such incorporation.<sup>5</sup> The one which prevailed in medieval times was one under which the rites were treated as equivalent and the *kami* perceived as phenomenal forms (*suijaku*) of which the true forms were buddhas (*honji*). Mahāyāna bodhisattva thought allowed for the

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<sup>4</sup> For the prevalence of *mikkyō*, see Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen eds, *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (London and New York NY: Routledge, 2006), including the understanding that secrecy creates secrets that then have value, and that the religious referent of esotericism can be distinguished from the socially-derived nature of the secret, though the latter came to prominence later, even in Shingon, in response to sectarian rivalry and military pressure (p. 20). Lucia Dolce, 'Reconsidering the taxonomy of the esoteric: hermeneutical and ritual practices of the Lotus Sutra', pp. 130-171, gives an account of the development of an esoteric Lotus practice by Tendai which rivalled Shingon's Two World Mandala practices.

<sup>5</sup> These included such literary modes of combination as association, metaphor and anagogy; Allan Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods*, p. 82. For details of the different phases, see Teeuwen and Rambelli, pp. 7ff. outlining the four-stage theory of Tsuji Zennosuke. They use the descriptive term 'rhizomatic' for this tendency, although as they remark (p. 23), the *kami* were never quite tamed - the theological tension between the two ritual discourses "proved an extremely fertile source of speculation on the nature of the *kami*." Compare with the earlier detailed work of Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation: The Historical Development of the Honji-Suijaku Theory* (Tōkyō and Rutland VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969). See also Arthur H. Thornhill III, *Six Circles, One Dewdrop: the Religio-Aesthetic World of Komparu Zenchiku* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 151-152 and pp. 178-180. Iyanaga Nobumi notes that it is a patterning which reflected that of the adoption of Hindu gods in early Buddhism; Iyanaga Nobumi, 'Honji Suijaku and the logic of Combinatory Deities: Two Case Studies', in Teeuwen and Rambelli, pp. 145-176 (p. 175).

understanding that the Buddha would “temper his light and mingle with the dust”<sup>6</sup> and indeed that he does so in the beneficence of Japan’s many tutelary *kami*. Under the general influence of Mahāyāna non-duality, the thrust of such faith was not syncretic so much as combinatory and assimilative.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore non-duality implies reversibility, as we have seen: the *kami* as *suijaku* were not less than the Buddha *honji*.<sup>8</sup> The point was not to make clear-cut identifications but to receive the saving power (*tariki*) of the Buddha under phenomenal conditions.

Such thinking accompanied the rise of powerful cults.<sup>9</sup> These were originally associated with court families and had a base in a locality where shrine and temple formed one complex providing rites, monastic practice, study and cultural achievements. They promoted their belief and influence over a wide area,<sup>10</sup> dispersed through local lay associations, *kō*, which among other activities would undertake pilgrimages. In time, such

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<sup>6</sup> From the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* of the Chinese T’ien-t’ai monk Chih-i (538-597). For instances of this in the literature of the cults of Tatsuta and Kasuga, see respectively Royall Tyler, ed. and trans., *Japanese Nō Dramas* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 301 who judges it “the fundamental theme of medieval syncretic faith” (p. 297) and Susan Tyler, *The Cult of Kasuga Seen Through its Art* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1992), p. 119, n.8 and p. 157 n.20.

<sup>7</sup> For this discussion, see Inoue Nobutaka, ‘Introduction: What is Shinto?’, p. 9. He writes of the Mahāyāna “tendency to transform differences into expressions of a single religious truth”. Also Breen and Teeuwen cite Kushida Ryōkō’s observation that to the medieval monks “the *kami* classics were the very essence of Buddhist teaching”, John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, ‘Introduction: Shinto past and present’, in *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*, ed. by John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 1-12 (p. 7).

<sup>8</sup> Beneficent *kami* could also be dangerous. This darker personality was venerated not only to placate but to acknowledge, in the colours of *hongaku* thinking, the reality of such negative Buddhist themes as the three poisons of greed, anger and ignorance. The hope was that the *suijaku* would drive out illusion by force and fear. Medieval Japanese were aware of many powers but also of unity, usually hidden but accessible to the *kokoro* through different channels - a unity with which one’s house or group could align itself by devising a suitable configuration of practices. This sense of unity was strengthened and nurtured by continental thought patterns: the correlative thinking of yin-yang and the five-phase systems, the moral demands of harmony advanced by Confucian teaching, and above all the soteriological imperative to awakening (*bodhi*) that was the bodhisattva way.

<sup>9</sup> Allan Grapard shows just how much was at stake in the early medieval period in terms of wealth and a complete economic system for the shrines and the families (including the imperial family) which were allied to them, in Allan Grapard, ‘The Economics of Ritual Power’, in Breen and Teeuwen, pp. 68-94.

<sup>10</sup> The Kōfukuji-Kasuga cult was the recognised ruler of Yamato province for a time. Max Moerman, in connection with the Kumano beliefs, writes of medieval Buddhism’s “frontier settlements” and critiques *honji suijaku* thought as “interpretive hubris”. D. Max Moerman, *Localising Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 235-236.

networks replaced the aristocrats as the source of patronage for these complexes (a process which the flexibility of *honji-suijaku* thinking helped). Discrimination in faith in medieval Japan, therefore, was not according to doctrine. One assimilative religion prevailed. But it was embodied in sharply distinguished, rival cults.

Such is *kenmitsu bukkyō*, the locally-grounded combinatory esoteric-exoteric Buddhism, unearthed from the misapplication of historical records by the indefatigable revisionist Kuroda Toshio some thirty years ago.<sup>11</sup> His judgment, on which contemporary scholarship is founded, is that it became medieval Japan's religious orthodoxy. In this present study the term 'kenmitsu faith' will be used. It is not one which would have been recognised by the artists and their patrons considered here, nor is it one used in the careful distinctions made by modern scholars of Japanese medieval religion (Kuroda writes of "the *kenmitsu* system"). But it will serve heuristically as a not-inappropriate designation for the religious, philosophical and aesthetic attraction of those combinatory cults of medieval Japan which claimed the devotional service of sincere and talented monks and artists such as Gedatsu and Komparu Zenchiku, whom we are about to meet.

However, before looking at the soteriological artistic application of this universal *kenmitsu* faith, certain aspects require further elucidation. Accompanying Mahāyāna non-duality are teachings of no self-nature, that all dharmas rest in emptiness (*kū*), are co-dependent in origination (*engi*) and inter-penetrating (emphasised especially by Kegon). Tendai developed the 'Three Truths' teaching, *santai*:<sup>12</sup> namely the phase of leaving phenomena and entering emptiness (*jūke-nyūkū*); its reverse by which the danger of reifying emptiness is avoided, leaving emptiness and entering into phenomena (*jūkū-nyūke*); and the third phase of "holding both in a state of dynamic and equalized tension", the middle way (*chū*).<sup>13</sup> Further it is understood that each of these three is valid only because the others are also.

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<sup>11</sup> See fn. 1 above. Since then there has been a revolution in the study of Japanese religions, qualifying Kuroda's thesis. In particular, as Breen and Teeuwen summarise it, Kuroda underplays the continuities over time in shrines, their myths and practices, and also what marks they have left on Buddhist practices. Breen and Teeuwen, pp. 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> From the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*. For this account, see LaFleur, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> For the use of this philosophy to illuminate medieval *renga* poetry as religio-aesthetic, see Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen's re-creation of the poetics of Shinkei (1406-1475) from his work *Sasamegoto*: Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen, *Emptiness and Temporality*:



William LaFleur, seeking to understand the religious background to *nō*, draws a distinction between two conflicting ways of viewing the world, both Buddhist and both originating in continental Asia and found in Tendai Buddhism. He terms these ‘cosmology’ and ‘dialectic’. Each had a profound effect on the arts, but “it is the tension and exchange between these two which is important.”<sup>14</sup> Cosmological Buddhism offers an explanation of the way the world is; seeing the world as ordered, it also acts as a spur to moral and religious endeavour. It describes six ‘courses’ of beings, both seen and unseen: the *rokudō*, a world of *samūhāsāra* in which the place of any being is determined by its karma.<sup>15</sup> This picture was modified by the soteriological concerns of Amidism and Tendai. Amidism stressed the Pure Land of Amida Nyōrai transcending the *rokudō*; Tendai added four nirvanic levels to make ten ‘worlds’ (*jikkai*). In the arts, cosmological Buddhism caused the use of symbols to flourish: “The moon, the web of a spider, the stillness of a boulder, the direction west, the chirp of a mountain bird, the distant shore of a body of water” – as things are not, in Buddhism, what they seem to be, they were available to be recruited by the artists as elements in a pervasive system of symbols.<sup>16</sup> In a world which made no strong distinction between the realities of dream and waking, there developed the hope (against a more ascetic understanding) that even the ephemera of the arts might serve the Dharma.<sup>17</sup>

Dialectical Buddhism cut through the rigidity of the cosmological system.<sup>18</sup> It took its cue from the sense of *hongaku*, original enlightenment, found in *The Awakening of Faith*, that enlightenment (*kaku*, *satori*) is not future possibility but already existent. This amounts to a radical rejection of all dualisms: body-mind; being-becoming; practice-attainment. *Hongaku* rejects dismissal of anything as mere means; as LaFleur puts it, “all phenomena are on an equal footing.” Hence the influence of *hongaku* on the arts is to undermine the established symbol system. It does not permit us to think of anything as merely symbolising something else, valuable for its hidden meaning; that would be duality. Rather it requires a right seeing. This proves to be more than a simple seeing of phenomena. It requires a renewed

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*Buddhism and Medieval Japanese Poetics* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 89-91.

<sup>14</sup> LaFleur, p. x.

<sup>15</sup> See LaFleur, Chapter 2, ‘In and Out the Rokudō: Kyōkai and the Formation of Medieval Japan’ pp. 26-59, for an account of a seminal presentation of this in medieval Japan.

<sup>16</sup> LaFleur, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Derived in Japan most forcefully from the Chinese poet, Bai Juyi (772-846). LaFleur, p. 8; Thornhill, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup> The following account is based on LaFleur, pp. 20-25.

sight, an attention redirected to phenomena for their own sake. This is sometimes referred to as a beginning of secularisation but it might with equal justice be described as seeing all things with the eyes of faith.<sup>19</sup>

Medieval *kenmitsu*, for all its comprehensiveness, did not in itself lead to a quiet life. The institutions vied for influence, notably Tendai's Enryakuji and the Hossō lineage Kōfukuji in Nara which was more likely to ally with Shingon. Either might descend on the capital with armed monks and holy objects to win their case. The inherent tendency of the cults to agglomerate wealth and influence stimulated reaction: reformers taught what were initially new ways of practising *kenmitsu*, but effectively became something other. Pure Land, Zen and Nichiren sects developed out of the capacious Tendai teaching by emphasising particular aspects (*nenbutsu*, *mu-shin* and the efficacy of the *Lotus Sutra*, respectively). And while Zen gained favour at the court of the *shōgun* and developed its own powerful institutions (the *gozan*) and acted as purveyor of Chinese (Song) culture, Nichirenshū had a prophetic, nationalistic edge and Jōdo Shinshū was avowedly populist and turned in the fifteenth century to creating armed leagues (*ikki*). Furthermore, the open market which *kenmitsu* offered in construing the meaning of associations of the sacred helped give rise to a more self-defined shrine identity: Watarai Shintō based around the Grand Shrine of Amaterasu at Ise and later the archipelago-wide organisation of shrines that was Yuiitsu (or Yoshida) Shintō. As early as the fourteenth century the monk Jihen<sup>20</sup> taught that as *kami* retain their purity undefiled by the sensory world with which the Buddhas mingle, they are *honji* and the compassionate Buddhas *suijaku*. One mark of the passing of Japan's *chūsei* was the drive towards definition and away from association in matters of faith.

Following this brief description of medieval Japanese believing, we can go on to appreciate three of the arts to which it gave rise.

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<sup>19</sup> For secularisation, see LaFleur, p. 25. Also Ienaga Saburō, *Japanese Art: a Cultural Appreciation*, trans. Richard L. Gage (New York NY: Weatherhill, 1979), pp. 95-114. The influence on Japanese history of *hongaku* interpretation of Mahāyāna has come under sustained criticism recently by 'critical Buddhism' for encouraging a quietist attitude, apt to collaborate with power. For *hongaku* thought and this debate, see Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu HI, University of Hawaii Press, 1989) and Jacqueline I. Stone, Review Article: 'Some Reflections on Critical Buddhism' in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26.1-2, (1999), pp. 159-188.

<sup>20</sup> Fl. fourteenth century, the brother of Kenkō, author of the *Tsurezuregusa*.

## 2. *Karesansui* Gardens

### THEIR AFFECTIVITY

In the Muromachi age of *kenmitsu*, a new form of garden developed which has become regarded as typically Japanese, the dry gardens, *karesansui*. With little else than raked gravel and stones, they affect. Loraine Kuck, one of the earlier Western writers on such Japanese gardens, wrote of the composition of rocks in Kyōto's Ryōanji dry garden: "its utter stability soothing us".<sup>21</sup> But Laurens van der Post, visiting eight years previously, registered, "the shock of the abstraction"; "what was a garden if not for growth?" However a "process of recognition" followed which he labelled, "an emotional sharing of the intent". In its "self-denial", "leaving so much unsaid, it evoked a whole far more poignantly".<sup>22</sup>

Japan's gardens lack elements that have been present in European ones: the geometric regularity of Renaissance gardens, the carefully constructed vistas in 'real' space of the Romantic-era gardens or the painterly qualities of colour matching in certain twentieth century plantings, such as the flower gardens of Gertrude Jekyll. All of these may be understood as a perfecting of nature. Space is not manipulated; it remains itself, showing its dimensions, but it is measured by human art and thought to answer to our desire, whether for logic, feeling or aesthetic quality. We remain observers rather than participants in nature.<sup>23</sup> Japanese gardens work differently. The flat lawn of English gardens and flower beds play little or no part in Japanese thinking on gardens. Instead the garden is a place in which rocks display their virtues. The opening words of Japan's first gardening manual, the eleventh century *Sakuteiki*, speak of 'placing rocks' in words that even then had probably come to mean, 'making a garden'.<sup>24</sup> The tradition does not waver. The *Sakuteiki* speaks of 'following the request of the rock'<sup>25</sup> and the fifteenth century *Illustrations for Designing*

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<sup>21</sup> Loraine Kuck, *The World of the Japanese Garden: From Chinese Origins to Modern Landscape Art* (New York NY and Tōkyō: Walker Weatherhill, 1968), p. 165. The reader implied by 'us' is her English-speaking Westerner readership, interested in but not overly-familiar with Japanese culture. Kuck is breaking new ground.

<sup>22</sup> Laurens van der Post, p. 227.

<sup>23</sup> For this distinction linked with a belief in creation, see Charles M. Corwin, *Biblical Encounter with Japanese Culture* (Tōkyō: Christian Literature Crusade, 1967), p. 91 on Japanese concepts of beauty.

<sup>24</sup> "*ishi wo taten koto*". See Takei Jirō and Mark P. Keane, *Sakuteiki. Visions of the Japanese Garden: a Modern Translation of Japan's Gardening Classic* (Boston MA, Rutland VT, Tōkyō: Tuttle, 2001), p. 153 and fn. 1.

<sup>25</sup> "*ishi no kowan ni shigahite*": see e.g., Takei and Keane, p. 164 and explanation p. 4.

*Mountain, Water and Hillside Field Landscapes* (hereafter, *Illustrations*) negatively of the many taboos evoked by mis-placing rocks.<sup>26</sup> These indicate that one expectation of a garden is that it will increase the harmony between the human dwelling (and those who live there) and the rest of the natural world, and that this is not so much by (mutual) consent – an act of will – as by natural affinity.

The placing of rocks indicates a space and creates its quality. In addition to the term ‘placing rocks’, gardens could be indicated by the term *senzui* (or *sansui*), ‘mountain-water’. Gardens in Japan play with the space they occupy. A small plot can be made to suggest a vast landscape; either a natural landscape or a landscape of the human spirit.<sup>27</sup> The Heian period aristocratic pleasure gardens around *shinden* (villas) devoted different corners of the garden to different scenery types.<sup>28</sup> But in medieval times gardens were often viewed from a fixed vantage point; they shared with ink brush landscape paintings the ability to conjure up a layered and atmospheric scene.<sup>29</sup>

But in addition to these arts there were those which aimed to modify consciousness; techniques which, at least from the time of Musō Soseki onwards, played with the senses, inducing synaesthesia or a hallucinatory effect. Many commentators speak of the effect of Musō’s stone waterfall in the upper garden of the Saihōji, a precursor of the *karesansui* of the Muromachi era. Hayakawa Masao writes of “the roar of a great flood.”<sup>30</sup> Evoking feeling has always been an aim of Japanese garden arts. The *Sakuteiki* refers to and commends the *fuzei* of certain garden arrangements, where *fuzei* 風情 (wind風 and emotion情) covers both atmosphere and taste: “recreate the essence of [famous] scenes in the garden, but do so interpretively, not strictly.”<sup>31</sup> Graham Parkes links these two aspects of feeling with nature “the consummate artist” (*fu*) and tradition, following the great examples from the

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<sup>26</sup> On taboos, see Takei and Keane, pp. 112-127.

<sup>27</sup> David Slawson itemises eight methods by which this is done. David Slawson, *Secret Teachings in the Art of Japanese Gardens: Design Principle, Aesthetic Values* (Tōkyō, New York NY, London: Kodansha International, 1991), pp. 106-122.

<sup>28</sup> Takei and Keane, p. 182, and comment, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> On the link with ink brush landscapes see for example, François Berthier, *Reading Zen in the Rocks: the Japanese Dry Landscape Garden*, trans. Graham Parkes (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 9; Hayakawa Masao, *The Garden Art of Japan*, trans. Richard L. Gage (New York NY, Tōkyō: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1973), p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> Hayakawa Masao, *The Garden Art of Japan*, p. 62. Cf. the effect of Ryōanji’s *karesansui* on van der Post, p. 228.

<sup>31</sup> Takei and Keane, p. 153, for example: “create a subtle atmosphere”; “heed as well one’s own taste.” See also, pp. 42-43.

past including, we might add, the garden makers to whom one is apprenticed (*sei*).<sup>32</sup> But where in the West we might see the two as opposed, in the arts of Japan, they form one word: tradition shows what nature truly is.<sup>33</sup> This is not feeling aroused by a hidden or absent reality. Nor do these medieval techniques refer to or illustrate an underlying order to things, as might be the case in a European garden. Rather, the feeling is aroused by contemplation of the flow of all things, the present reality with which the viewer too is engaged, not separate but indivisible from what is seen. The techniques break through our self-protective daily selves to this awareness.

#### THE FAITHS AND THE GARDEN

The *karesansui* became especially associated with Zen temples.<sup>34</sup> It is probably a mark of the expense of such a garden, as well as their reliance on a single viewpoint, that the best known are to be found around the Abbots' residences. They appear made for *zazen*; however they also embody religio-aesthetic elements which pre-date denominational Zen.<sup>35</sup>

The early *senzui* landscapes of hills and the stream recalled the typical scenery of Japan's volcanically-produced verdant countryside. But taken together with the open-space (perhaps the most primitive garden feature) these motifs suggest something further, the topography of many Shintō shrines, which Günter Nitschke terms Japan's native

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<sup>32</sup> Graham Parkes, 'The Role of the Rock in the Japanese Dry landscape Garden: A Philosophical Essay', in François Berthier, pp. 84-145 (p.111).

<sup>33</sup> Slawson notes that *fuzei* appears fifty-nine times in the *Illustrations* as compared to four times in the *Sakuteiki*. He sees a nascent awareness of the tremendous power of the perceptual qualities of materials: no longer reproducing natural landscape, but evoking mood; Slawson, pp. 70-71.

<sup>34</sup> In Muromachi times, when the influence of Zen was increasing, domestic architecture turned to the *shoin* ('study') style and the contemplative arts flourished: *ikebana*, ink painting, *nō*, certain immediate styles of calligraphy, and gardens, especially *karesansui*. Keene, *Yoshimasa and the Silver Pavilion*.

<sup>35</sup> Hayakawa Masao disputes this, in a discussion of Musō Soseki's dry garden of the Saihōji. Hayakawa, *The Garden Art of Japan*, pp. 66-67. The Zen world of Musō, he says, was very different to that of the shrine. In both there is a sympathy between rocks and the inner world of human emotions, but in the shrine there is reverence before something created by nature whereas in the Saihōji respect is first given to the results of human creativity. However the distinction may be questioned: as we saw with the term *fuzei*, the two make one whole.

geomancy.<sup>36</sup> Shrines such as Ise lie at the foot of mountains with rivers running past, the waters of which irrigated the paddies. Numinous power lay in the mountains, a source of fertility and also potentially of danger and chaos. This power was attracted down to the valley seasonally to confer fertility on the village's fields; a sacred log being brought with ceremony to the river-side ablution point to become the *shintai*, ritual locus of the *kami* presence. It was at this level place, the divine fields (*shinden*), that the ritually-purified maidens danced and the priests or shamans performed the sacred prayers and rites, the *norito*.<sup>37</sup> Nitschke comments, "The whole constitutes a kind of first garden, where deity and human being meet" and that such belief in fetching down the local guardian deities lies behind "the religious practice of growing and tending sacred gardens".<sup>38</sup>

Other indications of an outlook which is attuned to shrines in the treatment of space in Japanese gardens include a doubling of features, such as the two cones of sand in the south garden of the Daisen'in (a Rinzai Zen sub-temple, discussed below);<sup>39</sup> the cultivation of trees;<sup>40</sup> *shakkei* - borrowing landscape;<sup>41</sup> and in the attitude to rocks. Where the Chinese value the *qi* (energy) of rocks with elaborate shapes, the Japanese understand the strength of a rock to be in its innate qualities: its planes, its grain, its subdued colouring. The rocks are collected from nature, chosen to be in harmony with the humanly-defined dwelling space (which means both buildings and garden understood as a unity). Reverence of rocks

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<sup>36</sup> In distinction from the *feng shui* imported from China, which became a more conscious method of determining the shape of a garden from the seventh century onwards; Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens*, p. 19. For his description of this geomancy, see Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 9-31.

<sup>37</sup> For a selection of the most important of these, see Donald Philippi trans., *Norito: a Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens*, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> François Berthier says of these that in Shintō understanding they acted as reservoirs from which one drew in order to purify a space. Berthier, p. 66. Doubling is associated with the *kami*: Nitschke's geomantic account refers to source shrine and meeting shrine, originating in rites of renewal. Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> Hayakawa Masao instances the *takamiya* (sanctified gravel-spread area, prior to any shrine buildings) at Munakata, planted with a single *sakaki* tree. Hayakawa, *The Garden Art of Japan*, p. 27. But note also the reference in the *Sakuteiki*: "trees express the solemnity of man and Buddha." Takei and Keane, *Sakuteiki* XII 'Trees', p. 196. See also their discussion of the link between this understanding and Japanese legends of the Indian monastery of Gion Shōja, pp. 94-101.

<sup>41</sup> Including sacred mountain. See Itoh Teiji, *Space and Illusion: in the Japanese Garden*, trans. Ralph Friedrich and Masajiro Shimamura (New York NY, Tōkyō and Kyōto: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1973), p. 33ff. Compare Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens*, p. 181 and Hayakawa, *The Garden Art of Japan*, pp. 140-142.

echoes the recognition of certain rocks as *iwakura*, that is as *shintai* of the *kami* and therefore as some of the earliest shrine sites, before Chinese Buddhist influences had caused shrine buildings to be set up; the particular rocks being marked by the tying of a rope of rice straw (*shimenawa*).<sup>42</sup> Japanese gardens impress as an intensification of the natural environment. Sculpted and painted features are avoided. Moss invades. Bamboo, clay and stone, for the most part untreated, form their walls, paths and fences. The garden of the Hōkokuji in Kamakura is largely bamboo forest. The garden arts of Japan, including *karesansui*, faithfully embody an intuition that what is found in nature can be beneficent and worshipful, and recognised as such by beauty of form; an intuition that is demonstrated in the setting of shrine after shrine. The garden space highlights the life-powers with which human lives are intertwined and brings them into mutually beneficial relationship.

There is much symbolic reference in many *karesansui*. Daoism,<sup>43</sup> Confucianism,<sup>44</sup> the Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmology,<sup>45</sup> *feng shui* and Chinese legend have provided the figurative vocabulary for many standard Japanese garden motifs for centuries. The very word, *senzui*, in combining mountain and water, already draws attention to the yin and the yang. The necessity of employing Chinese geomancy is simply assumed: the structure of a garden will bring good or bad fortune.<sup>46</sup> There is also appeal to a cosmological principle: the three vectors of heaven (vertical), earth (horizontal) and human being (diagonal): *ōshakei*. Among these, the diagonal is at once an ambiguous direction, neither up nor along, and also a creative and dynamic one, synthesising the life of earth and heaven. Human artistic endeavour is itself representative of this synthesising capacity which is shown in the

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<sup>42</sup> On *iwakura* see Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens*, p. 18-19. On the significance of binding in Japanese religion and culture, see Günter Nitschke, 'Shime – Binding, Building and Occupying', in *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 94-103. For a presentation of objects tied with *shimenawa* as "holographic entry points", see Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: the Way Home* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), pp. 17-23.

<sup>43</sup> Daoist thinking is always in the matter of Japanese belief hard to isolate. On the questionable influence of Daoism on Japanese religions, see Tim Barrett, 'Shinto and Taoism in early Japan', in Breen and Teeuwen, eds, pp. 13-31.

<sup>44</sup> As seen in the *Illustrations*, items 83 and 84, in Slawson, and discussed on pp. 92-93 and 134.

<sup>45</sup> From *Sakuteiki* VII 'On Waterfalls': "Fudō Myōō has vowed that 'all waterfalls over 90 centimeters in height are expressions of my self.'" Takei and Keane, p. 175. See also pp. 101-106 on Fudō Myōō. François Berthier sees in the motifs of triad rocks and Fudō Myōō waterfalls influence from Shingon of the spirit of the mandala: Berthier, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> On Chinese geomancy, see Takei and Keane, pp. 61-87, Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens*, pp. 32-37.

diagonal.<sup>47</sup> Underlying Chinese religious influences mingle imperceptibly with the Indian (Buddhist) and Japanese. They make of the garden a meaningful space, open to being and to a prosperous future, and one that can shape the humanity of the people who inhabit it.

And are they Zen? Shin'ichi Hisamatsu, in his influential *Zen and the Fine Arts*, traces much that is distinctive in the arts of Japan to Zen roots and adumbrates seven characteristics of Zen influence on the arts.<sup>48</sup> He argues that the finest of the arts convey the authentic enlightenment of the artist. Indeed, it is the performance of the art that is the manifestation of awakened being: wielding the brush, dancing the role, arranging the cut flower that will shortly wither. These claims may be disputed; what is clearer is that the arts of this period have retained a strong influence over subsequent periods, that they are the product of an elite infused with the teaching of Zen, and that they flourished not least among the Zen monks. Noting that for Zen this world is the Pure Land and the Buddha reality, Richard Pilgrim writes that unmediated experience (Zen) found a natural ally in the aesthetic mode of human experiential knowing.<sup>49</sup> Zen is *jiriki* (self-help). Its watchword is not salvation, but enlightenment (*satori*), and no other will confer this. It shares with Shingon the sense that Buddhahood is within. There is no other place to be than here. The physical environment of the Zen temple by design aims to aid this way and foster meditation. The gardens convey a sense that small and great have no absolute meaning,<sup>50</sup> and that all that can be desired is already present here. They call the mind to the participation of all things in all things, a unity which encompasses one and not one. They have been called *kōan* in stone.<sup>51</sup> Drawing on a rich, shared vocabulary, the space of the *karesansui* garden in its simple 'thereness' (to recall Pattison's phrase) is a cultural and spiritual matrix recalling the mind to the parameters of human life. All that is has a grain with which we must fall in: home-with-garden is a mirror of what it is to be a human being.

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<sup>47</sup> "When you go to the fields and mountains to get rocks, keep in mind the three forces", *Illustrations* section 2. "You should set rocks bearing in mind the three forces", *Illustrations*, section 3. On *ōshakei*, see Slawson, *Secret Teachings*, pp.96-98, introducing a section on the sense of movement derived from rock settings. Also the comments of Günter Nitschke, *Japanese Gardens*, p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, *Zen and the Fine Arts*, trans. Tokiwa Gishin (Tōkyō, New York NY and San Francisco CA: Kodansha International, 1971). The seven characteristics are: asymmetry; simplicity; austere sublimity (or 'lofty dryness': *yūgen*), naturalness, subtle profundity (deep reserve), freedom from attachment and tranquillity.

<sup>49</sup> Pilgrim, pp. 53-54.

<sup>50</sup> Large and small do not really exist: "They are nothing but illusory appearances that float in perverted hearts." Musō Soseki, quoted in Berthier, p. 64.

<sup>51</sup> Berthier, p. 7.



THE RYŌANJI *KARESANSUI*<sup>52</sup>

This garden is perhaps the most discussed garden in the world: an indication of how the garden's enigmatic beauty compels. It is routinely described as small (its area is "about that of a tennis court")<sup>53</sup> but, as Graham Parkes notes, "Its image in memory remains persistently vast."<sup>54</sup> First made in the late fifteenth century, it is but a flat rectangle of raked sand and fifteen unimposing rocks with a little moss at their base and a pebble surround to the whole. It has on two sides a baked clay wall topped with tiles and only trees can be seen beyond.

It was perhaps not always so. It seems there were cherry trees in earlier centuries for Hideyoshi came to view them. The Kitayama hills are likely to have been visible as *shakkei* before the trees grew up.<sup>55</sup> And the moss may be an unintended invader (as it was during the years of neglect at the Saihōji, now famous as the Kokedera, the Moss temple). That the garden is not as it was first intended should not worry us: it is celebrated for what it has become and it is now kept deliberately in this form.

It stands, as might be expected, at the South side of the Abbot's lodging; in a shrine or *shinden* this *nantei* would be for ritual offerings and festivities to honour the *kami*. But this space could never host the sacred dance; the rocks forbid it.<sup>56</sup> So what is it for? It startles by its simplicity and even more so by its utter lack of referentiality (in contrast with the contemporaneous gardens of the Daisen'in). Its quality is utterly abstract, in a way that did not emerge in Europe until the twentieth century. But it compels contemplation and stays in the mind.<sup>57</sup> How it does so has many times been analysed. Suffice here to say that the

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<sup>52</sup> Appendix 3, Illustration 1.

<sup>53</sup> Kuck. p. 164.

<sup>54</sup> Graham Parkes, in *Japanese Hermeneutics*, Michael F. Marra (ed.), p. 53.

<sup>55</sup> Itoh, p. 36-38, where he dismisses the idea that the wave rhythm of the rocks could have been intended to have effected such *shakkei*. For Hideyoshi and the cherry trees, see Berthier, p. 35; he questions whether these trees could really have been in the garden. See also Kuitert, pp. 101ff. for changes to the Ryōanji: as mentioned above, he attributes its present form (including the present setting of the stones) to late Edo.

<sup>56</sup> François Berthier makes this point, p. 47, and judges the siting "revolutionary".

<sup>57</sup> "no amount of familiarity with this Zen Rock Garden can provide one with any solid assurance as to what it is that one will meet in experiencing it; for the work drives one into oneself ... [it] is not a finished thing; ... [it is] an open invitation to contemplative being." Eliot Deutsch, *Studies in Comparative Aesthetics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1975), pp. 26-27, quoted in James Alfred Martin Jr., *Beauty and Holiness: The Dialogue between Aesthetics and Religion* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 163.

stones are so arranged as to lead the eye from one to another, uprights supported by horizontals and a counter-movement checking hasty dismissal of the array. The space between the rocks appears perfectly proportioned to their relative size and position, so that they remain a rhythmic whole, not overbalanced by any singularity. Yet the effect is not at all one of artificial mathematical precision. They remain what they are, irregular rough rocks placed without any hint that they are not there at random. They are utterly still and yet they convey an unending dynamic.<sup>58</sup> As the rocks are brought into relation by the space between them, so the space is given definition by the arrangement of rocks. Is it the space or the rocks that the visitor is contemplating? The whole compels comparison with music, but the garden is quite silent.

The Ryōanji *karesansui* is surrounded by a flamboyant lake garden of flowering bushes and hidden paths, where terrapins jostle for a place on the pond-rocks and, drawing the eye to the centre, a small and colourful shrine.

#### THE DAISEN-IN<sup>59</sup>

The ambience of the celebrated dry rock garden of the Daisen-in is very different. It also belongs to Rinzai Zen and is a sub-temple of Kyōto's most prominent Rinzai complex, the Daitokuji. Where the garden at the Ryōanji is given prominence by being both central and hidden, the garden of the Daisen-in and those of the other sub-temples are simply out-of-the-way: they are meant to be so. There is an intimacy about the setting of the garden at the Daisen-in, which is magnified by the design of the garden itself. The one garden wraps itself around all the corners of the building in a single theme which develops like the unwinding of a picture scroll (*emaki*). It unfolds from the North-East to the South-West, following the familiar path of Heian garden streams dictated by geomancy.<sup>60</sup> It incorporates the very architecture of the buildings in its effects, so that it becomes part of the story the

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Deutsch sees in the garden of the Ryōanji the quality of *yūgen* (austere, profound mysteriousness), to be discussed later in connection with *nō*.

<sup>58</sup> "that force-field of a space." Graham Parkes in Berthier, p. 145. Gouverneur Mosher writes: "Nothing moved in the garden, but there was a great feeling of life and motion there" and speaks of "the thrill of watching the garden." Mosher, *Kyōto: A Contemplative Guide* (Rutland VT and Tōkyō: Charles T. Tuttle, 1964), p. 146. Kuitert provides a diagram of the dynamics, Kuitert, p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Appendix 3, Illustrations 3 and 4.

<sup>60</sup> As Günther Nitschke has pointed out in *Japanese Gardens*, p. 93.

garden has to tell.<sup>61</sup> Like a fellow monk of the sub-temple, there is no escaping the garden's character.

In terms of measurements, the plot of the garden, like that of the Ryōanji, is small, barely nine feet wide. But, once again, the garden maker is not constrained by this. With a draughtsman's skill more than a hundred rocks have been placed, not to crowd out the space but to shape it into something more extensive, a Chinese painter's landscape.<sup>62</sup> The eye is drawn back and up and along: high mountain, a tumbling waterfall, a fast flowing stream, its course altered by boulders, a bridge, an island like a turtle swimming against the stream. The sand-stream flows under the walkway and on the further side a boat ('the treasure boat') rides the currents, seeking harbour. This is the garden space as story, as journey, as allegory of life's experience, flowing from the isle of the immortals through the felicities and distractions of daily life.

Following the garden in the other direction, the stream rounds the corner and there, in the South court, what has been so richly delineated spreads out, a wide expanse of rippled sand, unbroken except by the rising of the sand into two still cones and a single bodhi tree in the far corner, concluding the *emaki*. It is perhaps like the sea, perhaps like the eighth scene of the famous (Daoist-inspired) Zen story of the ox-herder.<sup>63</sup> If the garden has been an allegory of the seeker's life, here allegory melts into abstraction, the better to communicate *mu*. The composition of the garden plays every note to attract the attention of the viewer. It is as if all things, all life, find expression in its narrative flow. The garden of the Ryōanji *karesansui*, for all that its beauty induces longing in the heart, encapsulates something that already is: the enlightened life. Contemplation of it maintains the poise of the enlightened mind. The garden of the Daisen-in is for those on the way. It incorporates the distractions of daily life, brings out their beauty as part of a whole composition and shows them leading on towards awakening to Suchness.

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<sup>61</sup> Most especially the roofed walkway bridging the East garden at the point the garden relates to the trials of life: "startlingly bold" according to Hayakawa Masao, *The Garden Art of Japan*, p. 76.

<sup>62</sup> David Slawson details some of the techniques used to suggest depth and mist, including the dark evergreen of camellia and the white wash of the walls; Slawson, pp. 74-75, 87-88, 114, 119-120.

<sup>63</sup> 'The transcending of both ox and self': see, for example, the version of it in Paul Reys, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 133-147, or Pilgrim, pp. 43-52.

### THE ITTEKIKAITAI OF THE KŌMYŌZENJI<sup>64</sup>

The Kōmyōzenji lies down a quiet side-street in Dazaifu, the ancient seat of government in Kyūshū dominated by the ever-popular Tenmangū shrine. This Zen temple was founded in its curtilage in the Kamakura era (1273). Inside the temple is of dark wood, one end housing cinerary urns; at the other, beyond the *hondō*, the Buddha-hall, the right-angled wooden walkway leads to a tea room with *nijiri-guchi*, a three-foot by three-foot ‘crawl’ entrance. These two sides open onto a garden space overhung with low maples and backed by a hillside of larger trees into which an old path of steps disappears. This is a garden of moss and sand which sweep in chasing curves around a naturalistic scattering of rocks, mainly upright. As we have seen previously, a small space is rendered immeasurable, both by arts designed to magnify area (such as the softening of lines towards the rear) and by the balance in proportion and dynamic of its composition.

The garden highlights the best of each of Japan’s celebrated four seasons: the fresh green of moss and maple leaf patterning in Spring; cool and shaded in the heats of Summer; clouds of red and gold in Autumn; and in Winter a carpet of these colours made by the fallen leaves and contrasting with the bare branches or (on rare days in the mild Kyūshū climate) the whole muffled in a fall of snow. The beauty of the Kōmyōzenji is a beauty bestowed by the rhythm of the passing airs, a beauty of changing moods and patterns. In this it stands in contrast to the Ryōanji and the Daisen-in gardens: while dry (*kare*) in that its ‘water’ is white sand, it is not ‘withered’. This is its *fuzei*, designed perfectly to receive what the seasons bring and to display *senzui*. If its sand and moss outline suggest a sea and its shore, then such a suggestion is more than image; it is a universal symbol for human spiritual understanding. And, in its asymmetrical balance, it shares with the Kyōto gardens a presence and stillness characteristic of the *shoin* ‘viewpoint’ design. Its name, the Ittekikaitei, means the ‘One-Drop-Sea’ garden.

### 3. The *Nō* Stage<sup>65</sup>

*Nō*, having nearly succumbed at the Meiji Restoration because it had been intimately linked with the shogunate, came under suspicion again during the Occupation. Earle Ernst was

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<sup>64</sup> Appendix 3, Illustration 2.

<sup>65</sup> Appendix 3, Illustrations 6 and 7.

entrusted with censoring Japanese theatre of all militaristic nationalism in the winter of 1946. *Nō*'s absorption in a single emotion beyond death convinced him it could not be a tool of propaganda. Here is his vivid picture of the first impression that the *nō* stage can give:

You felt you were in the open – both the stage and the long passage-way leading to it were roofed, three real pine trees were planted along the passageway, a width of gravel lay between the audience and the structure. The stage was austere. The roof and the carving on the beams supporting it suggested an extremely chaste, restrained baroque intricacy; the painted pine tree on the rear wall and the curtain at the end of the passageway were spots of color. Otherwise, plain, bare wood – Japanese cypress – created this elegant, empty space. The stage floor, smooth and polished, could have been a stretch of ice. From offstage came the chilling sound of a high-pitched flute.<sup>66</sup>

Nothing in the performance moderated this icy sense: “A fan was raised, or the actor turned, in his heavy, brocaded costume, as slowly as the rising winter sun.” Eventually, when the drama was ended, “no-one moved, for there was yet his long, slow exit.” During his withdrawal down the passageway, the actor, like the ghost he was playing, “seemed literally fading from sight.” Once gone, the audience sat on in silence “as though at vespers.” Ernst comments on this: “Something vaguely religious, ritualistic, had happened, was still happening.”

#### THE FORM OF THE *NŌ* STAGE<sup>67</sup>

The *nō* stage has a presence in its own right. It is not merely functional, unformed space, empty so as to be available to take on the colour of any enacted dream. The light is subdued, uniform. The pitched roof indoors marks the space as set apart; it portends something, an occurrence distinct, at variance to the expectations of daily life, and valued.<sup>68</sup> All is made with quality and precision, with purity of line; not embellished to excite

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<sup>66</sup> Earle Ernst, ‘Noh: An Appreciation’, in Nakamura Yasuo, *Noh: The Classical Theater*, trans. Don Kenny (New York NY, Tōkyō, Kyōto: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1971), pp. 3-18 (pp. 7-8).

<sup>67</sup> Komparu Kunio, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*, trans. Jane Corddry and Stephen Comee (New York NY, Tōkyō and Kyōto: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1983) is an invaluable source of information on *nō*. He was himself member of a *nō* troupe and is an architect.

<sup>68</sup> Komparu Kunio draws a comparison with the roof over the *sumō* ring and with the single umbrella stuck in the ground marking the area in which the outdoor tea ceremony will be performed. Komparu Kunio, p. 111.

anticipation of an enriched experience of life, like one of the grand opera houses of Europe. It is a thing of beauty, telling that this is a place where something has been met and will be again. Its form recalls that of many socially-formative and revered Japanese constructions, not least the precincts of a shrine.

Kenneth Yasuda writes of the uncurtained stage as a metaphor for *nō*, in which believing comes not from an illusion of reality but from experiential understanding of beauty.<sup>69</sup> Orchestra and chorus sit in specially-constructed areas of the stage. Audience can see musicians and the principal, the dancing *shite*, interacting. The lines chanted by the chorus are frequently those of the *shite* or of the *waki*.<sup>70</sup> Sometimes these are inter-mingled; at others, as the *shite* dances, the chorus sings his lines. It is an equilibrium which is innately open. The *nō* stage gives a sense of being held between incompleteness and completion. As another example, the *hashigakari* (passageway) precludes symmetry in the auditorium. The stage is forcefully weighted on one side, yet poised in harmonious tension. As at the Ryōanji the eye does not rest.<sup>71</sup> The events that take place here will take place at a certain somewhere and will be unique to the occasion, but the formal, pared-down nature of the stage anticipates universality to that experience. Poh Sim Plowright interprets the feeling of imbalance engendered by the *nō* stage as presaging the quest for harmony which lies at the heart of many *nō* dramas.<sup>72</sup>

## A THEATRE OF MEMORY

What, then, is the nature of the drama that is played out on such a stage? *Nō* is a theatre of memory.<sup>73</sup> Memories connect times; they depend on and so put value on place and order. One obvious example of this is seen in the performance of the *shite*. The *shite* actor is

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<sup>69</sup> Kenneth K. Yasuda, 'A Prototypical *Nō* Wig Play: "Izutsu"', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 40 (1980), 399-464 (p. 433).

<sup>70</sup> The *shite* is the principal. Many *nō* dramas involve a change between the *mae-shite* of the first act and the *nochi-jite* of the second act, usually the same character with changed costume and sometimes a change of mask, her true identity disclosed. The *waki*, sometimes thought of as an antagonist, may better be thought of as 'the witness'; Komparu Kunio translates the meaning of the word as 'side-doer'. Komparu Kunio, p. 158: "We might rather call the *waki* the coordinator of the play".

<sup>71</sup> Plowright has remarked that the composition of the *nō* stage is "as sparse and vigorous as that of the Zen garden", Poh Sim Plowright, *The Classical *Nō* Theatre of Japan* (Cambridge and Alexandria VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1991), p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> Plowright, *The Classical *Noh* Theatre of Japan*, p. 18. For a further evaluation of the asymmetry of the *nō* stage and the role of the *hashigakari*, see below, pages 98-100.

<sup>73</sup> Plowright says *nō* celebrates memory, pp. 19-20.

nearly blinded by the mask he wears. His movements arise from an internalised knowledge of the stage and of the movements of his own body which operates as instinct. This contributes to the seamlessness of the role: the actor becomes the *shite* in donning the mask and moves accordingly. The design of the stage, its familiarity, proportions, smoothness and gradations, permit this and hence suggest it. Plowright refers also to the clay sounding-jars placed at a tilted angle under the stage so that they reverberate to every sound and footfall. She comments that they are arranged “as if to act as the imagined memory chamber of our subconscious.”

The blind intuition of the *shite* is apposite as memories echo through the meaning of *nō* drama. Many *shite* are ghosts, karmic residue of the attachments of lives, searching for that which they have lost (frequently a lover). The arrival of the *waki* at a place of memories draws them forth, as with the wife of Narihira at the well-curb of the Ariwara Temple in *Izutsu*.<sup>74</sup> These are the ‘phantasmal’ *nō* (*mugen*) in which two worlds meet and time seems suspended. And in those dramas with living *shite*, ‘phenomenal’ *nō* (*genzai*), there are people haunted by memories. The forsaken wife in *Kinuta*<sup>75</sup> recalls her departed husband as she beats on the fuller’s block of the title. In *Sumidagawa*,<sup>76</sup> we first meet the mother whose son is lost as she is driven from the capital by her love in search of him. And, in deriving from Japanese literary classics, incorporating well-known poems, the dramas draw on the audience’s memory: familiarity aids the drama more than novelty. But not for the sake of repetition. The memories which the characters evince are attachments which trouble them and the drama is their search for release. The *nō* stage embodies drama of the significance of emotional trace.

### *KYŌGEN*<sup>77</sup>

These comedy dramas serve as an interval in the *nō* programme and use the same stage as *nō*. *Nō* dramas employ the stage with a practised restraint, expressive of a world conceived of hierarchically. The different areas of the stage carry different meaning. When the *shite* moves from one section to another, the audience is alerted to a change in emotional

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<sup>74</sup> Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 120-132.

<sup>75</sup> Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 160-170.

<sup>76</sup> Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 254-263

<sup>77</sup> On *kyōgen*, see Yoshikoshi Tatsuo and Hata Hisashi, *Kyogen*, trans. Don Kenny, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Osaka: Hoikusha, 1991); Komparu Kunio, chapter 8, ‘Kyōgen: The Beginnings of Japanese Comedy’; LaFleur, chapter 7, ‘Society Upside Down; Kyōgen as Satire and as Ritual’.

engagement. The stage is treated with a care akin to sacred ground during the performance of a rite. When *kyōgen* then erupts onto the same stage, bursting the tense boundaries, it can seem as if all rules have been jettisoned with an almost sacrilegious abandonment. A bamboo pipe for *sake* is passed across from the main stage to the first pine on the *hashigakari* in *Hi no Sake*. The four pillars are used to represent four temple bells of Kamakura in *Kane no Ne*. But it remains the one space. Lamentation and laughter exist in the same world. And underlying *kyōgen* inventiveness is an art as exacting as *nō*, with as precise a care as *nō* for the most meaningful use of the stage.

LaFleur, however, looks behind the *kyōgen* made socially acceptable to the Confucianist Tokugawa shogunate, to its sharper Muromachi era beginnings.<sup>78</sup> It is drama, he argues, from a time of social upheaval; those who cannot take the heat are those whom *kyōgen* dramas ridicule as inept. And while Buddhist monks and *yamabushi* (ascetics) are among the ridiculed, Muromachi *kyōgen* does not cast off Buddhist perception, but rather chimes in with its internal egalitarian logic deriving from the insight that *samṣāra* and *nirvāṇa* are not two. Such an insight gave rise to the playful irreverence of the Zen monk Ikkyū.<sup>79</sup> As the day's programme progresses, the laughter of *kyōgen* is drawn within the compass of that singleness of experience which *nō* generates. Yes, we are all worldly fools but also capable of that fineness of perception and in need of that transcendental resolution with which *nō* deals.

## DIFFERENT WORLDS

The *nō* stage presents different worlds, figured by stage and hidden mirror room (*kagami no ma*), joined by the *hashigakari*. Komparu Kunio says of the mirror room that it is no mere dressing room but "invisible stage", an autonomous space.<sup>80</sup> *Nō* begins and ends there. It is a place of transformation related to spiritual possession. The world of the mirror room can be understood to be a world from which memories, ghosts, beings traversing the *rokudō* are drawn forth. This is an uncertain world, literally edged out of direct human consciousness. But the very hiddenness of the transformation attracts even as it disturbs.

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<sup>78</sup> LaFleur, pp. 139-141.

<sup>79</sup> LaFleur, pp. 146-147.

<sup>80</sup> Komparu Kunio, diagram p. 136. For a detailed account of the *nō* stage see Komparu Kunio, Chapter 9 'The Noh Stage: Symbolic Space'.



Our eyes are drawn from the quiet natural tones of the stage, along the bridgeway to the billowing colours of the curtain,<sup>81</sup> waiting to see what this hidden world has in store for us.

The visible parts of the stage are otherwise. They draw us in by their openness. The *kami*, their presence signified by the pine painted on the rear ‘mirror’ panel, are here. They do not quite belong to the world of the open stage; they rest beyond the stage, known in that mirror (panel). But theirs is not the concealed (and potentially frightening) world of transformations. Their power is at hand to oversee the doings of the lived world we know. And that lived world is the open stage. It is the life we experience: meetings with the gods, the self-mocking laughter of *kyōgen*, the exertion of strength in the repulsion of evil. But in the midst of these there are also the more ambiguous adjustments we are called on by our memories to make, to conscience, to love and to fear (to typify the second, third and fourth category plays). We sit (that most potent of spiritual actions) with the *waki* and await what comes to us through the curtain, down the bridgeway. It is here before all eyes, joined with all eyes, that the typical *nō* rhythm (*jo-ha-kyū*)<sup>82</sup> of our existence will play out and here that we shall seek enlightenment before the return to the transforming unknown beyond the curtain.

And between the two worlds hangs (*kakari*) a bridge (*hashi*). This is not quite the Norse Bifröst, that rainbow path between the world of mortals and Asgard, the realm of the gods. The *kami* are with us; they belong to this organic world.<sup>83</sup> But the *hashigakari* of *nō* joins two different dimensions; Komparu Kunio calls it “time-transcending”,<sup>84</sup> recollecting us visibly to the moment before and the moment after. The *shite* reaches the *shite-bashira* (first pillar) and is poised: “It is before the foot is lifted/ That Hotoke’s dance is

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<sup>81</sup> On the curtain and the significance of its colours, see Komparu Kunio, pp. 145-147.

<sup>82</sup> *jo-ha-kyū*: preparation-breaking-rapid. Zeami explains this rhythm in *Sandō*, in *On the Art of the Nō Drama: the Major Treatises of Zeami*, trans. by J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 148-162. Komparu Kunio sees the rhythm everywhere in *nō*, Komparu Kunio, pp. 24-29. See also Ramirez-Christensen, chapter 6, for its application to *renga*.

<sup>83</sup> Heaven and earth separate from the one primordial whole (*konton*) according to the Chinese cosmology in *The Kojiki: Records of Ancient Matters*, trans. Basil Hall Chamberlain (Tōkyō, Rutland VT, Singapore: Tuttle, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1981), p. 4; and *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 67*, trans., W. G. Aston (Boston MA, Rutland VT, Tōkyō: Tuttle, 1972), Volume 1, pp. 1-2.

<sup>84</sup> Komparu Kunio, p. 124.

performed.”<sup>85</sup> The slim bridge, receding beyond the pines, tantalises with the fear of separation in the illusion of self, the hope of awakening to a nondual reality. And it is always off-centre; we cannot place it. Poh Sim Plowright comments on the feeling aroused by this architectural asymmetry, that the quest for oneness is “a tension which lies at the heart of *Nō*”.<sup>86</sup> It is “an aesthetic of discord”.<sup>87</sup>

## THE ONE WORLD

Is it possible to say which stage is real: the one we see or the one we do not? *Nō* does not remove us to another place. Komparu Kunio expresses this by saying that there is no eschatology in Japanese thought and no end to the cycle of *nō*.<sup>88</sup> In cosmological Buddhist thought this corresponds to the expectation of an endless cycle of birth, death and re-birth: a repeated passing between the two worlds. But salvation in dialectical Buddhism, as LaFleur describes it, consists in awakening to reality which already is. Although seeming bowed under the weight of memory and suffering, I am not held by this; there is no individuated ‘I’ to be trapped. “Form is emptiness”. Nor does this emptiness deny form: “the very emptiness is form”.<sup>89</sup> So I, dancing my grief, and the *waki* who has called this forth from me and I who see myself dancing on stage with my audience member’s eyes are, and are not, two. Forms, phenomena, dharmas are; they are for their own sake. There is no other world to which to go. The hidden stage is the open visible stage. The *mae-shite* is the *nōchi-jite* and is the actor. The mind of the actor and the mind of the viewer is the mirror of the mirror room, reflecting all forms. The back panel does not so much enclose the stage as reveal it mirror-like as the circle of emptiness in which all forms arise.

Likewise, just as Kūkai’s Shingon teaches that to perform *mudra* is to gain enlightenment, so all movement on the stage manifests freedom; it attends that sublime moment when *hana* appears (Zeami’s term, meaning ‘flower’, for unselfconscious perfection in performance) and *yūgen* is felt. “The flower is the mind; the seed is the performance,” is

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted by Plowright, p. 18; quotation from the third category drama *Hotoke*.

<sup>86</sup> Plowright, p. 18.

<sup>87</sup> The title of his chapter on the subject: Komparu Kunio, Chapter 3, pp. 16-29.

<sup>88</sup> Komparu Kunio, p. 41.

<sup>89</sup> *Buddhist Wisdom Books: the Diamond Sutra; the Heart Sutra*, trans. and expl., Edward Conze (New York NY, Evanston IL, San Francisco CA, London: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 81-85.

the way Zeami describes the value of *nō*.<sup>90</sup> Nirvāṇa and samṛsāra are not two but manifest as one on the *nō* stage. So in the same place where there is suffering, as for the deserted wives of *Izutsu* and *Kinuta* ('The Fuller's Block'), there is the space of their release. It is the compassionate bodhisattva ideal.<sup>91</sup> At the end of *Kinuta*, the chorus expresses it so:

See, how from the block she briefly beat,  
its complaint her own, a perfect flower  
has blossomed: the true Teaching,  
now the seed of her illumination  
now the seed of her illumination.<sup>92</sup>

If the stage is indeed a storehouse of reverberations, the imagined memory-chamber of our sub-conscious, as Plowright describes it,<sup>93</sup> then our peace is there.

This nonduality, encompassing the middle (*chū*) plane of truth of Tendai (entering form and entering emptiness held in tension), is expressed in the ambiguity offered in *nō*, which includes poetry, morality, identity. Take *Izutsu*. Plowright enumerates: the moon as symbol both of Buddhist enlightenment and romantic illusion; the wife dressed in her husband's clothes; innocence and betrayal; the fusion of forgiver and forgiven.<sup>94</sup> In other words the ambiguity is no literary device, but structural. The nondual cannot have end, and so cannot have a meaning beneath the surface, any depth or beyond. It is not an ambiguity of undecidedness, but a freeing of the mind from the illusion of a conclusion. This absence of meaning beneath the surface is re-enforced by the composition of *nō*. As music and dance, it is a compilation of *kata*, set patterns, repeated as needed in different dramas. These *kata* act as signs; a simple movement of the hand or fan indicates grief or joy. Yet *nō* is not mimicry. These *kata* are signs which themselves are the signified; they do not give greater weight to something beyond themselves. Each drama is made up (differently) from the same stock elements. The unchanging form of the stage could be considered as *kata* also, and may be another reason for the sense of meaning and form being identical in *nō*.

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<sup>90</sup> As rendered and discussed in LaFleur, pp. 126-127. Zeami, *Fūshikaden*, chapter 3; Rimer and Yamazaki translate it: "The Flower blooms from the imagination; the seed represents merely the various skills of our art." Rimer and Yamazaki, p. 30. On *yūgen*, see below, pp. 103-105.

<sup>91</sup> LaFleur, pp. 125-126.

<sup>92</sup> Tyler, p. 170. See LaFleur, p. 130 for this reading of the drama following Frank Hoff. Tyler emphasises the dramatic: the forgiveness implicit in the revealing of the mutual love of husband and wife, p. 158.

<sup>93</sup> Plowright, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Plowright, pp. 35-36.

Richard Pilgrim recalls Roland Barthes' description of Japanese culture as the 'Empire of Signs': "a radically presentational set of forms which are Empty of meanings".<sup>95</sup>

#### KENMITSU AND THE NŌ STAGE

William LaFleur writes of his motive for his captivating and lucid study, *The Karma of Words*, as stemming from the fascination he felt the first time he saw *nō*: "I was greatly moved by what I saw, but I was also greatly perplexed by the presence in this form of drama of energies, assumptions and aesthetic values that seemed very different from those present in the classical theaters of ancient Greece and Renaissance Europe."<sup>96</sup>

While the *sarugaku* players who developed *nō* were originally employed in Buddhist temples to convey teachings to the people by drama,<sup>97</sup> it is not surprising to find that *nō*, deriving from the age of *kenmitsu*, is not a dramatisation of Buddhist philosophy but a subtle spiritual practice (*dō*) in its own right, including awareness of the presence of the *kami* and honouring them. The beauty of the empty stage in the *kami* traditions, its affecting presence heightened by the painting of a gnarled pine on the mirror panel, *kagami ita*,<sup>98</sup> prefaces restoration and cleansing. It carries associations with that floor on which the shrine maidens dance to welcome the *kami*, (which includes the sense that the *kami* is present in the dancers) and awakens the expectation of the meeting of the human with the divine and of the blessing such meeting will bring.<sup>99</sup>

In *Six Circles, One Dewdrop* Arthur Thornhill is able to reconstruct fifteenth century Japanese religio-aesthetic theories from the secret *nō* treatise of the dramatist Komparu Zenchiku (1405-1468), Zeami's son-in-law, and the commentaries on this written by a

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<sup>95</sup> Pilgrim, p. 70. Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (Hill and Wang: New York NY, 1983).

<sup>96</sup> LaFleur, p. ix.

<sup>97</sup> And so *nō* may be considered to have something of the mystery play in its DNA.

<sup>98</sup> It may be that this painted pine recalls a specific tree, the Yōgō pine at the Kasuga shrine, which is a traditional (and continuing) site for the performance of *nō*. The legend associated with this pine holds that the *kami* of Kasuga, the Kasuga Daimyōjin, appeared there as an old man and danced.

<sup>99</sup> On this, see Komparu Kunio, pp. 3-7, including the derivation from the ancient agricultural sacred spaces, *himorogi*. The chief priest of Kasuga Shrine writes that the *bugaku* dance, which includes the *kagura* form danced in *nō* is "a manifestation of the gods' spirit.": "a Shinto ritual for the enjoyment of the gods and ... the gods have come to 'dwell' in it." Hamuro Yoriaki, 'Of Keeping the Gods' Spirit Alive' in *Bugaku*, (Nara: Kasuga Taisha, 1989).

Kegon Buddhist abbot, and a Confucian scholar, as well as with Zenchiku's own Shintō-influenced commentary.<sup>100</sup> The existence of these commentaries is a further reminder that artistic performance was taken seriously as a way of spiritual development. They also show the age as being one in which religious visions both contended and sought synthesis. Kaneyoshi, the courtier and scholar, is especially concerned to promote "the single flavor of the three teachings."<sup>101</sup>

Thornhill notes that all three teachings value form,<sup>102</sup> in contrast to the dominant fifteenth century Zen line of argument which stressed the inherent emptiness of material forms. Thornhill writes of this in terms of the Kegon doctrine of Suchness-following-conditions (*shinnyō zuen*).<sup>103</sup> But there are differences between the three also. Whereas in Confucian and Shintō thought forms emerge over time, the Buddhist understanding is trans-temporal (or metaphysical), not mimetic but making apparent what is true. This accounts for the recurring sense of verticals, moments of "chorded experience", which Yasuda notes.<sup>104</sup> So we can say that the calm, asymmetrically-balanced space we see on entering a *nō* theatre anticipates the state which Thornhill characterises as "each dharma peacefully abides on a lotus-cushion of Suchness, inherently perfect, filling the entire universe."<sup>105</sup> The *nō* stage exists to awaken us to such ultimate tranquillity in forms.

#### YŪGEN AND THE NŌ STAGE

*Yūgen*, 'calm darkness' according to Hisamatsu Shin'ichi,<sup>106</sup> became central to Zeami's aesthetics. LaFleur<sup>107</sup> comments on its meaning, drawing from the Tendai teaching of *hongaku*. *Yūgen* is able to find delight in what initially appears negative, distant or cold because it holds a sense of depth arising from the awareness of the deep mutual interpenetration of all things. So also the separation between distance and time, observer and observed collapses. LaFleur connects this with the Mādhyamika teaching of Nāgārjuna, and writes (apropos of the *waka* of Saigyō) that "every act of seeing is one in which the seer

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<sup>100</sup> Nakamura translates Zenchiku's term *rokurin* not as 'six circles' but 'six blossoms', Nakamura Yasuo, p. 214. The Kegon abbot is Shigyoku (1383-1463) and the Confucian scholar a courtier of Fujiwara descent, Ichijō Kaneyoshi (1402-1481).

<sup>101</sup> Thornhill, translating Kaneyoshi's commentary, p. 35.

<sup>102</sup> Thornhill, p. 171.

<sup>103</sup> Thornhill, pp. 92-98.

<sup>104</sup> Yasuda, 'A Prototypical Nō Wig Play', p. 401.

<sup>105</sup> Thornhill, p.171.

<sup>106</sup> Hisamatsu, p. 33. Quoted in LaFleur, p. 105.

<sup>107</sup> LaFleur, pp. 97-106.

and the seen not only depend on one another but also bring each other into being.”<sup>108</sup> And the role of imagery is thus altered. An image no longer conveys by convention either sadness or joy; it implies also its opposite. So in *nō* drama certain sounds are evocative of silence, certain motions of stillness. The surface of things is discovered to be their depth: a rejection of a sacred-profane dualism and “a strong reaffirmation of the phenomena of the empirical world.”<sup>109</sup> Experience of *yūgen* acts as the aesthetic equivalent of *zazen*: it conveys tranquillity in observing impermanence with equanimity as ‘the way things are’ (Suchness, *shinnyō*).<sup>110</sup>

The stage’s beauty is conditioned by the aesthetic of *yūgen*. LaFleur notes the interplay of the two construals of Buddhist teaching at work in *nō*. The cosmological can be seen in the dramatic arc in which the *shite* seeks release from the pains of attachment and re-birth through reliance on the saving vow of Amida Nyōrai or begging the recital of sutras. But, he suggests, while this fate of the *shite* may be presented as legally just, it is felt to be emotionally unjust: the heroic nature of the *shite* engages the audience’s sympathy.

The true climax comes otherwise: when the dance-movement of the *shite*, above all in the concluding *jo-no-mai* dance, manifests *yūgen*. In such an epiphany of ‘profound tranquillity’ the beauty and release of the movement concretely conveys “the presence of nirvana in the midst of samsara”<sup>111</sup> in which *shite* and *waki*, actor and audience, all partake. LaFleur writes of *nō* as “religious contemplation of the free, unhindered movement of beings on the stage.” The essential nirvanic freedom of the *shite* in her samsaric conditioning is true in all moments of the drama. And the stage is what it is because it exists to manifest *yūgen*. Its

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<sup>108</sup> LaFleur, p. 105. He insists, however, this disclosure of interdependence is not fusion into one undifferentiated entity.

<sup>109</sup> LaFleur, pp. 95-96.

<sup>110</sup> Izutsu Toyo defines *yūgen* similarly, but with the emphasis on the “non-articulated whole” (sc. Nothingness): “it is a beauty of spiritual aspiration and yearning motivated by the desire to have sensuous images of the non-articulated, non-sensuous reality of eternal silence and enigma in the midst of the phenomenal world.” And so Izutsu can say, “in the idea of *yūgen* the aesthetic factor is rather a secondary development” and also “the connotative configuration of *yūgen* ... may well be suggestive of the typical inner configuration of Japanese aesthetics in general.” Izutsu is not explicitly writing Buddhist interpretation, but draws from the Kyōto school of philosophers. See Izutsu Toshihiko and Izutsu Toyo, *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (The Hague, Boston MA and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981) p. 28, pp. 31f. and pp. 26f.

<sup>111</sup> LaFleur, pp. 130 and 131.

craftsmanship and design celebrate form; its shape invites meditation on emptiness. Its beauty is trace of *hongaku*.

#### IN SUMMARY: THE BEAUTY OF THE *nō* STAGE VALUED IN THREE WAYS

To summarise: the beauty of the *nō* stage is seen in its craftsmanship and in the harmony of its inherited design. We may say the stage allows three occurrences, or one event experienced in three ways: the meeting of *kami* and humans in shared celebration; the revivifying of memories; and the manifestation of nirvāṇa in the midst of saṃsāra, the non-dual. As place where *kami* and humans meet, the *nō* stage is a space of offering and rite; it holds us in the present for the sake of (the prosperity of) the future (or we could say, ‘presents us’). Its beauty is expressive of the sacredness of this offering. As place where memories are re-lived, the *nō* stage serves to arouse attachment, and with this to express joy, loss and sadness. It places us in the past for the sake of resolution (or ‘completion’, Zeami’s word *rakkyō*)<sup>112</sup> in the present. Its beauty is expressive of the value of this unbroken attachment and desire. As place where Suchness (*shinnyō*) manifests in particularity, the *nō* stage is space of form abbreviating to emptiness.<sup>113</sup> It displaces us. Its beauty is expressive of the value of the non-dual and, recalling that such non-duality prevents any hidden meaning, we may say the uncanny beauty of the *nō* stage valorises the non-dual or simply that its beauty is.

#### 4. Shrine Mandalas

The beauty of Japanese imaginative rendering of space, as well as being realised three dimensionally in the construction of a garden and in a performance on stage, may also be seen two dimensionally in painting. The third example of religiously-inspired Japanese art,

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<sup>112</sup> See Zeami, *Shūgyoku tokka*, Rimer and Yamazaki, pp. 126-147 (p. 137-140), who writes also of ‘fulfilment’ (*jōju*); discussed in Thornhill, p. 58, in relation to Zenchiku’s Circle of Abiding, *jūrin*, and p. 74 as the moment of *omoshiroki* and the stage of yin. It therefore does not imply ending.

<sup>113</sup> Such as *kata*. In terms of abbreviation, Komparu Kunio discusses the application of the *shin-gyō-sō* scale of calligraphy to *nō*, usually understood as block, semi-cursive and cursive forms. Komparu Kunio explains that with *shin* the viewer sees the figure first, with *sō*, the expressive part serves to give shape to the blank and is progressively abbreviated. The *gyō* stands between these two. Komparu Kunio, pp. 23-2 and 71-74. For more on the *gyō* form, see below, p. 122, fn. 176.

the shrine mandala, refers directly to cultic practices and beliefs and offers a distinct vision of space as sacred.

Shrine mandalas, in common with other hanging scrolls, such as Zen *ensō* or the later *suiboku* landscapes, conceived space (*ma*) imaginatively. But they reflect a different approach. They are coloured, often sumptuous. These mandalas blend a selection of finely observed and rendered details of a specific place with stylisation and the suggestive and symbolic representation of the numinous. The arresting power they display flows not from the energy of the brush-work so much as from the confident patterning of the belief they assert. Their meaning is associative and referential to a degree that the *ensō* and ink landscapes are not. They could never be recruited for the category of 'Zen art'. But to a similar degree they present a vision from Japan which can linger in the mind and enlarge the capacity to wonder. They are not immediate expressions of spiritual achievement but the devotional offerings of a socially articulated spiritual vision.

#### THE KASUGA SHIKA MANDARA<sup>114</sup>

The *shika mandara* are hanging scrolls depicting a deer with a stylised rendering of the landscape of the Kasuga shrine on the edge of present-day Nara. They were painted from Kamakura times onwards in the ateliers attached to the Kōfukuji, the Nara Hossō (Yogācāra) Buddhist temple linked with Kasuga, founded by the powerful Heian family, the Fujiwara. The Kasuga *mandara* usually belonged in temple halls or among the devotional treasures of associations of lay believers.<sup>115</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> century example in the Nara National Museum may be taken as typical.<sup>116</sup> It is painted on silk, produced either for the use of the monks in the temple or for a private lay owner.

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<sup>114</sup> *Shika mandara* translates directly as 'deer mandala' and is a term for these paintings which was already in use by Muromachi times: see Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography*, (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), p. 143.

<sup>115</sup> In 1325, the retired Emperor Hanazono wrote that everyone had a Kasuga *miya* (shrine-view) mandala. Quoted in Susan Tyler, p. 32. Susan Tyler writes of crisper, more obvious, less expensive mandalas produced to meet popular taste from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when the Kōfukuji was in decline and needed to broaden its support base, p. 6. For further details on the *kō*, see Susan Tyler, pp. 145-148.

<sup>116</sup> Appendix 3, Illustration 8. Nara National Museum, *Exhibition Catalogue: Shinto Gods and Buddhist Deities: Syncretic Faith in Japanese Art*, trans. Michael Jamentz (Nara: Nara National Museum, 2007), Plate 108.



The *mandara* displays a tri-partite horizontal structure leading the eye upwards: Kasuga plain at the base, saddled deer in the centre over a cloud covering the shrine precincts, to distant hills and sky. The *shika mandara* makes present a landscape that is sacred and real, epitomised by Mount Mikasa; it is obscured by cloud, not because it lacks value but rather because it is sacred, inexhaustible and one whole. The shrine's first *torii* occupies the central foreground with wide path leading in, coloured in an earthen golden-brown. It almost overplays its part as gateway to the sacred. The *mandara* places us at the entrance to a world that is the one we know and can visit and at the same time is a locus for awakening into a *kenmitsu* vision which encompasses both natural beneficence and salvific compassion. Indeed its purpose is as an instrument of such awakening, an object of beauty and meaning to arouse us to devotion.

The deer portrayed in Nara National Museum's *shika mandara* is sturdy, yet rendered with a delicate hand. It stands alert with the sensitivity and implicit swiftness that deer display. But it also exudes intelligence, confidence and nobility. The deer is present as the messenger of the *kami*, coming on its cloud like a bodhisattva bringing aid. And every deer at Kasuga, represented by those deer depicted inside the shrine grounds, is in some sense a messenger of the *kami*, never to be killed. In the mandala they roam among the cherry blossoms of Kasuga, which play on the meaning of the name (Kasuga - 'Spring day' or 'Spring sun'): renewal comes where the deer come. Deer traverse the boundary between the known and the unknown, the plain and the wilds of the mountain, source of life-giving water but also place of death. They appear out of the woods as reassurance of the goodwill of Kasuga Daimyōjin.<sup>117</sup> The deer in the mandala is saddled, and the devotee is reminded of that legend associated with the Fujiwara family that their *kami* have graciously come at the need of humankind. It carries a *sakaki* branch as *shintai* of the *kami*, entwined with the Fujiwara symbol of wisteria as the fortunes of the family are entwined with the goodwill of their divine ancestor and protector.

The central object of the *mandara* is the mirror-like disc on the saddle and the five *honji butsu* arrayed there. A mirror in *kenmitsu* thought stands for the empty mind, which is the awakened mind, as the mirror unifies by dissolving dualism. It is also *shintai* of many *kami*,

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<sup>117</sup> Royall Tyler translates the term *myōjin* as 'Presence', partly for its indeterminate quality; this would make *Daimyōjin* read 'Great Presence'. Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, p. 294.

including at Ise, and is paradigmatic of *kami* worship.<sup>118</sup> In the legend of the heavenly rock cave, the mirror was placed by the Fujiwara ancestor, Ame-no-koyane-no-mikoto.<sup>119</sup> Here it emanates where the five sanctuaries of the Kasuga shrine would be seen, if the covering cloud were to lift. Each *kami* was linked as *suijaku* with different Buddha and bodhisattva *honji*. Nevertheless the numinous at Kasuga was frequently referred to as Kasuga Daimyōjin, a composite divine power encompassing the five major *kami* enshrined there and indeed all the minor *kami* of the shrine also. Buddhist influence, far from demanding stricter identification, gave philosophical underpinning to this deliberate uncertainty by understanding all identity as dualistic and therefore relative.<sup>120</sup>

Mount Mikasa's pleasing gentle conical shape covered by lush forest has been attractively rendered in a variety of colours and shapes giving a sense of depth and also of hiddenness or mystery. In a typically Japanese aesthetic device the hill is seen left of centre. It draws the eye in that direction, even as the deer's turned head below draws the eye from left to right. This produces the asymmetrical balance which we have already encountered in the *karesansui* gardens and the *nō* stage. It quietly witnesses to the presence of the hill not as idealised hope but as experiential reality, a source of spiritual power contributing to and standing for the whole.

The asymmetrical balance is strengthened by the position of the celestial orb still further to the left over the mountains. This is likely to be the morning sun. And as Grapard points out, this would mean the moon, symbol of enlightenment, would be understood to be at the viewer's back or, we might think, in the place of the viewer who in full enlightenment looks on.<sup>121</sup> In giving such singular prominence to the sun, the mandala honours Amaterasu the

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<sup>118</sup> Kageyama Haruki, *The Arts of Shinto*, trans. and adapted Christine Guth (New York NY and Tōkyō: Weatherhill/Shibundo, 1973), p. 35. Susan Tyler writes, "Without interference the deities exist without reflection. They only know themselves and enjoy themselves when they are offered an image." The mirror is the perfect symbol of this exchange. Susan Tyler, p. 52. She quotes the interpretation by Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293-1354) of the meaning of the mirror as sacred treasure (in *Jinnō Shōtōki*) as embodying the virtue of honesty: Susan Tyler, p. 84. For *Jinnō Shōtōki*, see Wm. Theodore de Bary and others, p. 362.

<sup>119</sup> The luring of the sun *kami* Amaterasu from the cave is a myth central to Ise and Imperial rule; Aston, Volume 1, p. 49.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, the following from the *Shun'ya Shinki* (earliest copy 1437): "When Fukūkenjaku enters the meditation of Fukufunnuō [wrathful form], he manifests Kasuga Daimyōjin, and therefore is one in substance with Fudō". Quoted and discussed in Susan Tyler, pp.172-175.

<sup>121</sup> Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods*, p. 200.

sun *kami* and, by extension, the Emperor her descendant whom the Fujiwara serve. The sun also refers in Buddhist thought to the world Buddha Dainichi Nyōrai, the central object of devotion in esoteric Buddhism from which the world of mandalas derives. It may also reflect the name 'Kasuga'.

But as well as being painted in gold, there are versions in which the orb is painted in silver. The moon above Kasuga, linked with the deer's cry and Autumn, became familiar motifs in Kasuga-inspired poetry.<sup>122</sup> In addition to indicating enlightenment, the full moon was object of a meditation in Shingon practice (*gachirinkan*). In this meditation the moon is linked with the mirror and the visualisation of the *honji*.<sup>123</sup> The moon also carries overtones of rebirth (paralleling the sun in the East), especially when used in connection with Amidist beliefs, as on the pilgrimage of another cult, that of Kumano.<sup>124</sup> Royall Tyler has offered a third explanation of this orb: that it is to be understood as both sun and moon, *kami* and buddhas, Emperor and minister. He cites the poem by the 12th century Fujiwara poet, Yoshitsune:

The morning sun  
brilliant in a clear sky  
over the Kasuga hills,  
leaves a lingering sign:  
the moon of an autumn night.<sup>125</sup>

If this is correct then the Kasuga mandalas lay claim to religio-aesthetic comprehensiveness (which can be noted in the mandalas of other shrines too), including emphasising the non-duality which was the creed of the Kōfukuji and into which a devotion to the shrine can awaken the devotee. Thus the Kasuga *shika mandara* in all its main features honours the Daimyōjin, protector and trace manifestation of the Dharma. The *kami* manifest in the deer-messenger, in the *sakaki*,<sup>126</sup> in the wisteria as symbol of the clan descended from the *kami*, in the mirror and moon/sun and in Mount Mikasa, as well as in the *honji butsu*.

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<sup>122</sup> Royall Tyler, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity*, p. 134.

<sup>123</sup> On the links between this and the production of incised mirrors and votive plaques, see Ishida Hisatoyo, *Esoteric Buddhist Painting*, trans. E. Dale Saunders, (Tōkyō, New York NY: Kodansha/Shibundō, 1987), p. 168.

<sup>124</sup> Ten Grotenhuis, p. 175.

<sup>125</sup> Royall Tyler, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity*, p. 133.

<sup>126</sup> The carrying to the capital of the *sakaki* as *shintai* of the Daimyōjin was a well-rehearsed and much-feared form of political protest organised by the Kōfukuji: the 'Yamashina Method'. See Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods*, pp. 137-141.

## OTHER KASUGA MANDALAS

Other Kasuga mandalas depict not only the shrine precincts at the foot of Mount Mikasa, but a Pure Land rising above (*Kasuga jōdo mandara*). In one the Pure Land of the bodhisattva Kannon, Fudarakusen, rises into the sky above Mount Mikasa.<sup>127</sup> Believers are shown arriving by boat at the foot of Fudarakusen. Susan Tyler quotes Gedatsu<sup>128</sup> to illustrate the immediacy of the appeal of Kannon's Fudarakusen: "It is in the same world as our own, and there is no doubt that one of inferior capacity can be born into it."<sup>129</sup> There is also a Kasuga mandala at the Nōman-in of the Hasedera which depicts Śākyamuni's Pure Land very skilfully.<sup>130</sup> The bottom part of the painting shows the now familiar scene of the shrine with its four sanctuaries and deer grazing. The upper part is filled with the golden halls of Śākyamuni. The bodhisattva Jizō leads a monk, understood to be Gedatsu, into the Pure Land in a manner reminiscent of Amidist *raigō* (a painting of Amida approaching, often as consolation for the dying). Kasuga flows into the Pure Land and souls cross to it. These mandalas assert that the awakened reality of the sacred land of Mount Mikasa and the Kasuga Plain (rendered in natural colours) is the Pure Land of Buddhist salvific hope (painted in gold and the noble and cosmic dark blue associated with lapis lazuli<sup>131</sup>). In the *Kasuga Gongen Genki*, Gedatsu hears words in a dream spoken from the sky by the Kasuga Daimyōjin:

Know me as I am!  
The Buddha Shakamuni  
came into this life  
and lo! the bright moon  
now illumines the world.<sup>132</sup>

A further level of association was consciously made by recalling that Śākyamuni preached in the deer park of Varanasi. It should have come as no surprise to Myōe that the Kasuga

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<sup>127</sup> See the discussion and reproduction in ten Grotenhuis, pp. 159-162 and Figure 94.

<sup>128</sup> The Nara Buddhist lineages such as Hossō were revived in Kamakura times by the scholarly devotional practices associated with Gedatsu (1155-1213) at the Kōfuku-ji and Myōe (1173-1232), a Kegon monk. Both were opponents of Hōnen's reduction of belief to the practice of *nenbutsu*, and known for their devotion to the *kami* of Kasuga. Indeed one famous *nō* drama, *Kasuga Ryūjin*, recalls a vision of the *kami* received by Myōe which prevented his travel to India. Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 142-155.

<sup>129</sup> Susan Tyler, p. 133. Quoted in ten Grotenhuis, p. 161.

<sup>130</sup> On this mandala see Susan Tyler, pp. 178-182 and ten Grotenhuis, pp. 147-149.

<sup>131</sup> For an account of the significance of these colours, see ten Grotenhuis, pp. 81-83.

<sup>132</sup> Royall Tyler, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity*, p. 262. Quoted in ten Grotenhuis, p. 155.

Daimyōjin promised him that the spiritual riches which he hoped to find in India were rather to be sought in the sacred ground of Kasuga.

#### KASUGA SHIKA MANDARA AS MANDALAS

It may be asked in what sense the Kasuga *shika mandara* may be designated as mandalas. The mandala is an esoteric representation of the heart of things in their complete and perfect form. The word came to be applied to gatherings of the faithful and the gathering of the symbols of all things in order on the altar in the place of training. Painted mandalas are in origin representations of these altar top symbolic compilations of reality.<sup>133</sup> The making of mandalas entered Japan from China in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, most notably with Kūkai, the founder of Japanese Shingon, who brought with him from China the Womb World mandala (*Taizōkai*) and the Diamond World mandala (*Kongōkai*). The former refers to this phenomenal life, in which is found the tathāgatagarbha, the Buddha-nature. The latter refers to the unconditioned, the absolute buddha realm. In Mahāyāna there cannot be any hierarchical relationship between the two worlds. Both are true; they are non-dual. Hence they are frequently juxtaposed as the mandala of the Two Worlds.<sup>134</sup>

How are such mandalas connected to the Kasuga *shika mandara*? A brief and true answer is that the esoteric use of mandalas so permeated Japanese religious consciousness that the word was extended to cover all diagrammatic encapsulations of belief. But there is more to it than that. From the experience of *kami* worship, Susan Tyler suggests, “The sense of orientation within a landscape may have influenced the ready acceptance of Buddhist mandalas, which contributed system and philosophy to this ordering process.”<sup>135</sup> From the point of view of Esoteric Buddhism, its understanding of the tathāgatagarbha as indicating the essential sanctity of the phenomenal world led its practitioners to look at all aspects of their culture as already imbued with the Buddha-nature and therefore as potential skilful means by which the Buddha’s compassion would save human beings. So *shugendō*, mountain asceticism, could see a whole mountain as *shintai* of the *kami* and treat it as a mandala, ascended with effort that is at once both devotion and developmental

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<sup>133</sup> This definition of mandalas follows Sawa Ryuken and Sawa Takaaki, *Art in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*, trans. Richard L. Cage (New York NY, Tōkyō: Heibonsha/Weatherhill, 1972), p. 88-89.

<sup>134</sup> Ten Grotenhuis notes that the two mandalas act as a unit and suggests they were considered together as a kind of tally, following the use of these in Chinese government practice and religious Daoism; ten Grotenhuis, pp. 74-76.

<sup>135</sup> Susan Tyler, p. 113.

meditation.<sup>136</sup> To regard the shrine mandalas is to invite meditation on the whole by means of a part. It is to make a pilgrimage there, to seek renewal in purity and to strengthen the will to awakened knowing by heightening the sense of the Buddha's compassion.

The reader may wonder whether these mandalas were painted to propagate Buddhist truths or to reinforce an attachment to familial *kami* and a local community.<sup>137</sup> Susan Tyler extracts from the diaries of the Fujiwara courtier Kujō Kanezane, the *Gyokuyō* (12<sup>th</sup> century), to show how the Kasuga mandalas were used.<sup>138</sup> Kanezane received "one scroll painting of Kasuga shrine from the high priest in Nara" (presumably the abbot of the temple, who was his brother). He purified himself, put on ceremonial dress, bowed and offered "a thousand *tendoku* of the Heart Sutra" (that is, speedy symbolic readings, maybe no more than the title itself). He then offered one paper offering at each of the four sanctuaries, as well as at the Wakamiya and other shrines, bowed and retired. This rite was followed for seven days: "This is a very difficult practice", he comments. At the end of the seven days he returned the painting "along with a mirror to serve as a treasure for the god." "I and others confirmed in our dreams that the shrine had come here. It is truly worthy of belief."<sup>139</sup> Later prominent laymen such as Kanezane would be likely to have their own copy of the Kasuga mandala. This diary account shows that devotees treated the presence of the mandala as the presence of the shrine itself. The offerings are made to the *kami* and it is thought that *tendoku* of the most popular Prajñāpāramitā sutra is the correct offering. Effectively the mandala itself is *shintai* of the *kami*; a different version of the *sakaki* branch. Presence is also a fruit of religious practice: a dream-vision received as reward, which we may consider to be stimulated by the continual attention given to the mandala. What we are encountering with Kanezane, as with Gedatsu and Myōe, is one influential unitary faith embracing both *kami* and buddhas, earthed in the settlements and social relations of the land, and nurtured through practice that was at once experiential, religious and aesthetic. Grapard, reflecting on the making and use of shrine mandalas, typifies Fujiwara beliefs, writing that they "believed their cultic centre was a transcendental

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<sup>136</sup> For a classic treatment of *shugendō*, see Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: a Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975).

<sup>137</sup> Recollecting that in medieval times the Kōfukuji held authority over the whole province of Yamato. Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods*, p. 95.

<sup>138</sup> For the range of uses, see Susan Tyler, pp. 36-37.

<sup>139</sup> Susan Tyler, p. 30.

space, a cosmic zone of dwelling, part of a metaphysical land that had flown to and landed in Japan ... an other-worldly 'isle' set in the midst of an ocean of transmigration."<sup>140</sup>

#### THE BEAUTY OF THE SHRINE MANDALAS

Can the shrine mandalas be described as beautiful? They came to be produced in great numbers to answer an appetite for calling on the aid of the Daimyōjin, cultivated by the *kō*. Certainly many of the products are stilted or stiffly conventional. But the best of them echo the delicacy and intelligence of the age. This is not accidental. Kasuga and the Kōfukuji could call on the talents of the best. But additionally aesthetic response stood at the fountainhead of both *kami* worship and Buddhist teaching. Buddhism came to Japan in strength because of its absorption of Chinese (and Indian) culture. And for those schools of Buddhism which emphasised the Buddha-nature of this present world, beauty was an obvious skilful means. Kūkai was in no doubt about the value of art and that its worth was enhanced by beauty:

Eternal truth transcends colour, but only by means of colour can it be understood ... even when art does not excite admiration by its unusual quality, it is a treasure which protects the country and benefits the people. ... The various attitudes and mudras of the holy images all have their source in Buddha's love, and one may attain Buddhahood at the sight of them. ... Art is what reveals to us the state of perfection.<sup>141</sup>

*Kenmitsu* understood that natural objects by their being and beauty preach the Dharma.<sup>142</sup> Mount Mikasa's gentle conical shape adheres to the native ideal and in representations of the shrine it takes pride of place before the loftier Kasuga range. Shrine worship encouraged certain arts, such as *nō*, as worthy offerings. In one episode in the *Kasuga Gongen Reigen Ki*, the Daimyōjin appears to an Abbot to remind him that as music and dancing are heard in the Pure Land, they are also appropriate to offer at Kasuga.<sup>143</sup> That Shintō remained rooted in this world of phenomena explains the readiness to depict recognisable scenes in paintings, mandalas and handscrolls. Their iconography was never so

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<sup>140</sup> Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods*, p. 92.

<sup>141</sup> Quoted in de Bary and others, p. 155.

<sup>142</sup> William R. LaFleur, 'Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature, Part II', *History of Religions*, 13.3 (1974), pp. 227-248. And Susan Tyler quotes from the *Heike Monogatari* to show the beauty of the landscape at Kumano (referred to below) preaching the Dharma to Taira no Koremori, pp. 128-129.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods*, p. 97.

rigid that it precluded individual treatment and the subjects attracted artists capable of great beauty and originality as well as the conventional.

#### THE EXAMPLE OF NACHI<sup>144</sup>

A comparable mandala from another shrine may help to make the point that the artistically accomplished representation of natural beauty is a consequence of the religious thinking that underlay the production of shrine mandalas. In Tokyo's Nezu Art Museum there is a hanging scroll, paint on silk, dating from the Kamakura period and depicting the waterfall of Nachi, which is one of the pilgrimage sites for visitors to the Kumano shrines.<sup>145</sup> The waterfall is of impressive height and its inherent beauty may account for the worship it has engendered. It is itself considered the *shintai* of a *kami*. This painting appears entirely naturalistic; there are no *honji butsu* and no unusual features: the falls tumble from their cliff in a manner recognisable from photographs today.<sup>146</sup> But the artist has rendered them with such skill that they convey a powerful presence of continuous, unchanging movement, suggestive of the numinous, an essence of the cliffs over which they fall made liquid and light.

Like the Kasuga *shika mandara*, the scroll has three distinct portions. The topmost portion shows heavily wooded hills and the sky, with an orb of light half-appearing there. At the base of the scroll the falls split into three streams, partially obscured by the rocky outcrops and trees and, hidden among cedar trees, there are the roofs of the *haiden* (worship hall) of a shrine.<sup>147</sup> The falls themselves appear in the space which in the *shika mandara* would be occupied by the deer and *shintai*; they connect the distant (and sacred) realms of the mountains and heavens with the familiar earth-bound woods where people gather to pray and seek aid. The falls are understood as *suijaku* of the dragon-like *kami* Hirō Gongen whose *honji butsu* is Senju Kannon and are also linked with Fudō Myōō. Nachi was also associated with Amida and the Pure Land monk Ippen (1234-1289) who received at

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<sup>144</sup> Appendix 3, Illustration 9.

<sup>145</sup> Also reproduced in Kageyama, *The Arts of Shinto*, p. 133, figure 138. For consideration of the Kumano mandalas, see ten Grotenhuis, chapter 8. For detailed investigation of the beliefs attached to Kumano, see Moerman, *Localising Paradise*.

<sup>146</sup> Compare the scroll with the photograph in ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, p. 164, figure 95.

<sup>147</sup> Sherwood Moran writes that the placing of the *haiden* suggests that the falls themselves are to be understood as the *honden* (the presence hall), as it would be in a shrine. Sherwood F. Moran, 'Nachi Waterfall: A Painting of the Kamakura Period' in *Ars Asiaticus* 56 (1958), pp. 207-216 (p. 215).



Kumano the vision that set him on his spiritual journey. There are pictures of Amida that show him emerging as the moon over the hills to guide souls to his Western Pure Land, some of which are located at Nachi. Kageyama comments aptly on the Nachi falls scroll that “the religious impact of this simple landscape scene is strikingly like that of the more conventional *Amida Emerging from the Clouds*.”<sup>148</sup>

Royall Tyler writes of the beauty of “the patterns of intuition woven into cults” such as these, “informed above all by conceptions of sacred landscape.”<sup>149</sup> The elements he cites which provoke such intuition are myth, legend, history, dream, Buddhist doctrine, yin-yang lore and the unlikely linking of Buddhist and Shintō deities. In the Nachi scroll, the picture of the waterfall in moonlight is one of the Buddha inserting saving influence into the world through the form of the *kami* (the dust).<sup>150</sup> It conveys its spiritual sense by the beauty of its composition and execution (which Kageyama terms “extremely innovative”).<sup>151</sup> Those who had performed rites or meditated before this scroll could go to Nachi on pilgrimage and see the falls through the eyes of this artist and believer, finding the sacred in the natural. It is first and foremost through artistic beauty that this spiritual message is conveyed. This may be no less true today. Nagai Shinichi writes that he was “thunderstruck by the dynamism of the painting” of Nachi Falls in the Nezu Museum: “My lifelong desire to visit Kumano became a firm resolution.”<sup>152</sup> He goes to “this remote and mysterious place where god and nature were one” and finds himself, although confessedly not religious, praying. Kumano, he writes is “more a state of mind, to the Japanese, than a place-name”.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Kageyama, p. 134. For the *Amida Emerging from the Clouds* see figure 121, p. 126.

<sup>149</sup> Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, p. 293.

<sup>150</sup> The scene is reminiscent of one depicted in the poetry of Komparu Zenchiku in his *nō* drama *Tatsuta* (Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 298-308):

From lofty heavens the Divine cascade  
spills with bright moonlight,  
dashing waves high  
before the Tatsuta Presence.

Tyler comments on the waves splashing high that this reversed flow in the presence of intense spiritual power suggests rising aspiration to enlightenment which complements the descent of saving influence. Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, p. 307.

<sup>151</sup> Kageyama, p. 134.

<sup>152</sup> Nagai Shinichi, *Gods of Kumano: Shintō and the Occult* (Tōkyō and Palo Alto CA: Kodansha International, 1968), pp. 19-20.

<sup>153</sup> Nagai Shinichi, p.7.

To conclude, the shrine mandalas are products of imaginations inspired by the beauty of a particular place to a religio-aesthetic vision which sees all as charged with the presence of the numinous in such a way as to awaken us to life's true being. They employed their tripartite structure to render beautiful in art this *kenmitsu* vision of the Buddha's descent to mingle with the dust: beauty as aid to us in our illusion. The Kasuga deer indeed comes as messenger. Royall Tyler calls this "a poetic and religious world now lost for ever",<sup>154</sup> following the forced separation of Buddhism from shrine worship in Meiji times, the cultural revolution of *shinbutsu bunri*. While that is true, the beauty of its echoes continues to stir us, as Nagai Shinichi witnesses, and may come to us whenever a deer wanders out from the wooded mountain.

## 5. Connotations of Space Fashioned by the Arts of Japan

And if beauty calls us in the arrangement of a *karesansui* garden, the craft of the *nō* stage or the paths of a Kasuga mandala, what will its language convey?

Inoue Mitsuo, writing of what he terms the tendency of later medieval forms of Buddhism to reject images, detects a shift from the substantial to the spatial. Taking the example of narrative scrolls, he contrasts the richly-detailed late Heian era *Genji monogatari e-maki* with the thirteenth century *Ippen Shōnin e-den*, in which half the surface is given to mountains and clouds.<sup>155</sup> There grew a sense of the beauty of empty space (*yohaku no bi*), reflected in the fourteenth century *Tsurezuregusa* of Kenkō: "People agree that a house which has plenty of spare room is attractive to look at and may be put to many different uses."<sup>156</sup> He rails against too much together: "too many brushes in an ink-box; too many Buddhas in a family temple; too many stones and plants in a garden".<sup>157</sup> Kenkō (1283-1350) muses on the emptiness of mind, like the mirror that can reflect all things.<sup>158</sup> But his more dominant note is of preference for things that are old and indeed dilapidated and it is human impermanence which brings sensitivity to the beauty of things: "If man were never

<sup>154</sup> Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, p. 298.

<sup>155</sup> Inoue Mitsuo, *Space in Japanese Architecture*, trans. Watanabe Hiroshi (New York NY and Tōkyō: Weatherhill, 1985), pp. 135-136.

<sup>156</sup> Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kenkō*, trans. Donald Keene (Tōkyō, Rutland VT, Singapore: Tuttle, (1981), §55, p. 51.

<sup>157</sup> Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness*, §72, p. 64.

<sup>158</sup> Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness*, §235, p. 192.

to fade away like the dews of Adashino, never to vanish like the smoke over Toribeyama, but linger on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us!”<sup>159</sup> Hence Kenkō can write: “possessions should look old, not overly elaborate”.<sup>160</sup> Dilapidated lodgings; unmelted snow around a deserted temple by the light of the dawn moon: these set Kenkō’s aesthetic brush in motion, but the more so because each scene shelters a pair of lovers, people of taste.<sup>161</sup> It is this juxtaposition of the vanishing of things and the promise of their arising which piques his appreciation. “Are we to look at the cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring – these are even more deeply moving.”<sup>162</sup>

The signs of the changing seasons and the presence of death permeate the *Tsurezuregusa*, the touchstone of medieval Japanese aesthetics. In these we can understand analogy with the *sō* (abbreviated) stage of composition<sup>163</sup> and the beauty of space: what we value is enhanced by the emptiness around it, not only spatially but temporally; our lives, like *sōan*, are permeable. So we may interpret the medieval *sō* stage of composition as an articulation of this sense, ultimately a sense of the sacredness of daily life. That the gardens surrounding the Zen *shoin*, those most domesticated of monastic rooms, should be dry gardens, such as those of the Ryōanji and the Daisen-in, perfectly illustrates this.

#### FASHIONED SPACE AS MATRIX OF HUMAN SENSIBILITY

Tanizaki Jun’ichiro (1886-1965), in his essay on Japanese aesthetics *In Praise of Shadows*, attempts to show how Japanese sensibilities arise naturally, that is from the material conditions of life in the archipelago. Tanizaki downplays deliberate invention. A Western sense that art (including architecture) copies or represents a greater reality is absent. Tanizaki’s concern is not only with the material but even more with the movements of the human heart. It is the effect on our sensibilities of the grain of unvarnished wood or of light through a paper screen that has led to their universal adoption in Japan (and Tanizaki’s attempt to preserve their future). Our typical human responses are to be accounted an

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<sup>159</sup> The phrase “power to move us” translates *mono no aware*, the quality Motoori Norinaga was later to find so prominent in Heian literature. Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness*, §7, pp. 7-8 and fns 1,2, and 3.

<sup>160</sup> Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness*, §81, p. 70.

<sup>161</sup> Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness*, §104, p. 85, §105, p. 88.

<sup>162</sup> Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness*, §137, p. 115.

<sup>163</sup> For the *shin-gyō-sō* scale, see above, p. 105, fn. 113.

aspect of that environment: what we do is also an activity of nature. When we fashion natural materials we do so not to alter or perfect them but to render them more themselves, more natural, by rendering them more efficient, more beautiful, more culturally acceptable. Nature not only includes human activity, but is to be understood through the lens of human feeling.

So when artists treat space, they prevent it from being mere quantity and allow it to be natural space, that is, space to arouse human feeling. Gardens such as *roji* afford a clear example. Space is experienced as expanding through the taking of time. It is the spending of the time required for this varied sensory walk which prepares us for taking time on arrival in the tea room so that we experience it as spacious: of a size to hold our attention and still the illusion of an acting self. We give time and find space. The second aspect to note is the attentiveness given to what is a moment of transition. If all is uniformity, then we shall be impoverished in our connectedness with space; its very spaciousness will be lessened by the monotony of our response to it. If all is static, then we shall find our propensity for objectifying and grasping, for dualistic thinking and self-centredness, grows. And if all is suddenly changed, then again our experiences will tend to separation rather than to overcoming duality. The stronger reality, and so the greater spaciousness, belong to that space given through transition, the liminal space.

The shrines of Japan also illustrate this.<sup>164</sup> There are field shrines close to the villages and shrines deep in the mountains, but the majority rest at the foot of the mountains, often of the home mountain, in space that is a border of the human and the divine world, the known and the unknown, the safe and the dangerous. These shrines came to be surrounded by ancient groves.<sup>165</sup> The protection of the groves was at issue in pre-Heian Japan; its outcome afforded an occasion when *kami*-worship secured a measure of political and critical distance from the advancing continental thought-forms and practices.<sup>166</sup> Walking through the stillness of such groves as the untouched cryptomeria of Ise or the

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<sup>164</sup> Nitschke, *From Shino to Ando*, pp. 22-27.

<sup>165</sup> Augustin Berque, 'The Sense of Nature and its Relation to Space in Japan', in *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. by Joy Hendry and Jonathan Webber (Oxford: JASO, 1986), pp. 100-107 (p. 106). François Macé, 'Woods and Sanctuaries in Japan', in *Cultural Diversity and Transversal Values: East-West Dialogue on Spiritual and Secular Dynamics*, ed. by Samantha Wauchope (Paris: UNESCO, 2006), pp. 111-119 (p. 116).

<sup>166</sup> Sonoda Minoru, 'Shinto and the Natural Environment' pp. 32-46 of Breen and Teeuwen, pp. 38-39.

woods of Kasuga, one seems to walk deeper and further than expected, out of what we own and into an unfamiliar world shared with other life. Time has gathered, space expanded. The carefully nurtured simplicity of such groves provides a space between: our humanness is reconstituted as connected to the *kami* and all being. It is here, and not on the more impressive and distant mountains, that most Japanese have more frequently found their hearts stirred.

#### FASHIONED SPACE AS INTERPERSONAL

The above should make it sufficiently clear that space is not a negative concept in Japanese culture, an absence. Rather space brings together. It is a necessary and welcome arena of potential from which our humanity - as *ningen* - arises.<sup>167</sup> We carry, each of us in ourselves, between-ness. Attention is paid, not to any detached element (an 'individual') but to relations. We may recall that *nō* is drama composed of interchangeable units (*kata*) but forms a distinct whole. And, as Nitschke does not fail to point out, the Japanese person is recognised not by individual characteristics but by role in the group.<sup>168</sup>

This understanding of life has also been traced in the shape of urban development. Barrie Shelton writes that cities in Japan are not enclosed areas, formed by aggregation of compositional elements, but rather are defined by human activities. Hence, whereas North American cities typically present a profile shaped like a sine curve, rising to the tower blocks of downtown in what Shelton terms "conquering through building", Japanese cities appear irregular, the eye has no mastery over them. They are made up from a number of repeating box- or egg-like districts, each with a hard outer shell of high-rise commercial buildings, a lower-rise area for retail and a 'soft' centre of low residential buildings.<sup>169</sup>

As space, then, in Japan is understood relationally, it follows that the artistic rendering of space is also always likely to bring together. Many of the arts can be typified as performative. From Heian era incense games through medieval linked poetry (*renga*) to *nō* performances and the tea gatherings of Sen no Rikyū, the most prized arts have been those

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<sup>167</sup> For *ningen*, see below, p. 138.

<sup>168</sup> Günter Nitschke in *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>169</sup> Barrie Shelton, *Learning from the Japanese City: West meets East in Urban Design* (London and New York NY: Spon Press, 1999), p. 11, quoting from Peter Popham, and p. 159. See also Augustin Berque, 'The Sense of Nature and its Relation to Space in Japan', p. 107, who writes of "a city with crevices".

which have been performed by people brought together, particularising time and space. The beauty of the setting for the tea ceremony derives from this relational and particularised understanding.

#### FASHIONED SPACE AS MANIFESTATION OF NON-DUALITY AND OF EMPTINESS

Japanese fashioned space carries traces of form, is permeated by emptiness (*kū*) and is experienced as flux (*mujō*). This is to say, it presents the conditions of human experiencing of non-duality (*mu*).<sup>170</sup>

What we experience as space is pause or check between two times or two defined places (forms). The space avoids being substance in itself and thereby retains its potential for manifesting life. The corner posts of a house serve to create the space (*ma*) which is the important, living element. Or, it may be that to make such a clear distinction retains too much of the sense of substance to space. Space contains a trace of form just as forms exist as form by retaining a trace of space. Komparu Zenchiku expressed this in terms of music in *nō*; “within the interval there is a beat, and within the beat there is an interval.”<sup>171</sup> Such understanding chimes well with Tendai’s Three Truths, reading the *ma* of musical interval as the *kū* of philosophic emptiness. Zenchiku’s insight suggests also something of the interpenetrability of all things that is taught especially by the Kegon school and further that, in the words of Zenchiku: “In all performances the interest lies in the fact that actions have a transient nature.” Our very forms carry in their formation something of space and hence not of solidity but of flow.

In considering the rock garden of the Ryōanji in these terms, we can recall the beauty of dynamism at ease felt in the composition of the rocks. Comprehension of the forms of the rocks takes into account the space between them. Any of the rocks presents a shape that is solid when considered in one way but also a hole in the air when considered from another viewpoint. It draws the eye across the intervening sand to the next rock. It would be difficult, and probably untrue to the garden, to fix on just one rock. It is the flow between them which makes the impression. In such ways do rocks, the most solid reservoirs of

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<sup>170</sup> Izutsu Toyo, in a penetrating essay on the philosophical meaning of Sen no Rikyū’s *wabi* aesthetic of abbreviation, speaks of it in this way: things and events with *wabi* “naturally come to show quite a characteristic inner configuration as a temporal reflexion of the inner dynamics of the non-temporal structure of Nothingness.” Izutsu, p. 52.

<sup>171</sup> Quoted from Komparu Zenchiku’s *Go-on sangyoku shū* in Thornhill, p. 46, fn. 131.

energy, display fluidity and their participation in the transience and insubstantiality of all things. This artistic use of space can also be thought of as manifesting a return to origins, just as the blank part of the paper in a work of calligraphy is different from but recalls the blank paper before the brush-work was done. In Buddhist terms, this would be returning from illusion of substance in form. But in the extract noted above Zenchiku writes employing the language of the *kami* traditions, speaking of the interval as the “state when heaven and earth have not yet divided”: space here not as salvific but as purifying.

Space is not understood as negative, as lack of some thing, nor as static. On the *nō* stage space can readily be understood as flowing or oscillating.<sup>172</sup> Komparu Kunio cites *Sumidagawa*.<sup>173</sup> In this drama the movement skilfully heightens the tension of the emotions disclosed by repeatedly contrasting, in the one space of the stage, the civilised setting of the capital and the wilds of the provinces to which the distraught mother’s search takes her, a contrast which sets in motion the suggestion of sanity slipping into madness. The fluid nature of the stage space leads us to understand that duty and love, sanity and madness, are not absolute distinctions but arise within each other. The sense is that not merely the depiction of space but its reality is fluid: the continuing arising and vanishing of forms and dharmas. There can and does mutate into here. Void emerges temporarily as agent.

And space has its own formation, articulated by removal of form: the place from which form is taken away can become the place of greatest attraction. The shrine sites at Ise illustrate these perceptions.<sup>174</sup> Both the Naiku and the Geku (inner and outer shrines) present two sites, side by side. One is the current shrine site, multiplely fenced around, for offering and presence. The *chigi* (crossed finials) and *katsuogi* (ridge poles) of the shrine buildings rise tantalisingly above the fences, suggesting activity: presence in a world of forms. But beside them is another space. Here there are no protecting fences, no buildings, no suggestion of movement or of business being conducted, no hidden secrets. The space is of a size with the first; it is similarly strewn with rocky gravel. But it is open and almost entirely empty. One small wooden hut stands at its heart, a covering for the place where the *shin-no-mihashira* (sacred pillar) will be buried, which is understood as *shintai* of the

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<sup>172</sup> Komparu Kunio, pp. 90-91.

<sup>173</sup> Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 251-263.

<sup>174</sup> Komparu Kunio, p. 72.

*kami*. After twenty years this site will become the compound for the renewed shrine, and the present shrine site will stand empty as this one currently does.

What in the *kami*-reverencing traditions are patterns of renewal, ways of recovering pristine purity, register to the eye accustomed to Buddhist thought as intimations of the arising and dissolving of all forms, as *mujō*. We look on the empty sites of the Naiku and the Geku, know them in their peacefulness and are drawn to them by what is not there. We find through them a pattern for our whole world: one of flux, of insubstantiality and, in a reading Richard Pilgrim takes from Roland Barthes, “a radically presentational set of forms which are Empty of meanings and belong more to the ‘interstices’ between things (cf. *ma*) than to the things themselves.”<sup>175</sup> Komparu Kunio, when writing of “abbreviation” in the arts of *ma*, speaks of this duality, this double presence of formed and unformed, as the *gyō* stage in the *shin-gyō-sō* sequence which he seems to track between *ke* and *kū*.<sup>176</sup> Taken by itself, the unused shrine site would present the *sō* stage. It is not difficult to follow such abbreviation in *nō* or in the garden arts. At the Daisen’in for example, the gardens as they wrap around the buildings follow just such a pattern, ending in emptiness, articulated by the two cones of sand. A parallel understanding may be read in those shrine mandalas which have been reduced to a few elements, the deer in the Kasuga *shika mandara* and the waterfall in the Nachi mandala. These elements deriving from nature stand as a kind of trace of the greater whole; Komparu Kunio’s ‘one post’. In such a reading, the world from which the natural elements come is *ma* and the blessing of the *kami* or the awakening offered by the bodhisattva is the form.

The non-duality of Buddhist thinking reminds us that all of this can be seen the other way around: in the Pure Land mandalas duality that points to non-duality is especially evident. Is what is real Kasuga’s Mount Mikasa or Kannon’s Pure Land of Fudarakusen which rises above it? This question corresponds to the *gyō* stage in which form and space become interchangeable. In pursuing the question of what the medieval Japanese artist conveys by the language of *ma* we find that space is transformational, space of our awakening, which draws us into what is real: the *ma* of the artist, we find, is sacred.

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<sup>175</sup> Richard B. Pilgrim, p. 70.

<sup>176</sup> Komparu Kunio, pp. 71-72: “In a *gyō* composition the decision regarding the relationship of figure to ground rests with the viewer”.



## SPACE AS SACRED

Designating space (which involves the designing of space) has always carried the charge of the sacred in Japan.<sup>177</sup> A place is marked out with *shimenawa* and is kept apart as *yorishiro*, temporary resting place of the *kami*, sometimes described as a 'landing place' of the *kami*. Nitschke identifies one such *shiki no himorogi* at the Geku, with evergreen at its centre, currently sacred to the guardian deities of the shrine, and another, the Takimatsuri shrine, at the Naiku, which holds just a stone set on a bed of pebbles.<sup>178</sup> In these places the untamed and the cultivated meet. The southern courtyards of Heian *shinden*, the origin of *karesansui* gardens, echo this sense of the sacred. We mark a space that the gods may come to us with their blessing. Allan Grapard, writing of mountains as just such sacred spaces, itemises three reasons for their significance: their importance for agriculture (providing the water), as a meeting place, and as the site of death.<sup>179</sup> These three reasons could without difficulty be interpreted along the line of Tendai's Three Truths: death as entering the void (*nyūkū*); the cultivation of crops as entering the provisional (*nyūke*); and encounter as recognition of the "perfectly balanced codependence" of *kū* and *ke*.

It was under the influence of esoteric Buddhism and the *kenmitsu* system of religious practice that emphasis on meditation came to allow for an interiorisation of the sense of *ma* as sacred.<sup>180</sup> We meditate on the mandala and find in its geometrically arranged outward forms the non-duality of all, and that our experiential world of forms is none other than *nirvāṇa*. While form, and accompanying ritual, remained important for Shingon, later configurations of belief adapted its understanding of the esoteric nature of phenomena. For Jōdo, Zen and Nichiren practitioners, the activities of daily life carry as much religious significance as the special rites of the sacred. In Zen, the entire realm of human activity is the site for the realisation of buddhahood.<sup>181</sup> We perform our daily actions meditatively and so realise awakening - and the *Shōbōgenzō* of Dōgen contains pages of advice for monks on how to do so. The Pure Land tradition contributed the emphasis on the 'field' of the Buddha (especially that of Amida), that realm, of which there were myriads, in which

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<sup>177</sup> Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, p. 29.

<sup>178</sup> Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>179</sup> Allan Grapard, 'Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness: toward a definition of sacred space in Japanese religions', *Buddhism: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies, Volume VIII, Buddhism in China, East Asia and Japan*, ed. by Paul Williams (London and New York NY: Routledge, 2005), pp. 137-160 (p. 141).

<sup>180</sup> Grapard, 'Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness', p. 144 and p. 159.

<sup>181</sup> See Grapard, 'Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness', p. 158.

true awakening was being realised. In its Kegon antecedents, all Buddha fields are present in this world, even in the smallest speck of dust.<sup>182</sup> The word for field, (*ba-sho*), retains something of its agricultural sense as a field of (divine) cultivation. The secularisation of symbols, which LaFleur sees developing from the advent of these new Kamakura era forms of Buddhism, is not a loss of a sense of the sacred but its extension to all subjects.<sup>183</sup>

Grapard writes also of the mandalisation of space in medieval Japan.<sup>184</sup> The mandala, in symbolically recreating the encounter of Buddha and disciple, gives access to vision of all in simultaneous presence.<sup>185</sup> Once (through Shingon practice) the integration of the absolute and the relative had been realised, it was natural to project the mandala over geographical areas. So Mount Kimpusen/Yoshino and Mount Koya came to be understood as the Diamond and Womb worlds respectively. Peoples' (ascetic) behaviour in these landscapes then became part of their spiritual way, finding by their actions in a sacred area (such as pilgrimage) identification with the absolute. When the whole nation was under threat of invasion from Yuan dynasty China in the late thirteenth century, the sense developed that the space of the nation as a whole is sacred; the whole nation is a mandala for spiritual realisation.<sup>186</sup> This chimed in well with the existing myth of the nation as the fruit of the divine union of the *kami* Izanagi and Izanami and the intent of the shrine rituals to return to this divine origin. Once these mental moves had been made, then any fortuitous combination of circumstances could be taken as material for edifying associations. Grapard cites the twenty-eight temples of Usa-Hachiman expressing the twenty-eight books of the *Lotus Sutra*, and the many correspondences of the seven Sannō shrines at the foot of Mount Hiei.<sup>187</sup> As we have seen, such correspondences, far from being discounted as far-fetched, were oxygen for the *kenmitsu* system. Human perception, including artistic sensibility, was expected to enhance natural space to make it more truly natural and, through being so, more numinous. Grapard says of such mandalisation that it was "one of the most distinctive expressions of the Japanese perception of time, space and man's

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<sup>182</sup> McMahan's reading of the *Gandavyūha*, David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York NY and London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 117.

<sup>183</sup> LaFleur, p. 25. However, his example, the poet Bashō, is from the seventeenth century.

<sup>184</sup> Grapard, 'Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness', p. 149.

<sup>185</sup> McMahan's description, p. 170 and p. 172.

<sup>186</sup> Grapard, 'Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness', p. 154.

<sup>187</sup> Grapard, 'Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness', p. 157.

activities.”<sup>188</sup> We could add that for the artists, and for those who find compelling beauty in their work, medieval Japanese art and, by extension, all life lived thus naturally, is to be understood as mandala, space of the realisation of vision.

Japanese medieval art draws the heart to the beauty of *ma* because in doing so it intends to restore the original presence of the divine (whether *kami* as *suijaku* or Buddha and bodhisattva as *honji*), manifesting the trace of the non-dual, in which it understands that our awakening rests.<sup>189</sup> We find the space is also in and of us in our transience, and is the space of our relating, our ‘between’. Indeed these arts of *ma* were often fashioned as acts of compassion. If, then, in Japan space generates relations and so gains a sacred character (the expressive power of which can be enhanced by artistic skill), can Western Christians find in the deliberate attractiveness of this *ma* a place of meeting? And can we accept and learn from its characteristics as flowing, mutable, and as most fruitfully articulated through abbreviation; in other words, as expressive of *kū*, the emptiness of no self-nature, in its relation to form? If so, we are likely to find in this *ma* of the artists, this cultural space, figuration of the room God’s love makes for us and fresh occasion for the address to us of the wholly other, wholly engaged God of the Christians.

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<sup>188</sup> Grapard, ‘Flying mountains and walkers of emptiness’, p. 158.

<sup>189</sup> Faure, rejecting the idea (of Eliade) that Ch’an (Zen) space is amorphous, argues that emptiness, just because it is structure, “needs to be objectified”; Bernard Faure, ‘Space and Place in Chinese Religious Traditions’, *History of Religions* 26.4 (1987), 337-356 (p. 350).

## Chapter Four      GOD AND THE CALL OF BEAUTY

### 1.      What Beauty Does

Can the experience of beauty in the *ma* of Japanese arts have theological value for Christians? This section contends that our experiences of beauty lead us to intensification of life, while themselves remaining inexhaustible. In faith we can receive them as call and promise, occasions of divine self-disclosure. If this is so, then we can expect the same from the *en* (allure) of Muromachi arts, even as it manifests the realm of Suchness (*shinnyō*). The following section considers the particularities of artistic beauty and then the proposition ‘beauty calls us to act within the Field of Love as beauty acts and so to become persons’, commenting on each of these terms. This is not intended as a complete theology or phenomenology of beauty, but as explication of what is meant here by ‘the significance of the affective’. While consideration of the relation of such significance with the action of the Holy Trinity is held over for the subsequent section, the following account draws broadly on the theological presentation of beauty by von Balthasar and also on those of Patrick Sherry and Richard Harries.<sup>1</sup>

#### ART

Beauty, “the quality that gives pleasure to the sight”<sup>2</sup> (and, we can add, to the other senses), arouses joy and occasions desire. It is aptness of form to being: not a functional utility but a freedom from that confinement by which form falls short of the potential of the existent. As such, beauty holds out hope of untrammelled participation in life. This initial account stands true both for beauty perceived in the natural world and for that beauty consciously shaped by the hand of a human maker. But it is the beauty of our art with which we have most affinity. Here we consider three reasons.

First, in fashioning art we interpret the world and in doing so we also hold our humanity before us. As through our art we look a second time at an aspect of the world in which we

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Richard Harries: *Art and the Beauty of God: a Christian Understanding* (London, New York NY: Continuum, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> The definition of ‘Beauty’ given in *Chambers 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary*, ed. by E. M. Kirkpatrick (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers, 1983).

are set, we are regarding our own perceiving also. Such reflexive awareness opens us to the mystery of our creative perceptiveness as a phenomenon of the world, and thereby intimates the mystery of the world, of the forms we see: their inexhaustibleness in their perceptibility.<sup>3</sup> The world is a watched place, and we continue to regard it because it can never be fully seen and known, not least because we as watchers can never fully penetrate ourselves. The act of interpreting reveals mystery. In summary, our art is always other than mere experience recorded: it is a second, self-reflexive, way of knowing.

Second, in fashioning art, including the act of making sense of a work of art, we become more of what we are, expressions of meaning. In other words it is not simply the results of our making which affect us, but the process as well. Our art, in its fashioning as well as in its existence, acts as a language which, telling of the world, becomes a further reality both in and over against the world. And while we discover ourselves to be makers, this too is mysterious. There is something about our art which does not originate with us. We do not create *ex nihilo*; our art is made through us but not entirely by us. Discovering this as we make, our artistic processes of fashioning become a journey of discovery. We find ourselves dependent as human beings, and in some degree are ourselves made, at that very point of artistic creativity at which we experience ourselves to be most freely human and effective in our connectedness to and penetration of all that is.<sup>4</sup>

Third, our art as a way of communication is formative of human community, which is to say of our humanity. In our art we teach each other what it is to look at the world, to perceive, to imagine. We bind ourselves to one another as makers in a conversation about the meaning of the life we lead. And the world we mutually inhabit we shape after the fashion of the forms we have built, painted, played and danced - and after the fashion of those we have yet to make. The world ceases to be undifferentiated space and becomes place that

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<sup>3</sup> Von Balthasar writes of works of art, "They shine from day to day with a new never-spent freshness"; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory. Volume I: Truth of the World*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 143 (and see also p. 224, where he accounts for this in terms of "light from within"). And John O'Donohue quotes Rilke from his 9<sup>th</sup> Duino Elegy: "Perhaps we are here to say: *house*, / ... [etc.] ... / To say them more intensely than the things themselves / Ever dreamed of existing." From John O'Donohue, *Divine Beauty: the Invisible Embrace* (London: Bantam Press, 2003), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Compare from a secular point of view this account of the role of tradition and community in artistic fashioning: Deborah J. Haynes, *The Vocation of the Artist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

we have called into being for the exercise of the human spirit and so we bind ourselves to this world also.<sup>5</sup> Graham Ward, arguing that the operation of beauty is to beautify, writes that its intellectual content is “the recognition of relations in their gifted particularity.”<sup>6</sup>

None of these three points should lead us to dismiss the value of natural beauty or to rank art as of higher spiritual value, as did Hegel.<sup>7</sup> Natural beauty maintains an immediacy of otherness which may in our self-made art be deferred. And the possibility of self-reflexiveness exists also in the perception of natural beauty. To quote John O’Donohue again, “Perhaps because they are so much themselves, wild landscapes remind us of the unsearched territories of the mind.”<sup>8</sup> The distinction between natural and fashioned beauty becomes difficult to maintain (and especially so with Japanese art which has an understanding of the natural which embraces human artistic activity). Once we perceive an area as a landscape, or even *as* natural, we have already begun fashioning it for our understanding and memory, drawing on our inherited stock of artistic perceptions.

Nor is the above account to dismiss the value of art that is disturbing and falls outside our customary perception of beauty. If with effort we find such art by its form opens our eyes to new meaning, we shall be thankful for this awareness and the enhanced connection with the reality of the world which it brings to us. The disturbing form will be held in our memory now linked with appreciation of this meaning and preserved to us by our continuing desire to grow. With the aptness of its form to being (which can be defined here as existence as meaningful), we come to see such disturbing art as beautiful.

## BEAUTY CALLS US

To say so is to understand beauty not as objective or detached quality of an object, something we may comment on but which does not concern us. There is a dynamic aspect

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<sup>5</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw expresses it this way: only in art does life become reality, grow out of the human being. “Art is a means by which man subjugates life.” Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: the Holy in Art*, trans. David E. Green (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), p. 300.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Ward, ‘The Beauty of God’, in *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*, ed. by John Milbank, Graham Ward and Edith Wyschogrod (Harrisburg PA, London & New York NY: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 35–65 (p. 61).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the account of Hegel’s transformation of aesthetic philosophy in Mark C. Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 37-45.

<sup>8</sup> John O’Donohue, *Divine Beauty*, p. 32.

to beauty as quality: it effects change. And this dynamic aspect is directed; it is *ad hominem*, personal to the one who encounters it (while offering sufficient commonality of experience that there can be agreement as to its quality).<sup>9</sup> Beauty can be said to be relational – inhering in the relationships to which forms give rise. If something is hard, that is measurable, comparable by scale. If something is beautiful, it stands in relation to the perceiver or perceiving community. It is known not by how much but as itself. When we compare two beautiful things we may find qualities about which to say, ‘This is more beautifully X than that’, but the beauty as such of any object is unique to it; it is incomparable. The relation in which it stands initially is with us. But while beauty stands in relation to us as perceivers, it is not ours to command. We are inheritors of a language, our canons and interpretive semiotics of beauty, and at the same time there is a givenness to our experiencing of beauty, as exemplified by the fact that we are able to find beauty in the unfamiliar. There is an irreducible this-ness, a word we can only use of what stands in relationship to us. Beauty is given; it comes gratuitously.

The above account indicates that beauty is neither subjective, in the eye of the beholder merely or category of our value perceptions, nor objective, a measurable property or inherent quality. Goutam Biswas, an Indian phenomenologist, draws on Buber and Polanyi to define the relationship with art as dialogical,<sup>10</sup> such that the perceiver ceases to be a self-authenticating subject, objectifying a work of art, and instead lives in relation to the work of art. The work of art, he says, can be considered to be a ‘quasi-subject’, active in generating new meanings, and the perceiver is changed by these. The artwork calls forth trust: our intention to know and to live in (Biswas says, “pour ourselves into”) new forms of existence.<sup>11</sup> Here is the reason for valuing beauty: in its attractiveness, we trust it (to varying degrees) to offer us life.

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<sup>9</sup> When we speak of the beauty of a thing, this is in intention a public language not private. Furthermore we aim to converse with others not in an invented code which we subsequently project onto a material world without regard for that world’s reality but seeking an accurate description of what is mutually experienced. See Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, pp. 108-116 on Intimacy’s interpersonal approach to the rationality of aesthetic appreciation.

<sup>10</sup> Goutam Biswas, *Art as Dialogue: Essays in Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Biswas, *Art as Dialogue*, p. 78.

Further, beauty does not draw us into a timeless gaze which takes in everything at once and so excludes time. Beauty makes itself felt in scenes. What we see (and *a fortiori* hear) we see and hear over time. We combine registering a whole form as beautiful image with awareness of its existence arising from and resting temporarily on multiple actions and meanings (including our own). In this way we could say image combines the seen and the unseen, so crystallising those events that the image becomes interpretation of them. It is this dual aspect of image combining what is present and what emerges over time I label 'scene'. Scenes activate emotions and memories and therefore future action. They are energy capsules for human willing. And among the most powerful such images are those which attract and continue to do so, scenes of beauty.<sup>12</sup> Their effect is transformative. It is not that we capture beauty but that it captures us.<sup>13</sup> Beauty, stored within us in scenes, continues to prompt us to action and thus to inform our personal development, so that we find we commit ourselves to our affective responses as witnessing to truth. To resist this, we have to choose to do so (as we saw that Watsuji did at Nara)<sup>14</sup>: beauty calls us.

#### BEAUTY CALLS US TO ACT

Inoue Yōji at the start of *The Face of Jesus in Japan*<sup>15</sup> draws our attention to the power of the affective. As a young man he was encouraged to visit a leprosarium and found himself in a room with one of the patients. Made self-conscious by his fear of leprosy, Inoue was unable to register even the beauty of autumn leaves outside the window, much less see the beauty of the life and character of the person before him or act on his intention to offer comfort: "I had lost my presence of mind." Inoue identified his paralysis as hypocrisy, an unwanted dislocation of his presenting self from the truth within him: "Trembling inwardly, and yet behaving as if there had been nothing to worry about, to act as a friend only a day and to go back to the world feeling relieved next day". He was rescued from this dissolution

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<sup>12</sup> Compare Dulles' plea (versus Pannenberg) to avoid making a clear-cut distinction between what comes through history and what comes through symbol. Dulles' category is revelation, which could be considered the core meaning of all call. Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1992), pp. 65-66.

<sup>13</sup> McMahan, commenting on Buddhist art, notes the distinction between Cartesian 'ocularism', objectifying aesthetic experience as something seen only with the seeing individual in control, and Augustine's 'synaesthesia', exposure of all the channels of human sensing and therefore of the individual to beauty understood as from a single source. David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York NY and London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 'Introduction', pp. 1-14.

<sup>14</sup> See above, Chapter One, pp. 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 11-14.



of self by an act of gentle empathy on the part of the elderly patient, who spoke with him and drew attention to the leaves: “a hypocrite was I in a sense, the old patient knew it well, and yet he seemed to forgive and comfort me, ‘It’s all right. I understand.’” For Inoue this memory was connected with the beginning of acquiring a “presence of mind”, a hold on truth. And the nature of the event as “something like the thought that I had been forgiven” came to him as a scene of beauty: “a certain warm thought, like a piece of pink tellina shell left on a beach”.

In this story alienation renders Inoue unable to register beauty with its healing power. But the patient can see beauty and acts as beauty acts (forgiveness like a piece of pink tellina). In doing so he opens eyes to beauty and initiates healing and a journey of becoming for Inoue. As *The Face of Jesus in Japan* testifies, this is a journey which is dependent on unearthing truth and, in that pursuit, pays close attention to the experience of beauty. Inoue’s term for the operation of truth is “uncovering the subject”. He means by this to acknowledge truth’s disclosive power, but also to emphasise that what truth discloses is not knowledge ‘out there’ for our possession, but what involves, implicates us. It requires our response and so requires moral choice. In this way it uncovers who we are. However, we can tell from Inoue’s image of the shell that we need immediacy of delight in form (and its memory as scene) to educate us in truth and prompt the choice of the good. In doing so we also broaden our appreciation of beauty.

#### BEAUTY CALLS US TO ACT WITHIN ‘THE FIELD OF LOVE’

The term is from Inoue. As noted earlier, as well as reflecting the Mahāyāna understanding of the interpenetration of all things (dharmas), figured in the jewelled net of Indra, it carries a further and more obviously salvific resonance, that of the Buddha-field, or sphere of salvific influence and realm of enjoyment body, such as Amida’s Western Paradise. And in some traditions this present phenomenal realm is understood as another such Buddha-field, apt for awakening us from illusion.<sup>16</sup> Nishida Kitarō posited the Field of Nothingness. Japanese Christian theologians responded with metaphysical variations: Yagi’s Field of Integration dependent on the Transcendent beyond existence and Mutō’s Field of the Inversion of Polarities. Inoue, withdrawing from abstract metaphysics to theology, comments on the trust with which artists can treat events of this world. He finds in them (and others, not least some who suffer) an intuitive immersion in what life brings. That this

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 217-218.

trust is not misplaced is borne out by the tenor of their works (and in some cases their lives – Inoue cites the poet Ryōkan) and therefore Inoue is able to interpret these same works and lives as witnesses to a fundamental beneficence of being which he attributes to the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit. Lives that advance trust are lived in this field of interpenetration, which is revealed to the eyes of faith to be one of divine love.

Beauty's call to act is call into this field. It requires us to trust ourselves to it – Augustine's 'synaesthesia' – in such a way that who we are is formed through responding to this beauty. And, as at the leprosarium, we find that we cannot divorce the experience of beauty from questions of truth nor from the requirement to choose what is good. At the simplest level, if beauty is but deceptive veneer or propaganda for what damages the conscience, it will lose its attractiveness (that is, its ability to satisfy while continuing to attract). There is that about the trusting self-giving beauty invites which penetrates deeper than (while not abandoning) the aesthetic pleasure beauty affords and tends to unity with goodness and truth.<sup>17</sup> In these ways the nature of the field, recognised in response to beauty, may appropriately be designated 'love'. A Christian account of this is that God's Spirit freely sustains all in grace: life comes from and for divine love. Life bears the stamp of that love and can be witness to it. Beauty's call to act, then, within the Field of Love is call not only to trust life but to respond to the Giver of life, to respond to love with love.

In the Scriptures *The Wisdom of Solomon* 13: 5-7 presents a qualified account of beauty as a source of theological perception:

from the greatness and beauty of created things  
comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.  
Yet these people are little to be blamed,  
for perhaps they go astray  
while seeking God and desiring to find him.  
For while they live among his works, they keep searching,  
and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful.

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<sup>17</sup> The unity of the transcendentals is a major theme in von Balthasar's theology and further highlighted in the *Epilogue* to his tripartite theological opus, where he presents their unity in the image of a Cathedral; *Epilogue* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2004), trans. Edward T. Oakes. Form is beautiful to us only because in it the truth and goodness of the depths of reality are manifested and bestowed; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 118; cf. *Theo-Logic I*, p. 142. He sums this up in his aphorism, "Beauty retails the mystery of being on every street corner." Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I*, p. 224.

The people are right to keep on searching where they are looking; their problem is assuming the beautiful (and the powerful) things themselves to be gods (verse 3). But the author offers no comfort to those searching – they should have found the true Lord of these things sooner (verse 9). In practice, we depend on another form of grace as revelation to find the true Lord.

John O'Donohue, writing *Divine Beauty* with life in the rural West of Ireland in mind, suggests the shelter which beauty affords to human flourishing. Beauty is our home against the storm: inhabited by us, natural, provisioned by God, an arena of life. In this vein he speaks of the heart as tabernacle,<sup>18</sup> recalling the Tabernacle (and later the Temple in Jerusalem) when human craftsmanship appropriately and beautifully fashioned the meeting place for God and humankind, the touchstone of the calling of the people of Israel, both pattern and destination.<sup>19</sup> Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration suggests building shelters (three tabernacles), and he does so saying, "it is beautiful for us to be here."<sup>20</sup> When God gives the experience of divine presence, it is experienced as beautiful and prompts fashioning tabernacles of human hearts and lives which puts disciples in mind of making shelter, an arena of life, a culture. Here then is the Field of Love into which beauty calls us: it is the field of divine presence, God's gift. It is our natural home but that is not to say it is always interpreted aright from the many occasions of beauty in this world of God's creating.

Nor it seems did Peter get it right: those three shelters were not built. Staying put was not the point. Instead the beautiful vision led to them descending the mountain and in company with Jesus setting their faces to Jerusalem, a ministry of prophetic challenge, sealed in death. The Greek word for 'beautiful' used by Peter, *καλος*,<sup>21</sup> has a range that includes occasions which we would describe as 'good'. The vision, and the presence, issued in moral choice. The Field of Love, manifest to us by the call of beauty, engages us in willing

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<sup>18</sup> John O'Donohue, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> For the craftsmanship of Bezalel, filled "with the divine spirit, with ability, intelligence and knowledge in every kind of craft", see *Exodus* 31: 1-11. cf. *1 Kings* 7: 13-14 and *2 Chronicles* 2: 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> *Mark* 9:5. Also *Matthew* 17:4 and *Luke* 9:33. The usual translation is 'good', as given in NRSV.

<sup>21</sup> Von Balthasar translates Peter's use of it in this passage as 'delightful', *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 567. He discusses Plato's range of use of *καλος* in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: a Theological Aesthetics. Volume IV: The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*, trans. Brian McNeil and others (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), pp. 201-215.

what is good and in witnessing to what is true. These belong to one another, even if realising their unity costs us effort.

#### BEAUTY CALLS US TO ACT WITHIN THE FIELD OF LOVE AS BEAUTY ACTS

How does beauty act? Beauty is self-authenticating: it compels unaided by any utilitarian end. Where truth compels by its accuracy, its explanatory value, and goodness compels by its effect in nourishing conscience, there is an immediacy to beauty which precedes our assent.<sup>22</sup> We know it is beauty by its claim on us, not by any effects of that claim. We may know every detail of the origin of any particular beautiful form.<sup>23</sup> We may know how it works an effect on us.<sup>24</sup> What we can never fully comprehend is its presence, its continuing attractiveness; which is to say, the why of its existence.<sup>25</sup> Beauty fascinates in its irreducible gratuity. It is its own worth and as such we cannot exhaust it. There is something apophatic about this most sensory of qualities. In transfiguring the material, beauty acts as mystery making present what is beyond our comprehension. To speak so of beauty is to suggest it is analogous with the revelatory and sacramental.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Von Balthasar terms this beauty's "immediate salience", *Theo-Logic I*, p. 223. It is this immediacy which accounts for him beginning his theology with aesthetics before moving to the good and the true, an order which re-implicates the creation in the divine: we have to learn to see aright, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory. Volume III: The Spirit of Truth*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 21. This accounts also for the prominence this present study understands our response to beauty to have in preparing us for the moral action and truth-seeking across the gap of faiths necessary to voice our human praise of God.

<sup>23</sup> The question of the intentionality of the artist was the concern of the Waseda University School of Aesthetics, where it developed into a debate between those who saw the quality of aesthetics resting in the ideas of the artist (now considered a mis-application of German philosophical Idealism) and those who posited an artist working 'naturally', that is intuitively and free from conceptualising. Marra ed., *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>24</sup> This phenomenological concern was developed in Japan by the Tōkyō University School of Aesthetics; see Marra ed., *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, pp. 14-17.

<sup>25</sup> The Kyōto School of Aesthetics, under the influence of Nishida Kitarō, developed an existential account drawing on Zen constructions of reality as Nothingness (*mu*). Marra, ed. *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, pp. 18-22. In Western philosophy also, the notion of 'presence' can itself be understood as non-unitary, comprehending what it is not, what is not present. Ramirez-Christensen sees the relevance of this to Japanese art and gives an account of this in the teachings of Saussure and Derrida in their turn from metaphysical logocentrism; Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 31-33.

<sup>26</sup> Noel Dermot O'Donohue criticises von Balthasar's move from the term 'beauty' to that of 'glory', as concealing a lack of real correspondence between the transcendental and the divine attributes, recommending 'subjective glory' ("clear knowledge with praise") as a more helpful term. Von Balthasar sees real correspondence between the created and what

That mystery is sovereign; it precedes any expectation we may conceive. But it is also prevenient in laying its claim on us. It calls: 'Here is that with which you have to do.' And among the many ways we may find ourselves addressed by the untouchable presence of mystery, beauty offers the most immediately compelling. In calling to us, beauty draws us and we know it. Von Balthasar writes in his theo-aesthetics of any image that it acts as fulcrum of two interiorities: our own and, by extension, the interiority of some other.<sup>27</sup> These two are hidden from us. We can never fully see ourselves nor someone else. The image brings these two into relation and figures that relation, allowing an "intercourse of interiorities". What the gratuitous epiphany of beauty does is to make us, the recipient of that beauty, object of the relation, overturning any expectation that we may control the relating of our interiority or be the detached judge of another's interiority or manipulator of the image. Beauty others us: it shows us our own interiority as mysterious to us. At the same time, beauty mothers us: that is, it makes present that unseeable interiority and marks it as relational, as resonating with other interiorities, equally unseen, unseeable, loci of mystery.

While Japanese aesthetics do not single out a transcendental concept as exact parallel to Western ones of beauty, Japanese artistic traditions identify qualities of the aesthetic which convey the mystery of existence. The Heian era aesthetic of *aware* valorised what moves us, and especially those things which in their temporality touch us with melancholy. Zeami's writing on *yūgen* was cited above, together with Izutsu Toyo's metaphysical explanation.<sup>28</sup> Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen recovers the notion of 'allure' (*en*) as expounded by Shinkei and his fellow *renga* poets in the Higashiyama era. She writes of it as both "the compelling quality of the hidden realm of principle as it subtly manifests itself in phenomena" and as "inner grace", "the quality or emanation of an ideal person". That the term *en* should be attached both to persons and phenomena such as poetry is no surprise, given the thought of fifteenth century Japan regarding "the universal immanent realm where nothing remains

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of the divine is not shared, as between the philosophical and the theological. This can result in counting knowledge of the divine as our possession. But the sting of O'Donohue's criticism seems misplaced to the extent such *analogia entis* of beauty continues to rest on a revelational *analogia fidei*. See Noel Dermot O'Donohue, 'Appendix. Do We Get Beyond Plato? A Critical Appreciation of the Theological Aesthetics', *The Beauty of Christ. An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), pp. 253-266 (p. 257, fn.1).

<sup>27</sup> Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I*, p. 135.

<sup>28</sup> See above, p. 104, fn. 110.

still and each is a mirror of everything else in the constantly shifting, yet subtly poised network of interrelationships.”<sup>29</sup> It is the mind which knows this universal immanent realm which both recognises and manifests *en*.<sup>30</sup> Shinkei’s contention is that the beauty of these *kenmitsu* arts depends on and conveys wisdom and compassion.<sup>31</sup>

How then can we act as beauty acts? Beauty invites reverence for self and others as mysterious, in relation and manifestations of the Field of Love. It affirms presence. It does this free from interest. Like justice, it is blind. It operates similarly to that grace of God described in scripture as like the rain, which falls on both the just and the unjust, an image matched in Buddhist teaching.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, our lives may be marked by much sorrow and suffering; beauty remains gratuitous. But experiencing beauty, we are enabled to grow in thankfulness, presence to others and courage. Through the beauty of our art, we discover that the world is inexhaustibly interpretable. In short, beauty can elicit from us trusting actions that are self-authenticating expressions of the Field of Love. Others will be touched by our actions as free and welcome additions to their experience of life; so that, while we cannot make ourselves beautiful, to others our lives may carry the import of beauty, as did that of the elderly leper for Inoue.

In such ways, we can come to perceive the dimension of the holy in the beautiful and in so doing we can further learn by analogy to perceive that the holy is always beautiful.<sup>33</sup> In

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<sup>29</sup> Ramirez-Chistensen, p. 152

<sup>30</sup> Ramirez-Chistensen, p. 80. We can note that, while Japanese aesthetics stress flux and shun any transcendental ontology, offering no suggestion that qualities may be other than conditional (*engi*), nevertheless their compelling quality lies in their ability truthfully to manifest what is universal.

<sup>31</sup> And does so by eschewing the overt and singular in favour of the combined and ambiguous which allows contemplation of further depths, as in the preference for the distant link (*soku*) over the close link (*shinku*); Ramirez-Chistensen, pp. 97-98. The intention is to convey not a meaning but experience of the Real in a “mind-opening flash” which as such can be as effective centuries later; Ramirez-Chistensen, p. 120. For the application of the distant link to the matter of this thesis, see below pp. 175-178.

<sup>32</sup> See for example, LaFleur, p. 94, reflecting chapter five of *the Lotus Sutra*.

<sup>33</sup> This is not to say that beauty is identical with holiness. If it were then our appreciation of beauty would be worship. As Gerardus van der Leeuw insists, beauty is to be served not worshipped; van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty*, p. 337. Van der Leeuw traces the appearance of the holy in the beautiful carefully through all the fine arts, noting that the different arts serve God and speak of God in different ways. He borrows his definitions of the substance of the holy from Rudolf Otto, as the wholly other, and of the form of the holy from Eduard Spranger, as never a specific value, limited to a single point of view, but always

other words, a right attending to beauty in our lives and a right imagination can open us to desire for the holy in all its forms and to delight in it. Beauty, then, moves me from love of itself to a more generous love of what is other. This is an inchoate holiness, springing everywhere from a multiplicity of forms, meeting us with each lilt of the day's light, surprising us through the simplest of objects our hands have fashioned. It holds out hope of a beauty not yet seen. To be able to follow such a call from what and where I am to what I am not yet, I need a path, a path which faith can furnish.

#### BEAUTY CALLS US TO ACT WITHIN THE FIELD OF LOVE AS BEAUTY ACTS AND SO TO BECOME PERSONS

Drawn by beauty into trust within the Field of Love, we learn two languages. There is the language of the call itself, which is spoken in the vocabulary of beauty. As those who have been touched by beauty, we may find ourselves speaking this language with the accent of the art critic or of the maker or simply of one who looks and listens with the heart. It is the language of the Field of Love disclosed in images valued for their beauty. Then there is the language of the One who calls, the language of the holy. This also is a language of the Field of Love disclosed in images, as this is how the One is to be known. These images are likely to come to be valued for their beauty. But they are selected not for the gratuitousness of their attractive qualities but because they disclose the unified nature of the field, that the practice of goodness and the pursuit of truth belong also to it, and to a just valuing of beauty. It is a language which searches. The language of the call - of beauty - shows, makes present; the language of the One who calls addresses the unseen, hope in the yet-to-be, which also is necessary if our response to the Field of Love is to be one of living trust. This is beauty's promise: that life is, and is to be, more than we have known.

The scenes that beauty presents to us communicate in both languages.<sup>34</sup> At times, as in the case of Christians reverencing icons, these languages may be close. At other times, such as the case presented in this thesis of the Western Christian drawn to Japanese art, we shall

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final value and ultimate sense. This is what beauty, the emanation of form in a yet-to-be-completed world, cannot completely be; van der Leeuw, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> This formulation of two languages generates further pairings. We have here: art/religion, beauty/holiness (or hope), present/future, and embodying/transforming. Cognate pairings include: aesthetic/dramatic, contemplative/prophetic and gaze/act, space/time, sight/hearing; also, sacramental/eschatological. Each of these will also find its place in the discussion which follows. Note that these are treated as pairings offering binary vision of one reality, not as opposites.

be hard put to translate between the two. But, as we shall see later, the attempt to do so can give us a clue as to how to live as human beings and how a world, fractured and totalising, can be re-shaped into life-giving unity-in-difference. For the moment it may be sufficient to register the East Asian understanding that human persons are not countable units (*nin* 人) but develop only in relationship. As many writers have pointed out,<sup>35</sup> the word includes the ideogram for 'space' (*ningen* 人間, where *gen* 間 is the Chinese reading for the character *aida*, 'between'). We are given our lives 'between'. The space – something like an ache of the heart - opened by beauty's language of presence and the One's language of hope, educed not by conceptualisation but by immersion in the same compelling scenes of beauty, offers one of life's major delineations of the space for becoming human persons. We live from these two and between these two; their mutual interaction rightly remains unpredictable. The present thesis can offer no more than a suggestion.

We have seen that the *kenmitsu* belief of medieval Japan acts as a religio-aesthetic system, one in which these two languages are spoken as one word, one act of communicative, enlightening beauty. The typical Western distinction between aesthetic value and devotional value, between an artistic account of an art-work and a religious account, is unlikely to be of service when considering these *kenmitsu* art-works. Richard Pilgrim offers a more fruitful approach to religious art:

It might be useful to think of religious art as that type of religious expression which representationally symbolizes, presentationally embodies, and performatively transforms varying life situations within the context of an understanding of sacrality and by use of aesthetic form (visual, performing and literary arts). Such a way of

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<sup>35</sup> Among them Günter Nitschke in *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 57-58 and Augustin Berque in 'The Question of Space: From Heidegger to Watsuji', in *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches*, ed by Joy Hendry, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London and New York NY: Routledge, 1998), pp. 57-67 (p. 60). Yagi Seiichi offers an account of the development of the human psyche in these terms (permeable 'front-structure') drawn from Buddhist teaching in 'A Bridge from Buddhist to Christian Thinking: the "Front-Structure"', trans. Leonard Swidler, in Yagi Seiichi and Leonard Swidler, *A Bridge to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue* (New York NY and Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 75-107. Kasulis' version is similar but more simply presented, drawn from cultural practice but without recourse to the religious implications of the underlying world view; Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, pp 53-70. See also Takenaka, *God is Rice*, pp. 69-70. For an account of psychological development in Japanese culture which appears to confirm these theories, see Doi Takeo's celebrated work on *amae*, Doi Takeo, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, revised edn, trans. John Bester (Tōkyō and New York NY: Kodansha International, 1981).



“defining” religious art allows us to treat and distinguish the religious functions of art while at the same time discussing the arts themselves.<sup>36</sup>

He adds: “To overlook these functions would be to miss the *Buddhism* in the art, or to risk seeing the arts as merely decorative appendages to what just happens to be a religion.” Pilgrim’s definition helpfully reminds us that form (means) and sacrality (context) are met “at the same time” and held together. Likewise the language of beauty and the language of the One are not opposites, mutually excluding each other. The space they open up between presence and becoming is a living space, not vacuum but unique arena of our personhood. The symbols (‘scenes’) both embody and transform. Encountering them is of existential concern (Pilgrim’s reference to “varying life situations”). Hence we seek in the Mahāyāna reality of *kenmitsu* arts something further of the One by whom we have already been met.

## 2. Beauty and the Persons of the Holy Trinity

If we understand our perception of beauty neither as the conjuring of our imagination nor as random fling of a disinterested universe but as uncovering for us the mystery of ourselves, do we see in this transfiguration trace of our Creator? It is not that in beauty we are learning directly of God. The Creator of whom a Christian may be made aware when awed by beauty is already delineated by the image of the God who is remembered in the schema and of whom the Nicene Creed speaks. We do not have to deduce God from first principles and cannot do so, for what principle could be first before God? But nor do we necessarily have to think of beauty as secondary, as supporting evidence, for we may assume its effect on those who earlier described God so (even if beauty may be differently experienced and understood in different cultures). If we can know God, then it is on God’s terms. To recognise something from God in our experience is already to have intuited a connection between the new image and the knowledge of God we currently possess. Its explication and imaginative integration into that knowledge become a theological task which depends on, tests and deepens our relationship with God. To see beauty and yearn for God is to be caught up by God and involved more fully in the story of God’s one conversation with humankind.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Pilgrim, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> A phrase derived from Gregory of Nyssa’s *Commentary on Psalm 50*, for which I am grateful to Revd. Rick Fabian.

Beauty registers with us, as has been said above, as original, as present and as promise. Its gratuitousness suggests the operation of the One who creates all things, of the One who alone can give consolation without prior cause, to use the language of discernment taught by Ignatius of Loyola. Its way of rendering us vividly aware evokes the presence of the Sustainer of all things in whose hands rests the mystery of the timelessness of the present moment. And its witness to the possibility of untrammelled participation in life, including the unity of physical delight with what is good and what is true, calls forth from us hope in the One to whom all life comes, the One who will be all in all.

Such operations of God in creating, sustaining and perfecting are not, in Christian understanding, merely external acts. The doctrine of the Trinity does not assign these to one Person alone, a commission to be carried through before returning to the rest of the eternal relations of the Three. Nor does it posit them as single acts of an undifferentiated godhead. Rather each operation is an orchestration by the Three, an acted expression of their mutual love. Indeed it is from the operations of God that we have gained revelation of the knowledge of the mutually-loving three-foldness of God. We have no grounds for supposing God in Godself to be different from God in God's acting. We could hardly think at all of God in Godself except through the medium of God's acts. How then is beauty related to the Persons of the Trinity?

## TWO INCOMPLETE ACCOUNTS

Patrick Sherry adumbrates those occasions when beauty, as universal transcendental, has simply been identified with the Spirit in the Spirit's self.<sup>38</sup> This way of thinking is not meant to indicate that beauty is the property, domain or work exclusively of the Spirit. It parallels the thinking of those (Western) theologians who, understanding the Spirit as the exchange between the Father and the Son, have termed the Spirit Love, without suggesting that love is exclusive to the third Person of the Trinity. To make such a designation in the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, terming the Spirit Beauty, has its greater effect on understanding the operations of the economic Trinity. It leads us to say that wherever beauty is found, there the Holy Spirit is at work. A further development of this line of thought, considering the Spirit less bound by form and image than the second Person of the Trinity, allows the work of the Spirit to be named at times and places at which the sign of the Son is not acknowledged – and perhaps not discernible. In other words such a Western-style

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<sup>38</sup> As, for example, by Jonathan Edwards; see Patrick Sherry, p. 14.

immanent Trinity can allow us to name the Spirit as at work in the creation of the beauty of other religions, while not requiring us to believe that Christ is somehow hidden within them.

It is possible to sustain such an understanding, carefully nuanced, of the threefoldedness of God. It is also necessary to maintain that wherever beauty is found, there the Holy Spirit is at work. But the above account is open to over-statement, so that the Spirit is thought of as the hypostasis of beauty. Such a view tends towards emptying the Spirit's Person of the particular associations named in scripture and, indeed, of all conceptual content except the bare and abstracted quality named. Also such a view tempts us to think of the Spirit's activity as occurring separately from that of the Son (and the Father). Then it ceases to seem necessary to interrogate beauty that arises from the practice of other religions: it can be accepted and explained (away) as activity of God the Spirit and so does not require further elucidation. Such an account fails through attempting to explain. As such it lacks critical edge and, in reality, respect for the other religion in its particularity and for the art in its meaning, motivation and power to effect change in us. In other words, it empties the beauty in question of all that truly relates it to the Spirit, including its marks of originality, presence and promise. Further, such an account removes inter-trinitarian relations from this world and with them what is distinctively Christian.

Another account which functions similarly to give space to the action of God outside the Christian circle is to associate form with the second Person, the Logos, and freedom with the Spirit. This has some scriptural warrant. The naming as the Logos in *John* 1 of the One who became flesh as Jesus associates the second Person with order or structure; and the *Carmen Christi* of *Philippians* 2 explicitly refers to his form, μορφή: "Although he was in the form of God ...". The Spirit contrariwise is not associated explicitly with form and the forms which have come to be seen as representing the Spirit, the dove of Jesus' baptism or the metaphor of water in *John*, speak more of freedom from limitation of form. Jesus' recorded words recollecting the Hebrew and Greek combination of spirit with breath and wind, "The Spirit blows where it wills" (*John* 3: 8),<sup>39</sup> also associate the Spirit with what is liquid and changing and by extension with freedom. Following this line of argument, if there are images which we wish to value but which do not follow from received revelation, such as those of other faiths, these images can be understood as a work of the freedom of the

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<sup>39</sup> NRSV: "wind".

Spirit. The artist's inspiration may come from anywhere and if it is not directly derived from received revelation but we wish to recognise in it something transcendent, then we may say that the Spirit in the Spirit's freedom inspired the artist in this way. Such an account of the operations of the Trinity misleads. If the Logos is exclusively associated with form, then we must allow the unknown forms that meet us also to be work of the Logos. But better, we should recognise that the forming of images is a work in which all Persons of the Trinity are involved: as well as the Logos, the Spirit who passes over the waters at the Creation, who overshadows Mary and who gives coherence to the Church, and the Father who, dwelling in the Son, does his works and who sends the Spirit (*John 14*). Likewise regarding freedom, we should recognise true freedom as belonging to each Person of the Trinity exactly in their trinitarian relations. The freedom of God is sovereignty and it derives from the perfect agreement and single will of the Persons of the Trinity. Where we discern God-given order and where we discern God's freedom being exercised, there we are perceiving the work of God the Holy Trinity in all God's fullness.

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Nevertheless the instinct to account for beauty, including the beauty of the art of another faith, by reference to the Holy Spirit is not mis-placed. When we reflect on being sustained in life or drawn towards perfection, when we identify within the experience of beauty a call, it is of the Spirit's enabling that we think. But to speak of the Holy Spirit is to speak of Christ, whose gift the Spirit is. It may be thought that to locate the Spirit at work we must have prior understanding of the action there of Jesus Christ; as, for example, the one baptised receives the Holy Spirit because she has entered into the death and resurrection of Christ. So, has the Christian who appreciates the beauty of space when watching *nō* reversed this order by first identifying the Spirit and then claiming Christ? Not so. The Spirit the Christian audience member claims is the Spirit of whom she already has knowledge (including experiential knowledge) as the Spirit sent by Christ animating the Church, the Holy Spirit. She will understand herself in that *nō* theatre as embodying presence of the Church of Christ,<sup>40</sup> as original point of connection between the truth of the beauty she experiences and the gospel. The Spirit of Christ prompts us to become interpreters of what

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<sup>40</sup> Not exclusively, of course. Kasulis notes "religious thought often develops in intimacy-dominant contexts", Kasulis, p. 177. The Church's understanding of being 'in Christ' fits the Intimacy pattern of a 'holographic' paradigm.

is unknown and to recognise in what attracts God's address implicating us with others, invitation to enhanced life.

If it is by the power of the Holy Spirit we interpret the attraction of beauty as good, we do so in Christ Jesus. We see creation in the light of Christ the Redeemer and Christ the One who is to come.<sup>41</sup> The centre of the world is the cross of Christ; the cross of Christ is the locus of all God means by creation. It is the moment we discover that what is created is not rejected by God at the last. It remains; it has ultimate value. For these reasons the cross is (counter-intuitively) the acme of beauty. According to von Balthasar, following the Fourth Gospel's understanding of the cross as the incomparable moment of divine glory, it is the end of all worldly aesthetics and the emergence of a divine aesthetic.<sup>42</sup> Von Balthasar explains: it is only through being fragmented (the element of the ugly, even the demonic) that the beautiful really reveals the eschatological promise which it contains. On the cross the goodness in obedience and love of all the moments of Jesus' life coalesced. There at Calvary the reality of God's love is manifest in a form which speaks perfectly of what it is. God in Christ has utterly given Godself away for love of us. Hence this becomes the one form from which all others derive, the form hidden as mystery from the beginning of ages. The fullness of the love of Father for Son and Son for Father has there been realised in their mutual self-giving in the extremity of absence to One another and in the Spirit (and made apparent in the Resurrection). The cross reveals creation to be of that love and therefore unbreakably bound up with the Incarnation of the Son and indeed to derive from the life of the One who became incarnate. The entelechy of the creation is the love of the Son - in every sense: the Father's love for the Son, the Son's for the Father and his love for us, the Father's love for us in his Son and also our love for the Son, God-with-us.

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<sup>41</sup> Von Balthasar's way of putting this is to say that incarnation pre-supposes creation in its obediential potency, that Jesus Christ is the real ground of creation. Hence all human experience can be drawn into the light of the cross and Resurrection by which it is given us to know the glory of the Lord; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Drury (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 136-138 and p. 122. It is this sense of creation depending on the life of Jesus Christ which informs the direction of this present study in its objection to Dupuis' perduring Logos and in seeking with Inoue Yōji for the face of Jesus in Japan.

<sup>42</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 460. Referred to in Breandán Leahy, 'Theological Aesthetics', in *The Beauty of Christ. An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), pp. 23-55 (p. 40).

The event of Christ has changed everything. Now all things can be understood in their true relation to God: as signs oriented to the one complete sign, the risen Christ; as forms whose beauty refers to the true manifestation of God's glory. It is in Christ that all the images co-inhere. He arranges them around himself.<sup>43</sup> The whole world and the images that surround us are a single field of signification.<sup>44</sup> And this is for the reason noted above: that the crucified, risen Christ perfectly manifests the self-giving love that is the life of God, the ground of differentiation and so the origin of all signs. It is not that the world is subsumed, absorbed into the Son without remainder. Rather, the dominant thought here is that God's self-giving love is given freely. This love is instantiated in the world's being; it sustains the world in its multiplicity. So the world, as expressive of God's love, is also expressive, in that other will proper to itself and in its own differentiations, of the differentiating of Persons in God which comes of loving and brings forth loving. The plurality of the world is at root expressive of the freedom God has within Godself to love. The world's unity is of the divine unity of love, so that the literal space we experience can be read in the light of the cross and Resurrection as expression of the differentiation and unity in loving relations of the Persons of the Trinity: God, in God's character as Persons mutually enriching in love, makes room for what is not those Persons, for us, consciousness within this cosmos.

#### THE DIVINE INTERPLAY

So, if we would understand the world aright, including its surprising occasions of beauty, we must understand the trinitarian God of whose love its space is trace. What is the character of differentiation and unity within the Trinity? The Father begets the Son in self-giving love, or, to put this more simply, in somewhat paradoxical fashion, it is because the Father loves the Son that the Father begets the Son. The Father's begetting is a giving away of self as loving Father in an ever-increasing dynamic of love. The Son's begottenness is a receiving of all the Father's loving self in such a way that who the Son is is constituted by loving self-giving. The Son as Son consequently gives self away in love to the Father. The Father thus receives the Father's self as gift of the Son's reciprocated love. This mutual love is not hedged around; the Spirit is witness of it, proceeding from the Father's love, receiving no less the love of the Son and returning to each that same self-giving love. The Persons of the Trinity thus mutually magnify each other by their eternally self-giving love, so that 'something more', magnification, is ever effect of this differentiation in unity and pattern of

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<sup>43</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 419.

<sup>44</sup> Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I*, p. 140.

the divine life.<sup>45</sup> When we name God we name this ever-deepening threefold communion of freely-given and received love, constituted with a single will.

Gregory of Nyssa understood our redeemed life in God, eternal life, not as stasis but ‘*epektasis*’, an ever-greater stretching out of desire directed to the God whose fullness we can never fathom.<sup>46</sup> But such *epektasis* of humanity merely reflects the nature of God which Gregory terms unlimited and infinite, by which we may understand that within the inner life of the Trinity each Person ever trusts, loves - and therefore knows - the Others the more: the loving obedience we see in Jesus is the human expression of this quality of the Son, which is of the Son’s shared nature with the Father and the Spirit. This theme was taken up by von Balthasar and forms a basis for Ben Quash’s heightened theo-dramatics.<sup>47</sup> He comments on von Balthasar’s argument thus:

Knowledge does not replace faith as a complete and fixed thing might replace a partial and inconstant thing. Faith, as von Balthasar has it, “is *more* than knowledge” ... . Faith exceeds knowledge because it so closely represents the Son’s own attitude of obedient receptivity. Faith and hope – like love – are features of the trinitarian life itself, into which redeemed human existence is caught up the more fully, and with which it is transformed and renewed.<sup>48</sup>

Quash adds, “Even the *eschaton* itself is not, in von Balthasar’s terms, a ‘FINIS’. ... There is something like time in God”. He labels this “God’s ‘supra-time’”.

The Incarnation of the Son, the creation of the world that gives birth to this adventure of God, and the acts of Jesus Christ which save us take place in this ‘supra-time’: they are ‘moments’ of the divine interplay of Persons. This does not mean God’s love for this temporal world (cf. *John* 3: 16) is a weaker reflection or extension of the Father’s love for the Son; rather the very being of the world in its totality is lovingly gratuitous instance of that self-forgetting, self-expressive, self-emptying delight in difference which welcomes another - delight which is the very begetting of the Son and inner relational nature of God the Trinity. Creation is room of God’s loving and for God’s loving, freely called into being. This relationship is fully embodied by the incarnate Christ, whose life is indivisible from this

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<sup>45</sup> Ben Quash refers to the “unframeability-of-surplus which is God’s”; Quash, p. 170.

<sup>46</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe (New York NY, Ramsey NJ, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1978). See, for example, I.7, p.31.

<sup>47</sup> For an account of Quash’s theo-dramatics, see below, p. 164.

<sup>48</sup> Quash, p. 130 (Quash’s italics).

created expression of God's loving but also indivisible from the loving, faithful, hopeful life of God. Christ Jesus, in his human and divine willing extending to the extremity of self-giving on the cross, has more perfectly united this double character: Jesus Christ is the inner meaning of the world's reality. It is in Christ Jesus that the creation finds its purpose as free expression of the self-giving love by which the Persons of the Trinity mutually magnify each other; constant instance of their 'more'.

## SECOND RESPONSE

Any lingering sense of a wide gap between the Spirit working in creation and Christ working our redemption may be overcome by considering our response to the beauty of art in the light of the Holy Trinity. I see beauty and think: this is life-giving; this furthers the work of God in creation, ordering, differentiating, unifying, making good and true in making beautiful, conveying presence as joy, issuing call to the future. And I find I, who make this response, do so as one who is given hope of salvation. Hence this experience of beauty furthers the redemption of the world in me (and perhaps in others, even through me). Such furthering of redemption by this particular occasion of beauty is something that is new, effected by the Holy Spirit, (economic) occasion of the (immanent) 'more' in God; and as such exchange of the ever-intensifying love in divine relations.

Ben Quash acknowledges, with Rowan Williams, that we experience a certain absence from Jesus – an absence known especially in the realities of suffering - and that this finds its source within the trinitarian relations. He uses the term 'second response' to speak of the work of the Spirit in creation; a response which is "with and in addition to the response of the Son" to the Father; "one which incorporates the myriad *further responses* of creation."<sup>49</sup> This 'second response' is dependent on a 'second difference': "the difference of the Spirit from the difference between Father and Son". The revelation to us of the trinitarian life of God not only shows us room for creation in God's love, but allows significance to the life of this creation as work of the Spirit, bearing new expression of divine love. Our world – including, it is argued here, the beauty of art - yields instances of divine loving. And these will always tend to unity with that paradigmatic instance which is the life of Jesus Christ - "creaturely witness to what the Son has done in obedience to the Father." So Quash, following Eugene Rogers, can write of the Holy Spirit giving gifts "within the life of God", especially the gift of gladness. There is on the part of the Father and the

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<sup>49</sup> Ben Quash, pp. 211-213; italics in the original.



Son “a joyful waiting in trust and thanksgiving upon the Spirit to work.”<sup>50</sup> Our own experience of life as drama (including the encounter of faiths) follows from this waiting of the divine Persons in their ‘supra-time’.

These works of the Spirit, new instances of divine loving, as has been argued, are not separate from the work of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is not that the Spirit’s work relates independently of the Son to the Father (nor the Son’s independently of the Spirit); the pattern is not that of two hands as passive agents of a head. Rather the proper work for each is loving exchange within the community of Persons. The Spirit’s work in creation works out the redemption given through the Son. And the Son’s work of redemption not only makes possible but actualises and completes the perfection of transformation which is the work of the Spirit in response to the redemption. In the work of any one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity the other Persons are present. So, while listening to Ben Quash’s point that Father and Son wait in trust on the Spirit’s gift, we should not then think on this present time as an age of the Spirit. Their waiting is moral – trust - rather than strictly temporal. We may better say that each divine Person waits on the others in their mutual collaboration. As we are being fashioned for the Kingdom, each Person of the Trinity works in us, delighting in the work of the others, finding their mutual love magnified in our lives.

So, by God’s will we, as those given the gift of perception of beauty, become party to the Father’s delight in the Son and the Son’s in the Father. For the beauty (or loveliness) the Spirit perceives in the Father includes the Father’s perceiving of beauty in the Son and the beauty the Spirit perceives in the Son includes the Son’s perceiving of beauty in the Father. Here is the betweenness of the Spirit, reflexiveness proceeding as the Father perceives the Son. Accordingly we associate with the Spirit, not beauty as discrete transcendental quality, but perception of beauty; that which, encountering beauty, causes return in thankfulness to the Father. Addressing this understanding of the Trinity to our experience of created beauty, we understand that this contains within it the Spirit’s gift to us. As we are in the Spirit and look upon this world’s beauty, the beauty of the Father is illuminated in the Father’s perceiving of the Son in our appreciation of beauty. Likewise, as we are in the Spirit and look upon this world’s beauty, the beauty of the Son is illuminated as the Son perceives

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<sup>50</sup> Eugene F. Rogers Jr, ‘The Eclipse of the Spirit in Karl Barth’, in *Conversing with Barth*, ed. by John C. McDowell and Mike Higon (Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 173-190 (p. 184); quoted in Quash, pp. 212-213.

the Father in our appreciation of beauty. By the gift of the Spirit our perceiving of beauty participates in this betweenness and reflexiveness, the eternal interplay of the Persons of the Trinity. This is to claim high destiny for our appreciation of beauty (including, by God's intent, the beauty of other faiths): that it magnifies the life of love of the Trinity.

God "has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." (*Ephesians* 1: 9-10.) That God sums up all things in Christ is the action of God's love in the works of the Holy Spirit intending fullness for his creation in Christ: the pleroma. What this may mean awaits unveiling, but the trend of any theological account of the culture and faiths of the nations will be towards this fullness in Christ, the love of God incarnate.<sup>51</sup>

### THREE CONSIDERATIONS

Three considerations follow from the understanding that what the world has been given in Jesus Christ is the uniquely complete embodiment of that inward meaning to which all that is good, true and beautiful in other cultures tends. First, we cannot be content with eyes that see only through the lens of a Logos theology. Once we know the Word made flesh, we view creation according to an incarnational, trinitarian, eschatological theology. The New Testament does not highlight Logos theology; it occurs to illustrate Christian theology: "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ". (*John* 1:17). *Romans* 1: 19-20 and *John* 1: 1-18 are two key passages but each should be read in the wider context of the early churches, and in their own contexts as part of over-riding arcs of argument: neither concentrates on the 'pre-incarnate' Christ; both stress the duality of believers/non-believers. Their thrust rather is to require us now to regard creation and our knowing of it as children born of God (*John* 1: 13), justified by grace through Jesus Christ (*Romans* 3: 24).<sup>52</sup> Creation is not brute matter to be rightly ordered: it is creation in that it is loved of God and redeemed; it is creation in that, as redeemed, it partakes in the exchange of gifts of love within the Persons

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<sup>51</sup> Heim discusses this in response to Arthur Lovejoy's 'principle of plenitude'; Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, chapter seven. See also David Ford's discussion of salvation in terms of transformative improvisations contributing to the abundance of pleroma, David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapter five.

<sup>52</sup> We may read *Romans* 2: 7, 10 and 14-15 similarly. Are there those who do good by conscience? Paul does not deny the theoretical possibility, but his point is to stress that in fact all have fallen short: hence its inclusion here is rhetorical.

of the Trinity; it is creation in that its character is formed of that ever-widening 'more' in God. It is with eyes focussed on this *eschaton* that the Christian discerns the creation.

Second, we must recognise that this source of meaning for creation is known in (and only in) one particularity, the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Knowing this, we cannot think of a particularity - and most especially human life as that form of created particularity which is reflexively conscious - as of merely proportional worth, a fragment of that love of God which imbues the whole. Such thinking would correspond in Kasulis' typology to the isolated integer of an Integrity-dominated culture. What we have seen and known in Jesus Christ asks that we adopt something more like the holograph of Intimacy-dominated thinking, by which particularities interpenetrate and convey the whole.<sup>53</sup> The life of Jesus, as source of meaning and end for creation, affirms the potential of all particularities: it is through such that the divine exchange of love occurs. Knowing this, we may value the more highly any particularity, not as of merely passing interest but as of potentially eternal import. Christian poets have long done so; one thinks of Thomas Traherne or Gerard Manley Hopkins.

But it does not follow that we can thereby automatically recognise a link between the redemptive work of Christ and the action of the Spirit in us through other cultures, whether in particularities or as inner meaning. That is a work of this thesis to illuminate. For while we see Christ crucified, we do not yet know him as he is; there is hiddenness about the presence of God in Jesus Christ, as was argued in the first chapter.<sup>54</sup> And there is the further hiddenness of an as yet unexperienced future: he will come to us, the eschatological Christ. Meaning is given by the Son, realised in the redemption. It is replete: it is full meaning, the Kingdom of God. But that fullness includes faithfulness and hope, since these are true of God, as we have heard von Balthasar say. So, there remains that about the redeemed life which is hidden from us and ever will be. Furthermore, under the conditions of this freely created world, endowed with its own freedom (otherness) of being, there is a further sense of the hiddenness of the redeemed life: not only is its future open, but its presence now is occluded by the continuing effect of the bondage of sin. We are absent from Christ in these various ways. Hence it is by the life we lead in the Spirit that Christ's fullness is explicated. Our perception of the *pleroma* is extrapolated from what is familiar. And here I am arguing

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<sup>53</sup> See pp. 35-36 and fn. 9.

<sup>54</sup> See above, pp. 11-12.

that we also need the unfamiliar to further that trajectory: new perception of truth. As full knowledge will remain hidden from us, so we may expect there will always be that in other cultures and religions which will remain other and, as such, occasion of fresh realisation of the meaning of God's love and source of new blessing to us.

#### THAT GOD IS AND WHAT IS NOT

If our path is not to be one of knowing but of experiencing hiddenness, then we shall need to travel it by discerning aright; our path will be one of interpretation as our human way of receiving revelation - that is, God's self given in God's freedom to God's creatures. Furthermore our understanding is that the primary locus for the operation of the Holy Spirit to which we are called to pay attention is within our own lives, rather than in some objectifiable other, and this understanding also draws us to a life of interpreting, with the (significant) added confidence that God in Godself is with us in this task.

For what is disclosed (for example, in interpreting revelation through beauty) may accurately be understood as a concealing and a concealer. The doctrine of creation (itself revealed) requires appreciation of God's self-withdrawal, a self-denying ordinance. The exercise of human will likewise requires us to recognise that a space is given in which such a will may be exercised, as we have seen. Hans Urs von Balthasar cites Paul Claudel on Pseudo-Denys. Denys had written that we know of God that God is and what God is not. Claudel comments that the reason for this is that we, who know that God is, are what God is not.<sup>55</sup> Much follows from this. For the moment it will be helpful to note that it is by God's will that we are what God is not. God, we may say, purposes to withdraw Godself that we may be whom God intends us to be. An arena for relating is created, the hyphen in an I-thou knowing. The revealing does not end the concealing; it reveals it and the shape of the will that designed it.<sup>56</sup> Continuing concealing which also implies continuing revealing is necessary for relationship. Von Balthasar writes, in a line which encapsulates a full doctrine

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, pp. 399-400.

<sup>56</sup> Von Balthasar details three dimensions of God's concealment, which he says cannot be reduced to one another: at the level of Being, at which we know body and infer spirit; at the level of Word, at which we know the cosmos and infer God; and at the level of the Human Being ('Man' writes von Balthasar), at which we know our sinfulness and infer God's grace in Christ's redeeming work on the cross; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, pp. 441-462. The present study understands all three levels to be involved in the revealing described here.

of revelation, of *John's* presentation of the passion of Christ on the cross as glory: "To the gaze of answering love, the concealment is already the unveiling."<sup>57</sup>

If God is and we are what God is not, we find in our own natures framed for relationship a temporal quality: we are what is not yet in being. Our participation in divine relationship is from the future: we are becoming. It follows that not only is God hidden from us but that we are hidden from ourselves. We do not yet know what we shall be. And this too is by God's intention. The potential for relationship which God gives us in our creating and realises by the grace of revelation is one which demands the exercise of our faculties. Revelation of God-who-is under the form of what-God-is-not necessarily requires interpretation and is inseparable from interpretation. It is according to our created natures that the will, understanding, imagination and other faculties which we exercise (including in such work of interpretation) are proper to us and not mere simulacra (God's will et cetera operating in an un-mediated way through a human body). But this does not necessarily leave our human lives perilously severed from their source in God. When we exercise our will, this is an exercise of our will to be. And, as our coming to be is God's will, we can say that when we exercise our will, as in the interpreting of revelation, in as far as we do so with a will truly to be (which principally means, truly to know God's self-revelation) this effects God's will.

Such exercise of our will depends on our not knowing. If we could know what it is to be, we would already experience such being. Our being would not then require an exercise of the will. Claudel comments: "In order to know Being, we have to bring our own being into a relationship with him which precedes the dawn – *Ante luciferum*". This is the darkness of which Denys speaks, "for it is darkness that abolishes boundaries."<sup>58</sup> Further, as the reference to '*ante luciferum*' suggests, there is a moral dimension to this: such willing is exercised in concert with the exercise of our conscience. If we could know what it is to be, we would not need to discern and choose the good. The good would already be our experience. God's self-concealment is necessary to realise ourselves as moral beings. We take decisions not yet knowing but because we have discerned that such decisions serve the good. To act so is to act in faith that the good is beyond those interests of our own that we already know, that it is of a greater whole and, indeed, that the interests of our own

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<sup>57</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 672.

<sup>58</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 401.

which we have already discerned may be in opposition to this greater good. To act so is to be ready to revise our knowing, our understanding of what is good and of what is our true interest. Furthermore, as it is to realise ourselves as moral beings, so it is to realise ourselves as relational beings. To act morally is to be in relation, seeking the good of the whole. As Paul Claudel wrote, if the foundation of our being is to be what God is not, “it follows that we can only do this together, as an integral world.”<sup>59</sup> To act thus in faith is already to be in receipt of God’s self-revelation.

To summarise, God conceals Godself while simultaneously revealing Godself in order that by the exercise of our will to good we may realise ourselves as moral and relational beings, which is the same as to say: that we may come to being. Through the practice of interpretation, our moral faculties of conscience and will are, by God’s intention, involved with receiving God’s self-disclosure, that we may come to be. And as God is the source of all being, such coming to be is necessarily in relation to God and is also necessarily of the whole, is together with all that is. God’s self-revealing, then, and our interpreting are progressive, not as linear construction but as concerned with what is not yet, as continually drawing us to the future relationship of the one creation with its Creator. And what of our fashioning of beauty? If imagination also is proper to us, and is not God’s unmediated imagination exercised through a human body as a simulacrum of being, then our art too is freely our own; it is human creativity. But, if so, can it also reveal God?

### **3. How May the Beauty of Art Fashioned in Human Freedom Disclose God’s Truth?**

The concern here is to understand how the expressions of other faiths may be true to themselves and also participant in God’s salvific work in Christ (the matter of revelation). To claim that the beauty of our art (including that fashioned by Asian cosmologies of immanence) reveals God’s truth is also to claim that it is of God’s imagination. What does this mean? Imagination images – creates forms – and so all our creating (and appreciating) of forms (to the extent it is good) derives ultimately from the Trinity’s creating in the mutual loving of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. To be *of* God’s imagination means *derives*

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<sup>59</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 400.

*from* and also *sustained by* with its corollary *suffused by*. But it is also *sustained in* and, most importantly, *infused by* God's imaginative loving. To take these terms in turn: the artist's imagination is proper to him; *deriving from* God's creating, it partakes of the freedom of the creation. The artist's imagination works from and also on (that is, fashions images which reflect and extend) a milieu, environmental and cultural; what he does in imagining beauty from the milieu and fashioning it of that milieu resonates like the harmony of strings vibrating in a chord. The art-work articulates the milieu as a wine expresses the terroir. The milieu is thus enhanced and evolves. Such a milieu, developing according to vision (of artists and many others) can be understood as one which invites trust in life: we welcome intuitively the world which displays beauty, occasions good acts and conveys truth. We intuit that the world in which we have our being is a world *suffused by* grace.

Moreover our trusting acts, among which I include these creative imaginings of true beauty, also foster further trust in the meaningfulness of existence, and its mediation through our milieus. In doing this, they go beyond being merely *sustained by* God's imaginative love; they act in synergy with God's grace. That is to say, our acts of fashioning beauty, acting well and telling truth are *sustained in* God's imaginative loving. Whether we articulate it consciously or not, our creative acts co-operate with the loving acts of God<sup>60</sup> to form a world which lives in and by self-giving love, which is thus of God and so returns love to Father, Son and Spirit as exchange of love between the Persons, moment of their divine interplay. These moments of trusting human engagement instantiate God's love and, in doing so, we can recognise them as *infused by* God's grace.

Such a picture of the operation of God's Holy Spirit corresponds closely with Inoue Yōji's account of 'the Field of Love', throwing ourselves into the flow of eternal life.<sup>61</sup> For Inoue, we can know only by participating. We depend and respond, and there the field is, always field of merciful love (agape, *hi-ai*). It is active and calls to us in beauty. It may be seen in a poem on a maple-leaf,<sup>62</sup> or the abraded features of a statue of Jizō on the edge of a

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<sup>60</sup> Inoue's analogy of the Holy Spirit operating as magnetism does in creating a magnetic field, suggests well the pattern and hiddenness of God's imagination, but hardly does justice to human imaginative freedom. Inoue Yōji, p. 117 and pp. 123ff.

<sup>61</sup> See above, pp. 48-51.

<sup>62</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 116.

village.<sup>63</sup> His picture of the fullest participation is of Jesus calling on the Father as 'Abba', a word that does not name any object but expresses experience of unity in love and trust and, doing so, enacts it.<sup>64</sup> All may know this field but our failures to trust alienate us from it. But it grows in the Spirit from the perfect agape of Christ, and it is in knowing this love of Christ on the cross that we can be at one with the originating source of life. In this way Inoue equates the field with the Kingdom of God.

Is the picture of this field then one of creation minus sin (as if, for example, we could welcome *kenmitsu* outlook with the aspects deemed incompatible with Christianity removed)? No, a more faithful (because less 'objectifying') representation would be creation lived for thanksgiving, as opposed to creation lived for mere existence or for aggrandisement. Such thanksgiving does not necessarily need cognisance (explicit knowledge); the cry 'Abba' is expressive rather than referential. Inoue's insight is that our art can be just such a cry of 'Abba'. Does this mean that acting with trust in the Field of Love (as, for instance, Inoue tells us the *haiku* poet Ryōkan did) is equivalent to salvific response? Again, we cannot say. What we can know is that, if as Christians we experience Ryōkan's poetry as good response in the Field of Love, then God mediates God's love to us through this *haiku*. Its compelling beauty identifies it as new perception of truth and, by the grace of the Spirit, it becomes call to us ourselves to act in trust in this Field of Love. The poet's 'abba' is the hidden God's self-revelation to us. And further, we learn by such trust that this field knows no separated individuals; we are bound to one another (and all this creation) as we find our life in the originating love of God. Like Inoue's magnetic filings, our responding is in concert with others. But more than this, it affects others, and it may be here that our hope for the salvation of all in Christ rests.

To summarise so far: these are free acts; God's sustaining grace (which includes God's hiddenness) undergirds our being and enables us to be free to respond in love. When we respond, we do so not as individuals but as finding existence within a membrane of relationships of self-giving love which constitute a 'field' (as conditioned by our environment and culture). This field, then, encompasses God's sustaining grace as well as our free human responses. Furthermore, by God's infused grace these free acts can also be unique instantiations of God's love, occasions of God's self-disclosure, affording new

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<sup>63</sup> Inoue Yōji, pp. 193-194.

<sup>64</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 79.



perception of truth that is affective and calls to the whole person, and does so within the field. While we cannot answer for any other person's reception of grace in these ways, we are answerable for our own response to God's call through beauty. The pattern of our responding to beauty with patient receptivity is consonant with God's own pattern of receptivity to creation. Hence this membrane or field makes its contribution to the 'gifts' given and received within the 'ever more' of the relations of the Persons of the Trinity, and is itself suggestive of those relations. Response to the beauty of our freely created art has place within the love of God and our call to holiness.

#### THE FIELD OF THE INVERSION OF POLARITIES

Inoue Yōji gave as his first appellation of the field, which he understands as the field of God's self-revelation, as *mu*, Nothingness.<sup>65</sup> By *mu* Inoue means what is beyond subject-object division and all verbalising distinctions, and he allies this with the thought of emptiness: fire does not burn fire, so we can say that what is fire is fire only because of what is not fire, empty of fire. Inoue's *mu* means seeking our origin in the originating love of God which is the field of life. And in naming the field thus, he equates *mu* with the Kingdom of God and allows reality to our part by emphasising the necessity of participative trusting response. But maybe *mu* cannot be that comparator. *Mu* is not the sum of beings and not-beings, not is and may be, not Being taken as innumerable One. *Mu* suggests, not indeed barren nihil but what is beyond any concept with its reliance on distinctions. *Mu* is not not-being nor potentiality, but that non-conceptuality which may awaken into Suchness.<sup>66</sup> While *mu* may appreciate the articulation of this in particulars, it does not allow for the kind of valuing of particularity or transcendence that Inoue's insistence on the image of Christ as fullness of loving relationship seems to demand (irreversibility). *Mu* absorbs the whole cosmos without remainder. As Nagao comments, it is only on the basis of emptiness that conventional truth can be recovered and given place. So for Nishida the field becomes that of 'the self-identity of absolute contradiction'.

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<sup>65</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 78.

<sup>66</sup> Nagao characterises the middle way of Buddhist ontology as being based not on being but the transcendence of emptiness (and so not able to be discussed via an Aristotelian ontology which depends on a law of non-contradiction), synonymous with dependent origination; Nagao, pp. 157-187.

Mutō Kazuo<sup>67</sup> rescues 'field' from the unicity of *mu* by adding the thought of hiddenness: we are hidden to ourselves and the transcending hidden God corresponds to our hiddenness. How can we have access to this mystery? By the mediating symbol of faith which creates a Field of the Inversion of Polarities. For example, where Christian revelation theology of the cross negates the hiddenness of a natural theology of creation (God shows Godself), in being thus negated the premise of natural theology that God is hidden remains and is validated, for God is indeed hidden in mystery on the cross. Negation mediated through revelation: this is the inversion of polarities which makes of the separation of the poles the place of their mutual validation - hidden/known; natural/revelational; immanent/transcendent (Mutō includes further polarities). Hiddenness requires mediating symbol for it to remain the (eschatological) horizon of our lives. And crucially for this discussion, this creates a field, one initiated by God, the Field of the Inversion of Polarities in which difference remains essential for understanding and self-transcendence. In negating particularity, the need for particularity is preserved. The accounts of Inoue and Mutō of the field initiated by God's love are mutually supporting. Mutō's field depends on inverting polarities and that task, initiated by God, is ours. We do not know to do it; it is given to us (as on the cross and in the Resurrection) but we respond with assent, which is trust in the (eschatological) mystery. Discerning this inversion of polarities involves an existential welcome to our own hiddenness which is not other than living in the flow of eternal life of which Inoue writes so movingly.

We can begin to see here how the action of trusting response to Japanese beauty may indeed, through the field of God's loving, bring Christians into new perception of truth. One pole in this field can be conceptual duality (the differentiation of religions); the other the non-conceptual (including delight and trust). The field is enscribed by the two poles, which may otherwise be characterised as discriminatory truth and non-discriminatory truth; both are experiential, both are needed. But it is the mediating symbol of Christ which, creating the field through being the locus of our trust, transcends it and thus inverts the polarities. This inverting has the result that our differences in religion serve to uphold our sense of the comprehensiveness of our non-discriminatory experiences (as in encountering beauty), as our understanding of Christ is transcended to encompass the other religion and thus relies on there being such a religious other for this transcending to be possible. Likewise the mediating symbol of Christ transcends our sense of the comprehensiveness of non-

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<sup>67</sup> For reference to Mutō's thought, see above, pp. 42-47.

discriminatory experience: Christ the Son embraces all that we can mean by such experience and does so while leading us onto a path of particularity. Comprehensiveness and discrimination are both transcended under the mediation of the symbol of Christ and are thereby also both affirmed (together they constitute the field). Christ is of both poles and dependent on neither.

Our search, then, confronted both by the other and by the undeniability of our own experience (as in the shrine at the hot spring resort), is to find fruitful ways to receive this transcending mediation by Christ. It is a task not so different from that which faced the first Christians as they learnt how to live as both of this world (the field) and of the resurrection life (the transcending of it). Their most characteristic response was to share the eucharistic mysteries. All such endeavours to follow Christ in this life are likely to have a sacramental aspect. But before searching out a way to recognise the transcending mediation described here, we can enquire of Inoue and Mutō how they express the conjunction of the incommensurates. For Inoue Yōji our trust leads us to experience something of a Japanese sensibility of *mu*, known not as philosophical concept but experientially. He is willing to take this a stage further and link such experience with received Christian teaching, each interpreting the other. So, interpreting experiences in the field of trusting response to love as *mu*, he is put in mind of St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live ...”. Inoue can then interpret this scripture to illuminate the actions of the Buddhist Honen: the ‘I’ has been omitted.<sup>68</sup> Inoue chooses to quote the second half of the verse also (*Galatians* 2: 20) “... but Christ who lives in me.” Inoue’s pattern of mutual interpretation may be suggested by Japanese assimilative practice, but he seems again to endorse the irreversibility that has so exercised other Japanese theologians, to the extent in this passage of implying the presence of the Saviour through other faiths. Mutō Kazuo, in his account of mediation, terms it betweenness, that is (once again) *aida* or *ma* (間). In doing so he makes what mediates the unity of all being (the religious image) subject to a mindset formed at least in part by *kenmitsu* thought.<sup>69</sup> While there is in his picture of the field as inversion of polarities an interpretation of irreversibility (God in Godself transcends the mediation), his practice remains one of dialectics aimed at dialogue. He is able to explain why difference remains

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<sup>68</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 237.

<sup>69</sup> Note also, in his consideration of the Christian ethic of “Love your neighbour as yourself”, his treatment of ‘as’/‘qua’ (*soku*), frequently used in Buddhist literature to indicate the manifestation of Suchness. Mutō, ‘Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness’, pp. 212-214.

essential: we continue both one with and confronted by, not only in our knowing but also in our self-transcending.

#### INCOMPLETION AND SIN

Employing the notion of field, it is worthwhile remembering that its use by Japanese theologians derives not in the first instance from a physical view of field advanced by science<sup>70</sup> but from a Mahāyāna usage we might characterise as radical immanence. In this view the field comprises not only pure but impure also, just as all the circuits of being find their place in the mandalas. The field is finite, it is for our comprehension, understood as belonging to the enjoyment body of the Buddha. In other words, it is skilful means, *hōben*.<sup>71</sup> Christian adoption of the term encompasses finitude (it is of the creation) and attuning to human understanding (God's love by its nature fits itself to the recipient). If we re-define the field (in Christian terms) as 'the ministering of God's invitation to life by the Holy Spirit operating in creation through the attractiveness of the transcendentals of beauty, goodness and truth and through our responses to this attraction', can this field also be termed 'skilful means'? To do so is probably unhelpful since the term *hōben* carries with it a Mahāyāna sense of the nothingness of all dharmas or, in the language used above, it implies reversibility and radical immanence: no teaching of the Buddha is true in any sense beyond effectiveness in awakening sentient beings from illusion. There is no place for the transcendent nature of the transcendentals. Beauty is beauty, full stop: awake and see. Beauty is not, as has been argued here, gift and increase: true expression of divine interchange of love. The use of field in Christian theology is, then, not in itself a meeting place with Buddhist thought, but it remains one of the ways in which Christian vision is extended by Buddhist practice.

And if field as *hōben* includes impure as well as pure, are sin and death to be understood by Christians to be of the field of God's loving? This is not the place to attempt any extended answer, but in the context of a Christian account of the beauty of Japanese art, three things may be noted. First, what has been deemed impure in traditional Buddhist thought (and

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<sup>70</sup> As employed analogously by various contemporary theologians, including Wolfhart Pannenberg, T. F. Torrance and John Polkinghorne.

<sup>71</sup> On *hōben* in *The Lotus Sutra*, see Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 150-152. Michael Pye gives a comprehensive account in *Skilful Means: a Concept in Mahayana Buddhism* (London: Duckworth, 1978). See also J. H. Kamstra's review article on Pye's book, 'Skilful means as a "germinative principle": some remarks on a concept in Mahayana Buddhism', *Numen* 27.2 (1980), pp. 270-277.

relegated to the lower circles of being) differs from a Christian understanding of sin. In Mahāyāna thought the impure partakes of Suchness as does the pure, and may in certain circumstances manifest it no less completely; whereas in Christian thinking, “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1: 5.) The Resurrection of Christ overcomes the old order of sin and death.<sup>72</sup> In this, too, Christian accounts of a field, however much they may draw on the language of *mu*, differ from those reflecting Mahāyāna thought.

Second, while sin can have no place in the Kingdom of Christ or love of God, it has been occasion for manifestation of grace. Anselm’s account of the fall as *felix culpa* in *Cur Deus Homo?* is a classic statement of this. While the atonement removes the stain of sin, human act remains formative in God’s grace. Following from this, art can and frequently does include representation of occasions of sin and death in ways that do not diminish but enhance its beauty and truth. In Inoue’s terms of the field of God’s loving as ‘depend-respond’, it is of God’s love that God chooses to make this field contingent on our response. In this way our acts manifest the presence of God’s love as field. In this thesis our interpreting of beauty between faiths in response to call is understood to be one such act. The field of God’s loving interpenetrates with, and so is shaped by, a world incompletely sanctified, without itself being limited by that incompleteness. To combine the thoughts of the previous two paragraphs, if by impurity we understand a state both sinful and consequently incomplete, the effect of acknowledging the field of God’s loving is to separate out our sinfulness while encompassing our incompleteness.

Third, the account given here of the role of beauty may mis-lead some into imagining I am positing a supra-lapsarian world in which beauty is immediate access to ultimacy. The beauty to which we respond is fashioned of the things of this passing world. It is of creation, both in its finitude and in the occlusion of God’s glory owing to sin. And we, whose eyes see it, see darkly for we have our own finitude and sin. The argument is not that beauty gives untrammelled access to a dimension of pure relating in love. Rather it is that beauty is call, as Inoue teaches. It is occasion of grace prompting a moral response of loving of a kind that lays aside resignation to dissolution of life. It invites hope. In all this, beauty requires interpretation that is participative. There is room in fashioning and viewing a thing of beauty for many mis-steps. In this, as with other less immediately affecting occasions in this fallen world, God tests and strengthens our hearts by means of a way of practice. God does

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<sup>72</sup> *Romans* 8: 2; cf. *1 Corinthians* 15: 26; *Revelation* 21: 4.

so from love; through the allure of beauty to lead us to holiness. This is the field in which the artist freely (though often without cognisance) and imperfectly co-operates with God's grace to fashion beauty. This freedom, as St. Paul in *Romans 7* reminds us, is not the insularity of a self regarded as an integer, but willing the good: it restores our belonging. And it does so in a field which exists from God's free love, but one that exists as it does because we are sinners, and not apart from this truth. As was said previously, we only understand the creation in the light of our redemption in Christ.

#### PATTERN OF THE NATURAL

So far we have been considering how beauty affects us as call and what in Christian understanding of the actions of God would lead us to expect this. We now turn to enquiring about discernment of this call and, before asking how we go about doing so and with what results, we must ask what is it we are expecting to discern. Our expectation is that beauty's call is not merely to personal pleasure. Nor is beauty like a puzzle or code to be cracked. Rather, as beauty speaks to us of something inexhaustible, good and true, we can expect it to possess the potential to be read, according to its own quality, as God's love and, in particular, as in conformity with that fullest exemplar of God's love, the life of Christ Jesus culminating in his self-giving for us on the cross, which here has been understood with von Balthasar as the true touchstone of beauty.<sup>73</sup> Our expectation is of seeing in forms of beauty emerging signs for us of Christ.<sup>74</sup>

The operations of the Spirit minister the love of Christ in all times and places (both BC and AD). In the span of a human life, this ministry can be most fully comprehended in reconciliation with God given in justification and sanctification, reforming of our lives in the image of Jesus Christ and making of them signs of Christ for others. But the fitting response to God in love which is Jesus Christ's is also ministered by the Spirit under the conditions of creation, in every occasion appropriately to that occasion. In proposition, the truth we find is the fitting response to God and so can be sign of Christ to those who would see. In moral act, the goodness we find is fitting response to God and so likewise can be sign of Christ.

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<sup>73</sup> See above p. 143.

<sup>74</sup> Here 'form' identifies what is appreciable by the senses – shape, line, colour, proportion, harmony and so forth; 'image' identifies a mental picture, an understanding of some kind derived from forms as memories but compounded of thoughts and feelings – the 'scenes' described earlier are images; and 'sign' identifies those forms which convey image so closely as to figure it, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for 'symbol' and 'sacrament'.

Plants in manifesting each its unique vegetable-life; animals in manifesting each its unique animality: these too partake of a transcendental quality, that of presence, and so offer the sign of Christ in their own natural degree (itself a form of grace and as such incidence of the field). And the contention of this thesis thus far, tutored by Japanese sensibility, has been that the application of human artistry (not excluding in myth-making and religious searching) is itself natural and as such can enhance the response to God in the things of creation and hence the propriety of their forms as signs of Christ to those who would see. And so in art, too, the beauty we find is fitting response to God and can be sign of Christ to us.

From the patriarchs' dreams and encounters which gave orientation to their changing fortunes to the prophets being given eyes to understand God's working by means of everyday objects and on to the disciples keeping company with Jesus through Galilee and Judea, we see in the account of scripture that God has set in motion insight into the truth of life by means of images afforded by this world. The world understood as creation takes its origin from the truthfulness of these images. Our right interpreting of these images as signs of Christ occasioning transformative action points us to the Kingdom and so prepares us for it. But such reading is always by means of the victory on the cross, the love of God known to us through the Resurrection and mediated by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore these signs also partake of the Kingdom to which they point, playing their part in the economy of salvation. In our discerning the Kingdom breaks into our consciousness in the pattern of the natural.

In *Romans* 8: 18-30 the picture given of the relation of the work of the Holy Spirit to the creation is that the Spirit intercedes (effectively) for those who have the first-fruits (that is, for Christians who have been baptised and received the Spirit) to be adopted as children and their bodies redeemed. This in turn will lead to the eschatological liberation of creation from final decay into the same "glorious liberty of the children of God". Groaning is heard three times in this passage: that of creation subject to decay; that of those who have the first-fruits; and that of the Spirit within us. Each groan denotes hope.<sup>75</sup> But we as first fruits

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<sup>75</sup> Or, it could be said, "the need for hope", as the Greek verb στεναζω is usually used in a negative context. But when the groan is breath of heaven, the English translation is given as 'sigh', since life and health are there (cf Jesus opening the ears of the deaf man *Mark* 7: 34). The English word 'aspiration' and the proverb "Where there is life, there's hope" come to

are the pivot; and the Spirit is the agent, as it is the Spirit's groan which is heard. In the trinitarian terms we have been considering, this groan of the Spirit is the mutual yearning of the Father for the Son and Son for the Father in those to be redeemed. Therefore our response is pivotal for the operation of the Spirit in the redeeming of creation.

This response (in this passage from *Romans*, one of waiting in faith and the groaning of prayer) is one of hope: a reading of things of the world as, despite appearances, destined for redemption. It is a response which is indeed a reading of Christ in the world, as verses 28-29 make clear. If we hold hope that we are "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" then we are ourselves, in the faithful responses of our believing, (proleptically) image of the Son in this world (compare verse 19): as the Holy Spirit breathes or sighs within us, we are becoming signs of Christ. And the expectation of our hope is that the creation will attain this same freedom of the glory (that is, manifestation given to spiritual vision) of those who are children of God in the image of the Son (verse 21). Our acts of discernment of God's ways in the world are the place to look for the coming fullness of Christ.

In our discerning beauty has a special role through its celebration of differentiation-in-unity<sup>76</sup> alerting us to the work of the Spirit, the Person who returns the love of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father, the Person whom the Son has sent to bring to fruition the salvation he has won. The work of the Spirit in creation and sanctification is one (even as it is multiform): it reflects and draws towards the life of Christ, who fills all in all.<sup>77</sup> For a Christian to be prompted by the Spirit to appreciate the beauty of creative human works is to begin to fit together the things of God in creation to their true end, which is God's praise; that is, consciously to be occasion for revealing the one field of God's love: joint work of Son and Spirit redeeming and sanctifying.

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mind. This groan is a giving of breath as prayer for the overcoming of impairment of life. Cf. verse 24: "For in hope we were saved" (or "by hope" – the noun is in the dative).

<sup>76</sup> As was said above, we have no cause to treat works of human making as an exception to this interpretation. Rather, in that they exhibit the deliberate conjunction of the human mind with the material world, they can exhibit further layers of differentiation and unity.

<sup>77</sup> The requirement on us to seek to make the connections between the work which we discern of the Spirit in creation and the salvific work of Christ remains. We cannot simply assimilate one to the other assuming we already know the lineaments of the Kingdom. But we recognise both Kingdom and creation by means of the one Spirit who causes us to discern.



There are advantages to this account of the primary locus of the Spirit's sanctifying work as being in the Christian observer. The account allows for all cultures developing in their own ways, while suggesting why Christian appreciation is irreplaceably important.<sup>78</sup> It thereby values both culture and Christian. It values the Holy Spirit also, to whom this work in cultures is ascribed by appropriation, as drawing forth new expressions of love as gifts within the exchange of the Persons of the Trinity. It also avoids attempting to project the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth directly onto other times and places. By discerning in another culture not marks of a hidden Christ (as Rahner might) but the effects on us of its beauty as emerging sign of Christ, developing fitness of creation to be incorporated into the Kingdom, the account extrapolates from the beauty of the culture to the fullness of Christ, rather than requiring the culture to conform to what we already know of the Kingdom, narrowing what is so that it may match our ideas. At the same time, there remains that of Christ which is hidden under the form of the sign. The sign, therefore, continues to have dual nature for the Christian: it both is and is not; of salvation as image (which in the operation of our minds incorporates a temporal aspect) and of itself, including its religio-cultural milieu, as form.<sup>79</sup> It is a dual nature which conforms to our Christian placing between the Resurrection and the eschaton. This account of the Spirit's work through the participant Christian observer opens unframed space for life, a Field of Love for trust, an arena of the Kingdom known primarily in our discerning. It obviates any striving for conformity and welcomes difference. The account gives the responsibility (and privilege) to the Christian to fit together present reality and what we know through revelation of the end, to discern in the multiform scenes of life signs of God's transformative love.

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<sup>78</sup> A matter that will concern us when we come to consider Christian mission and dialogue.

<sup>79</sup> The contention with Rahner's view is not the hiddenness as such of Christ in other cultural forms but the seeking to account for Christ's presence by uncovering discrete marks rather than allow for the integrity of the form within its religio-cultural milieu.

## Chapter Five CHRIST AND THE BEAUTY OF JAPANESE ART

### 1. Reading Signs of Christ

We shall need to accept the continuing discord between two conceptions of beauty (*kenmitsu* and Christian) which we experience and interpret as one. Japanese art figures awakening: space for bliss is given to our imaginations. At the same time, for Christians it is under the sign of Christ that we shall receive beauty: the love which makes sense of beauty's particularity and transcendence is made known to us through the Resurrection of the incarnate Christ. My experience is the fulcrum and my heart and mind (*kokoro*) put the two together. I can expect to be altered by the effect of beauty in Japanese art (as is its intent), which necessarily (and by God's design) will affect my interpretation of Christ.

At this point in the exploration, Ben Quash's presentation of theo-dramatics becomes the guide. Quash writes of reading events and with them of reading Christ, by which we may gain a 'hard-won' legibility and so form a world, an interpretive environment. It amounts to 'transposing' or 'transcribing' the form of Christ in our world: form which cannot be pre-conceived but known through particulars, narrative configuration that is not to be frozen into a single pattern.<sup>1</sup> This is an account of human life lived within theo-drama, in which we live forwards, not yet recognising denouement. So our reading of this life is always hermeneutic, a practice of interpreting which relies on enabling by the Holy Spirit and amounts to an account of revelation in the 'existential register'. It is a disposition not of passivity but of courage and creativity.<sup>2</sup> Such transcribing of the form of Christ is always new; it derives from the Spirit's otherness within the life of the Holy Trinity, the 'second difference'. Hence Quash's understanding is that discernment does not involve reading off from the intractable material of history "the wholeness and integrity (the *resolved* dramatic

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<sup>1</sup> Following Rowan Williams and Donald MacKinnon; Quash, p. 207; compare p. 60. The example he gives is that of Gerard Manley Hopkins immersing himself in newspaper reports of a navigational disaster in 1875 so that, by entering imaginatively into the specific events, he discovers Christ – in what amounts to a 'transcription' of the life of Jesus Christ – in the witness of the tall nun who calls on Christ as the ship goes down and is able in that moment to think him together with these events. The result of Hopkins' effort was the powerful poem, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. The focus for Quash is on human suffering; to read particular suffering in a way that eschews any attempt at explaining it.

<sup>2</sup> Quash; see especially pp. 204-205, 215.

shape) of the Christ-form”,<sup>3</sup> as he sees von Balthasar, with his tendency to ‘epic’ reading, habitually does. Rather it involves operating “under the discipline of faith in the incarnation, looking only for a sign that God who was in Christ is discernible somewhere *inside* the events.” As Quash summarises the epistemology behind this practice: “God’s immanence offers not a frame but a presence.”<sup>4</sup> Such discernment is “not neatly transferable to any subsequent event” but is “nonetheless part of a continuing and communicable tradition of reading”. It is responsible towards the ‘unassimilably particular’,<sup>5</sup> yet contributes to public discourse.

Contact with an unassimilable other alerts us to the unfinished nature of this theo-drama and of our interpreter’s role. The beauty of Japanese art, in conveying radical immanency, encourages Christian theology endlessly to value irreducible particularities. They rest on emptiness; they may vanish. Yet, like a miracle, they hold form and speak. They re-calibrate our being as similarly constituted. Flesh in a fallen world, we remain endlessly to be valued and miraculously present. We too are from nothing and to nothing, ever incomplete, radically contingent, trace. And as trace, our lives are loci of intense feeling (not our own but common) and mark *ma*, space of love, freedom and peace. Our trust in the field of God’s love encourages us to explore these perceptions, to see further. These lives of ours, which can be understood so, share familial likeness with that of Jesus. We come to perceive Christ in his Incarnation as trace, resting on emptiness. He, to whom the world owes its being, manifests as radical immanency: irreducibly particular, holding form like a miracle and endlessly to be valued. What we receive through the beauty of Japanese art we find is what we have always been given in Christ, not substance but presence, call to life. Just as Rowan Williams and Ben Quash warn us against the epic overview by which we would aim through explanatory framework to control what is discontinuous or resistant,<sup>6</sup> so Japanese art refuses us a frame. It is experience of the discontinuous to awaken us from the stasis of illusion.

The call of this Japanese beauty affirms the significance of the task of putting together. It parallels a task which lies at heart of Christian discipleship. Jesus’ repeated commands to “See!” and “Hear!” are commands to interpret well experience of presence as vehicle of

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<sup>3</sup> Quash, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Quash, p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> Quash, p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> Quash, p. 206.

saving truth; that is, to interpret it with faith, hope and love in such a way that these virtues issue in action. The call to the first disciples can be understood as call to put together Jesus of Nazareth, with whom they lived and whom they saw crucified, and the risen Lord. Here is the primary discontinuity (polarity) which, for Christians, underlies all other interpreting; get this right and we are given a key to life. The figuration in Japanese art of emptiness only highlights the polarity (although it is argued here that it does so in a usefully different and compelling way). The disciples' intuition ran before their reasoning at the tomb, on the sea-shore and on the Emmaus road. They believed. They put together their experience in the world and the Kingdom already present among them. They then found they had to apply that putting together to other discontinuities, notably between Jewish faithfulness to the self-revealing God and Greek philosophical logic. Such putting together (or 'reading signs of Christ') continues to rest on faith; it is not to be appropriated as ideological tool. Likewise, as presence, beauty remains gift. Arriving in Japan, disciples of Christ find Japanese art persuades both of our insubstantiality and of our worth. Our part (our response to the call of that beauty) is to see how the key we have been given in our continuing reading of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ unlocks meaning from the occasion of this beauty. Our role is to announce the Kingdom by reading Christ within the truth-event this beauty supplies.

#### HEIDEGGER, WATSUJI AND BERQUE

Augustin Berque offers a helpful perspective on attempts to put together East and West, in this case in terms of the understandings of the human person held by Heidegger and Watsuji.<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, in the European tradition, distinguishes Being from being and consequently collective from individual. Watsuji, influenced by Mahāyāna and by the

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<sup>7</sup> Berque, 'The Question of Space: From Heidegger to Watsuji', in *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. by Joy Hendry, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, pp. 57-67. Heidegger's turn to temporality which led from logic and metaphysics to existentialism brought Western philosophy into the path of Eastern thought (for this judgment, see Ramirez-Christensen, p. 94). But Heidegger himself was led to see an unbridgeable gap between the postulates of Western philosophical language which derive from Greek tradition and those of Japan with Buddhist antecedents. For this view, see his imaginary dialogue with a Japanese student, discussed in Marra, *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics* pp. 3-4. Watsuji studied with Heidegger in Germany and critiques his Existentialism as being too oriented to temporality over the spatialisation of *fūdo*, according to Berque, 'The Question of Space' (see especially pp. 61, 63). Berque prefers the readings of Levinas and Didier Franck of space as corporeity over Watsuji, but also over Heidegger's distinction between undifferentiated space and place which our works make and which therefore precedes space.

Japanese language's tendency not to distinguish definite from indefinite, does not. But Berque understands both as swallowing up the consciousness of the subject as individual, Heidegger in focussing on human existence, Watsuji on *fūdo* (and therefore, according to Berque, natural determination). Both display the 'engulfment' of 'the plane of the subject' of which Nishida Kitarō wrote and this, according to Berque, encourages (historically-witnessed) compromises with totalitarian ideologies. But on the other hand, the subject as individual (the Cartesian subject) is mired in dualism. Berque proposes that human reality be understood rather as a trajectory of emergence. Engulfment, which at this point connotes belonging, and the emergence of the consciousness (and conscience) of the individual are two sides of human reality and both necessary. It is a trajectory which entails recognition that we are our *fūdo*. Watsuji has read human transience as connecting 'I' to the more stable 'we' and subsuming the individual.<sup>8</sup> In positing such a trajectory Berque has reintroduced responsibility into the notion of *fūdo*. Berque's 'emergence' tempers European substantialism of the human subject with a sense of what he terms 'relationalism' derived from Mahāyāna philosophy, without embracing Mahāyāna absence of self-nature or evanescence. It is a forward trajectory, one Berque describes as "a new stage in the continuous development of Being".

The question here is what kind of betweenness (*aida*, *ma*, *gen*) constitutes our humanity. Watsuji's philosophic re-working of the Mahāyāna tradition is of human beings as natural, arising in our *fūdo*.<sup>9</sup> Berque's 'development of being' is ultimately a re-working of a continuing European dream of the autonomous human being: we make our milieu. Berque will not allow a Japanese vision (however eloquently expressed in art) to compromise that autonomy. The difficulty of Berque's presentation is that he too remains attached to his (European) *fūdo* in prioritising progress: the individual subject is ultimately a means to this developmental trajectory. By down-playing the sense of givenness, he compromises our

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<sup>8</sup> Berque quotes Watsuji's words: "while dying and changing, men live and the betweenness [*aida*] of men continues." Berque, 'The Question of Space', p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> As Berque notes, Watsuji writes of *fūdosei* ('mediance', the orientation of the relationship of a society with its environment) as the "structural moment of the being-human"; Berque, 'The Question of Space', p. 57. "Being-human" (*ningen sonzai*, 人間存在), as well as including the sense of space as *ma* (間), incorporates the ideogram for *zai* with its flavour of *tsuchi* (土) meaning earth and, with it, the understanding that being is always placed; Berque, 'The Question of Space', p. 60.

ability to recognise and respond to the Giver.<sup>10</sup> Hence he can only present the Japanese vision as, at best, one out of which to emerge. A Christian understanding of emergence, liberty, is different. It comes not by denying the vision of emptiness in *kenmitsu*. Rather it comes under the sign of Christ. The Resurrection shines light on that particular engulfment in emptiness which is the birth, life and death of Jesus and finds there what transcends *mu*, that is, the presence of God with us. Emptiness and *fūdo* are found by the Resurrection to mediate what transcends *mu*. Christ, the one who went into death and lives, thereby holds together radical contingency (evanescence) and the worth of the human person, Berque's individual subject with conscience. Liberty is revealed as the freedom to love.

#### EFFECTS ON THE ONE READING OF READING CHRIST

If Watsuji saw in dying the continuing of human betweenness in a sense that prioritised *fūdo* over person (see footnote 8 above), under the sign of the cross the Christian finds different truth there. *Ningen sonzai*, being-human, as *aida, ma* (see footnote 9 above), is no longer a betweenness that is continuing, subsumed in a collective consciousness, but a new betweenness, constituted by 'for the sake of', that is, by love: a new humanity. Emptiness and *fūdo* are not rejected but re-made to mediate this transcending love. They become the Field of Love. They are not now totalising engulfment but created space for freely-willed peace-making, expression of and preparation for the Kingdom of God. When we respond to the beauty of Japanese art by recognising that our experiencing is fulcrum and by recognising that we who experience are made by God's grace to be both unfolding of *mu* and that space which in Christ is being-human (*ningen sonzai*) for the sake of love, then the inversion of polarities which is effected by (the Spirit-given faith of the apostles in) the Resurrection is enabled through us, through our faithful experiencing. The form I see in Japanese art (in this study, the *ma* defined by trace) is thereby made sign of the *ma* God makes of me. In my pivotal experiencing, I am also in my Christian belonging sign of the Incarnation and of the Field of Love where the inversion of polarities occurs. And it follows that the (*kenmitsu*-inspired) beauty I see is image of the beauty God chooses to see in me. I read the sign of Christ when I experience the beauty of Japanese art and increase in true

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<sup>10</sup> Consider, for example, his delightful instance of Parisian 'phenomena of milieu', 'mediance': "sunset glow goes along with Notre Dame's big rosace, whereas the chirping of birds at dawn goes along with its apse." There is rightly much here of human formation of milieu, but Berque fails to note that the imagination which can fashion such milieu is formed by a sense of givenness, that is of creatureliness. Berque, 'The Question of Space', p. 59.

faith. I find Christ where Christ finds me. In the terms which Inoue Yōji uses of the face of Jesus in Japan - that is, not in terms of identifying objective presence but in terms of witnessing to spiritual sensibility - it is I, called to look on *kenmitsu* beauty with eyes focussed by Christ, registering there the love of God mediated through Japanese life and known in its attractiveness, who am thereby made face of Jesus in Japan. Asking what Japan is for,<sup>11</sup> I find I am myself made a part of the answer. And Christ does this, not for my sake alone, but for the sake of the Kingdom.

What is the nature of such a sign? Like all signs it is a figuration; it has form. I meet it as event (and recall it as scene), and my reading furthers the event and alters my perception of the sign and alters me who does the perceiving. As sign it maintains a combinatory nature: at its most signifying when form and image are most distinct yet one.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the art of different faiths there is that which properly resists Christian theological signification.<sup>13</sup> The act of reading the sign remains hard-winning<sup>14</sup> (and those offered here are at best provisional). The will of God is in this. This resistance preserves the uniqueness of each particularity and, in doing so, keeps us from assuming mastery by our acts of interpretation. It preserves our capacity to be met by God in God's freedom. It preserves our attentiveness to what may be of God but we do not yet know it. In particular, it preserves our attentiveness to what we learn to be God's proper character, God's endless capacity for love, and keeps us in mind of the importance of difference as deriving ultimately from the 'space' between the divine Persons which is condition for faith, hope and love, that it is relational rather than of any essence. This has been recognised by Japanese theologians confronted daily by cultural intractability. For Mutō Kazuo, the polarisation of the polarities preserves the futurist thrust of eschatology.<sup>15</sup> For Inoue Yōji it is a necessary condition for the right response to the Field of Love being one of trust, which builds relationship and forms character.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For contemporary concern for 'theology of Japan', see Furuya, pp. 141-146.

<sup>12</sup> As, for example, the sign that Hopkins sees in the nun's cry in the *Wreck of the Deutschland*. Quash, pp. 204-205.

<sup>13</sup> As there is in other cases, such as human suffering, as we met with Ben Quash and Gerard Manley Hopkins in shipwreck. See above, p. 164 and fn. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Quash, p. 198.

<sup>15</sup> Mutō, "Immanent Transcendence" in *Religion*.

<sup>16</sup> Inoue Yōji, p. 238.

But the attempt to see, with its provisional results, remains important God-given vocation. We shall recognise the Christ who comes to us, the King who by grace draws all into true relationship, more readily for having discerned signs of Christ where he is not easily to be recognised. Looking at the beauty of Japanese forms through eyes informed by Christ of true beauty - this act of reading Christ - alters our perception of the other and of the image of Christ. Walking with Inoue Yōji among the hills and temples of Yamato we come to see Christ present through *ma*, *yūgen*, evanescence, through the compassionate features of a bodhisattva and the falling of maple leaves on the water.<sup>17</sup> Among our many fashionings, the most significant are those of our own lives. This vocation of ours is not an isolated one. Human lives can only image Christ to the degree they are for the sake of others, and this will embrace our communal formation. Our lives are made this Christ-like sign not for our own sake (alone) but that they may bring hope to others. Therefore our fashioning of things of beauty and our appreciation and interpreting of them have all at their base this trajectory of emergence, that together we are drawing all into the freedom of Christ. We are co-workers with the Spirit. The beauty, its origin in an unassimilable and irreplaceable world-view, remains enticing; it invites new responses and so new readings. This practice over time is both drama and path of discipleship. It helps confirm to us that Christ remains more than the signs we have identified, that what Ben Quash termed 'the resolved dramatic shape of the Christ-form'<sup>18</sup> is indeed not yet available to us, and so this practice keeps us from idolatry. Nevertheless, these readings provide a treasury for the imagination from which to explore truth afresh. Christ came to a world where interpretation is through signs; a world of faiths. His Incarnation remains an eschatological summons to us to continue ever-afresh to interpret well.

#### METAPHORS OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

What kind of interpretation of signs of Christ can speak of the fullness of the Kingdom in a plural world? Is there a language to help us recognise the eschatological in the unresolved? The Kingdom can be understood as summing up in Christ, a recapitulation of all things which, in terms of the many, speaks of accounting and renewal for each, an additive sense of the Kingdom (one of integers). But scripture also speaks of fullness, a term closely allied to the thought of Christ as head. The fullness (πληρωμα) is God's, it dwells in Christ (bodily)

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<sup>17</sup> This latter is a reference to the shrine of Tatsuta and to Komparu Zenchiku's *nō* drama of that name. For the meanings of this image, a translation of the drama and the many religious associations of the shrine, see Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 293-308.

<sup>18</sup> Quash, p. 195.



and it is ours as we are in him.<sup>19</sup> The understanding in this case is that any particularity included in the whole is microcosm of that whole. In neither sense can the Kingdom be any achievement of ours. We cannot put everything together ourselves, much less renew all things. Neither can we fashion ourselves, even collectively, as microcosm of fullness; such fullness could only come as gift. However, this does not mean that God has necessarily left the meaning of the fullness of the Kingdom utterly hidden from us. Clearly the life of Jesus Christ is sure clue, sacrament of the Kingdom as gift to us. The revelation through Christ initiates us into the quality of life of the Kingdom, its attentiveness to God, its self-spending, its thankful heart. These are understandings of the Kingdom which draw on analogy.

But equally insightful is our metaphorical sense: conjunction of thought based not on the attribution and proportionality of analogy but imaginative serendipity. If analogy is scaffolding,<sup>20</sup> metaphor takes wing, rides currents (and may occasionally rise too high). Analogy works piece by piece; it has the beauty of engineering. Metaphor, by contrast, begins with the whole; comprehending two things in one. It already establishes a field of polarities, asserting unity in the paradox of difference. Its beauty is architectonic, enscribing a fresh space. And as it catches our imaginations, metaphor invites us to explore that space, to glimpse or invent new vistas (and occasionally to come up against a very solid dividing wall). Metaphor juxtaposes terms from two distinct realms of experience; this alignment jolts us into forming fresh conceptions of each, conceptions which can hardly exist apart from the particularity of this metaphor. But as important as what is recognised as alike is what is thought to be unlike. With metaphor, the link simultaneously is and is not. So what is said serves additionally to highlight what distinguishes the terms and by this also to further comprehension.<sup>21</sup> It is effective in this only as long as the two elements preserve their separation: if we have routinely conflated them, the metaphor dies. In other words, for there to be a metaphor, something must remain unresolved, concealed.

A term in a metaphor draws with it a whole context. 'Christ the good shepherd' places flock and traditions of human economy and Palestinian *fūdo* and covenant promise and prophetic goad all before our eyes. When a term in a theological metaphor is drawn from a different faith, the metaphor gives attention to the context of that faith considered whole.

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<sup>19</sup> *Colossians*: 2: 9-10, cf. 1: 19. Also, *Ephesians* 3: 19 and 1: 23.

<sup>20</sup> See Quash, chapter five.

<sup>21</sup> Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (London: SCM Press, 1982), p. 199, fn. 18: not just illustrative but "epistemologically necessary".

Fashioning metaphors from *kenmitsu* art will bring the perceptions of medieval Japanese believing to bear on our continuing relationship with the divine three-in-one. The practice also invites us to comprehend God's love operating through those perceptions. Likewise, 'Christ the good shepherd', as metaphor, primarily affects how we respond to Christ, but it also transforms use of a religious image familiar in scripture. The metaphor renders our perceptions whole to us (which is to say, holistically but not resolved): we find our memories and imaginations, our senses and feelings informing our reflective thought.

Contemporary understanding is that we use and need metaphorical speech for a wide range of human comprehension, but that our understanding of such speech as metaphor derives initially from literary usage.<sup>22</sup> This accentuates its appropriateness in the present case, when we are seeking to extend comprehension of a concept that exists for us as images (such as 'fullness' and 'Kingdom') and which comes to us in the first instance from the pages of the bible. If the descriptive language of integers renders the additive sense of the Kingdom as sum and fullness gives an analogical sense of Kingdom,<sup>23</sup> then metaphor offers a third way, one which Jesus himself appears to have used in his many parables of the Kingdom.<sup>24</sup> These come closest to a narrative sense of the Kingdom as drama, as play.<sup>25</sup>

Recognising the metaphorical dimension of our concepts is a further way in which we find that space is given to us as analogous of God's intra-trinitarian 'more' and occasion for faith. Paul Ricoeur's presentation of the principle of plenitude as applied to hermeneutics is helpful here, that texts mean all they can mean.<sup>26</sup> The principle signifies that plenitude is bounded with reference to quality, namely its character as meaning (to impose meanings on a text would result in non-sense). But by the same principle this plenitude is open with reference to quantity; it is immeasurable (that is essentially, it is open to the future). Its universe is an expanding one. This is also the case with metaphors: metaphor generates metaphor and understanding deepens. Accordingly we may assert the 'text' of the Kingdom

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<sup>22</sup> McFague, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> But note in Quash's presentation, he stresses analogy's approximation as opportunity; that is, space to become "dramatical historical agent"; Quash p. 214.

<sup>24</sup> McFague, pp. 14ff, pp. 42-54.

<sup>25</sup> McFague, pp. 33-34: "A metaphorical pattern for rational human understanding is essentially a dramatic pattern for human knowing and becoming, a pattern which focuses on mobility, open-endedness and tentativeness in its commitments."

<sup>26</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', *New Literary History* 6.1 (1974), pp. 95 -110 (esp. pp. 104-105).

means all it can mean.<sup>27</sup> It is bounded in its character as eschatological rule of Christ but ever open to be extended by new metaphorical comprehension. Nor does the dependence of such extension on futurity offer a limit. We have already seen that the doctrine of the Trinity implies extension; time is merely our current way of experiencing this. Thus we may expect thought of the Kingdom to be juxtaposed in surprising ways with fresh realms of human experience in the alignment of metaphor and for the tensility<sup>28</sup> between these continually to generate further meaning. These will be meanings regarding Christ in the first instance, as he is the primary link between eschaton and experience: signs of Christ. This, then, is an argument that metaphor can be a sign we read; that, in the Spirit, we make our signs. Furthermore we must expect such extension of meaning to entail increase in occasions of Christ-like action, which is an indelible mark of any meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Applying these thoughts to the task in hand of learning to speak of the pleroma by interpreting signs of Christ, we can see that faiths are unlikely to be able to be added as integers to make a sum. But nor is it certain that one belief system will have capacity to offer extension of analogical meaning to another. Analogies between the *boko* world of *kenmitsu* and the *deko* world of revealed monotheism are hard to draw. Nirvāṇa is not obviously analogous of heaven nor awakening of salvation; it is their differences which draw attention. Were we nevertheless to put them together, we would be more likely to be doing so to compare functions in a system than content. And while we expect God to ask us to conceptualise analogically from the evidence of revelation, an *analogia fidei*, we shall be cautious about drawing analogical conclusions from sources extrinsic to the tradition, lest the attribution be mistaken.<sup>29</sup> It is otherwise when gaining understanding from metaphor. In this case, the breadth of difference can serve to accentuate the emergence of meaning in a new area of human understanding. It teases us into new thought. The imaginative leaps which it requires of us are less like technical ability (in logic, for example) and more like the

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<sup>27</sup> It may be objected that a concept should not be treated as a text, that we cannot apply a principle of plenitude outside particular (linguistic) form. However this may be, the charge does not hold in this case as we have already noticed that the concept itself is generated by means of the literary interplay of metaphor.

<sup>28</sup> The term (*take* in Japanese) is used in Ramirez-Christensen's account of the link in *renga*, where it conveys the condition for extension of meaning between verses and carries a metaphysical suggestion of the sublime, the inter-relation of all phenomena. Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 142-145. See also below, pp. 175-178.

<sup>29</sup> Quash, in choosing *The Wreck of the Deutschland* to illustrate his argument, comments that it is appropriate because it is theological; Quash, p. 198.

empathy of engaged commitment. Metaphor multiplies meanings. So, if the fullness of the Kingdom is plenitude (and *prima facie* this is what we expect), then fashioning metaphors of faith from extrinsic sources can be a way to recognise the presence of Christ its King and be open to be formed in its ways.

#### MEANING IS A FUNCTION OF THE GAP

Much has been said already in this study about living 'between' and the valuing of difference inherent in doing so. These subjects come to a crux in this consideration of metaphor. The human person has been understood not as unitary but emergent: conditioned (though not determined) by *fūdo* and in his turn conditioning; living from the unknown future as much as from the experiential present; held in the co-dependence (identified by the *santai* of Tendai)<sup>30</sup> of entering emptiness out of phenomena and entering phenomena out of emptiness; in Christ who is yet to come. These instances of 'between' derive from different perspectives on reality; the point here is that the composite quality of the human person can be described instructively by each. Human persons in our complex self-reflexivity, our radical conditioning as those always between, become in our lives signs of meaning arising from the juxtaposition of difference. Meaning is a function of the gap.

In this lies the value of the earlier discussion of 'field'. Inoue's Field of Love and Mutō's Field of the Inversion of Polarities are in intention descriptions of life lived between. The singleness of the concept as field expresses our sense of the oneness of existence, our experiencing selves, while the tension of the field maintains paradox, the openness of life. Inoue and Mutō achieve comprehensiveness as continuing drama in ways Nishida's Field of Nothing and Yagi's Field of Integration do not. We cannot escape the challenge of living between difference, of putting together; it is the constant of our nature. Christian theology's reading of our situatedness within a field maintained by difference (lives lived as traces of a gap) is that such space is invitation to grow in love and as such is analogy of the originating differentiation between Creator and creation, moment in the inter-play of loving differentiation between Persons of the Trinity. In coming now to speak of the putting together of metaphor and of the grounds for such juxtaposition, we are considering what on the one hand is more creative than mere dialectics and on the other is more valuing of differentiation than is the way of synthesis; one way of doing what human nature has us doing continuously to live. And in paying attention in this way to the difference between

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<sup>30</sup> LaFleur, pp. 91-94; and see above, p. 82.

faiths, as alerted by beauty, we are consciously inviting God's self-revelation through this poiesis, even as we seek our Saviour in a strange land.

#### THE DISTANT LINK

The manner in which meaning acts as a function of the gap may be seen in certain forms of Japanese literature, which illuminate the working of metaphor and in which art perfectly manifests faith, in the way sought by medieval Japan's religio-aesthetic. Reference was made above to *renga*, as explained by Shinkei in his *Sasamegoto* and commented on by Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen. *Renga* linked verses and in doing so effected and drew attention to a link between minds (*kokoro*), those of the poets involved in the first instance but also those of hearers ever since. As Ramirez-Christensen explicates the art, a good preceding stanza (*maeku*) combines the unity of self-sense with the intimation of something left unsaid. The next poet intuits the direction of this openness in providing a succeeding stanza (*tsukeku*) which interprets the first, while itself showing self-sense and leaving something unsaid in acting as *maeku* for a further *tsukeku*, and so on for one hundred stanzas.<sup>31</sup> The sense of *renga* is not in the forward thrust or narrative of the verse: it avoids this. Rather, sense emerges from the way the *tsukeku* can draw out fresh meaning from the *maeku*, not any 'hidden intention' of the *maeku* poet, but meaning which is found to be possible in the interchange of the words of the *maeku* but which is only illuminable through the difference of the stanzas; in other words, through the gap which is occasion for the link.<sup>32</sup> As that *tsukeku* in turn becomes *maeku* and is illuminated by a further *tsukeku*, its own sense which had been linked to the preceding *maeku* is found to be multiple.<sup>33</sup>

The quality of the *renga* depends on the quality of the link. Shinkei insists this comes from a heart (*kokoro*) that is pure and meditative: the practice of *renga* conforms to the expectation that the arts will be a way to awakening. The close link (*shinku*) is easy to grasp; it depends on verbal association and, because of this, has less potential for depth of meaning. What Shinkei prizes is the distant link (*soku*). It is hard to grasp as link and may suggest dissociation as much as affinity. Its character as link is not dependent on the usual

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<sup>31</sup> These are not signifier and signified; each stanza signifies and is signified by the other. Ramirez-Christensen speaks of "filtering the one against the screen of the other." Ramirez-Christensen, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> The "enabling gap of *différance*" which lets "significance leak out", so that "the words trace the shape of an absence", according to Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 33-34, 106 and 107.

<sup>33</sup> Ramirez-Christensen writes that in *renga* meaning is not semantic content of either verse but a third, an invisible field, p. 78.

associations of the words but comes from their ability to manifest to the heart the unseen interconnection of phenomena (dharmas), their interpenetration and mutual resting in emptiness.<sup>34</sup> Skilful *soku* show *engi* and *kū*. Ramirez-Christensen says that, while the distant link has a hermeneutic function, it is at least as important as a heuristic device for experiencing reality: “If the poem is good, it will reenact for readers centuries later the same mind-opening flash, or tense fullness of significance, that it generated when first created.”<sup>35</sup> Hence the need for the poet to write with a heart freed from illusion of self. The gap interprets the heart.<sup>36</sup>

This excursion into the world of the *renga* poets points up what is important in metaphor when employing this concept to interpret signs of Christ. First, if metaphor extends perception of truth, it can do so only because the subject (tenor) is open (something left unsaid, as in the *maeku*). This must be the case with the eschatological Christ, because of God’s nature as loving extension, and also because of our own limitations of perception under conditions of temporality (and sin). Wolfhart Pannenberg, writing a theology of the history of religions, asserts that Christian revelation refuses finitisation.<sup>37</sup> It is its eschatological orientation which opens up debatability, Pannenberg says, in all matters of the sacred, including between faiths. Here then is role for metaphor in extending perception of Christ. Second, the putting together of metaphor, like the *tsukeku* poet’s supplying of a stanza, draws on the heart (*kokoro*). There is no rule book for a distant link (no neat word association). It flows from apperception of reality – Christian theology would say Spirit-given and received by the disciple in faithfulness. Shinkei has much to say to the poet about developing such a *kokoro*,<sup>38</sup> and so would moral theology. Here it is important

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<sup>34</sup> Ramirez-Christensen quotes Shinkei’s example of *soku*: Is this then the broom tree/that grows by the lowly hut?/In a flash/of lightning, the colour/of the pines! (See her explication, pp. 69-70.) *Soku* “sets off an implosion of meaning in which the two verses apparently so disparate dissolve together in a deeper and larger unity”; Ramirez-Christensen, p. 78.

<sup>35</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 120.

<sup>36</sup> The gap between stanzas in *renga* corresponds to the caesura between the lines of *waka*, so that similar remarks could be made about the effect of the best *waka* from 250 years before Shinkei.

<sup>37</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Towards a Theology of the History of Religions’ in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* Volume 2, trans. George H. Kehn (London: SCM, 1971). See especially, pp. 108-109, 111, 113-114. Of Jesus’ self-sacrifice: “He did not bind the infinite God to his own person”, p. 114. Pannenberg writes that it is the characteristic contribution of Christian theology to the history of religions to create space (for debatability); p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 112, pp. 157-160.

to note that the results of this intuition are not private or romanticist. A good *renga* and a good poetic theology are both publicly discernible (through ‘dark knowledge’ in Kasulis’ terms, or ‘debatable’, to borrow Pannenberg’s word). And for this reason, we may recognise the reality of such intuitive insight, even as we need also to acknowledge that its working remains cloudy to us, deriving from that same range of inner human resource which has led Heidegger to posit projective understanding,<sup>39</sup> Rahner pre-apprehension and the supernatural existential, Polanyi tacit knowledge and von Balthasar (following Guardini) a priori concordance,<sup>40</sup> but which may in the present context best be likened to reading ability. Third, as Ramirez-Christensen insists, what the *soku* of *renga* provides is not so much hermeneutic to further understanding as unique figure of an experience (heuristic).<sup>41</sup> So also with metaphor, we could not know what it reveals to us by any other means. Fourth, its means remain gap; which is to say, discontinuity and surprise. As Sallie McFague says of metaphor, it both is and is not.<sup>42</sup>

Finally in the points of comparison between *soku* and metaphor, there is the question of the underlying ability of each to form a bond. In the case of *soku*, the Mahāyāna understanding is that all dharma are inter-related and none possesses an essential self. The uncovering of *soku* by the words of the *tsukeku* poet manifests this truth. It awakens us to reality. In the words of Shin’ichi Hisamatsu, it amounts to perceiving that “the true inside of the inside is not having inside or outside”.<sup>43</sup> (And here we may note that, as in the call of *kenmitsu* beauty across faiths, this experience of link is effective for hearers of *renga* who come with no attachment to Mahāyāna.) In the case of metaphor, the ability of two disparate images to resonate implies an unseen – and perhaps unknowable – place of accord, a hidden unity, I. A. Richards’ ‘implicit ground’.<sup>44</sup> Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen

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<sup>39</sup> See Ramirez-Christensen’s account of the comprehensibility of *renga* as equivalent to projective understanding, Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 94-96.

<sup>40</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I*, p. 244, drawing on Guardini’s ‘third domain’, that is neither nature nor special grace; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory II: Truth of God*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2004), p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 84.

<sup>42</sup> McFague, p. 13: “including a silent but present negative.” Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen would agree: in *renga* the object “both is and is not itself”, generated by and in its turn generating the whole; Ramirez-Christensen, p. 84.

<sup>43</sup> Hisamatsu, p. 49. Quoted in William LaFleur, p. 93.

<sup>44</sup> For explication of I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, see Andrew McGrady, ‘Glimpsing the Divine: Metaphor and Religious Thinking’, in *Religion and Culture in*

draws the parallel for *renga* with Derrida's account of our construction of textuality through the linguistic indeterminacy of traces, which are constituted as bearing within themselves marks of past and future.<sup>45</sup> In the case of vision of Christ arising in this plural world through metaphor, our expectation is that enabling unity depends on the supra-cosmic pleroma and its appropriation of the things of creation: what from our perspective is the eschatological vision.<sup>46</sup>

## DISCONTINUITY

But what seems more impressive, and in the long run more likely to prove creative than any attempted delineation in our experience of enabling unity (which might imply the absorption of the Dharma into Christian theology - and if successful this would merely be another form of fulfilment theology), is the continuing discord between two truths so that, passing back, we can never be quite the same again. Nevertheless in the 'discontinuous dyadic structure'<sup>47</sup> of *waka* and *renga*, it is not discontinuity itself which is valued but the space which reveals our contradictions experientially, not as constructed conceptual opposites but as dependent within one field of experiencing, as necessary to each other. So, by the same thought, what we should be considering in our theologies of religions is not the disjunction of faiths per se, but how (that is, with the appearance of what figures and what emotions) the experience of such disjunction allows us to receive contradictions within our Christian experiencing as necessary, as disclosive of what is real, of where life is given. I may expect Christ and *kenmitsu* mutually to interpret within the arena of my life.

For the *kenmitsu* poets believed there is something deeper even than self-acceptance as trace emanation lacking in self-nature: what (in her discussion of the use in *renga* of the final particle *kana*) Ramirez-Christensen terms 'suspension of meaning': "the gentle

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*Dialogue: a Challenge for the Next Millennium*, ed by Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1993), pp. 151-188.

<sup>45</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 32. But she also points up the difference: Buddhism's ultimate aim is soteriological whereas the deconstructive practice merely reveals "the solipsistic hall of mirrors that is language." (pp. 34-35.) For a guide to the debate between Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion on construction of meaning resting on an ever-postponed impossible versus 'Dionysian' negation, see Thomas A. Carlson, 'Postmetaphysical Theology', pp. 58-75 of Kevin J Vanhoozer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>46</sup> McFague quotes F. W. Dillistone: "every metaphor that holds together two disparate aspects of reality in creative tension assumes the character of a prophecy of the final reconciliation of all things in the kingdom of God." McFague, p.199, fn. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 74.



eruption of wondering, yet deeply moved response.”<sup>48</sup> May it be that Christian theology, in its faith in resurrection and eschatology, requires of us, in the face of the world’s diversity, not certainty but a mode of inchoateness? This will not be numbness or illogicality but something conveying deeply moved response. It will entail (as it did for Abhishiktananda) a ‘suspension of meaning’ (distinct from Derrida’s ‘delay of différance’ in that it rests on eschatological hope) which above was termed ‘an advancing of trust’. It will allow us to stay put before the suffering of the cross, that one ‘scene’ which we have received as the uniquely interpretive key to the truth of all true beauty.

For in Christian theology the primal discontinuity, sign of a gap which interprets to each of us our hearts, is the Resurrection, as the first chapter recalled reflecting on the journey to Emmaus. The evangelists’ inspired work in putting together the crucified Jesus of Nazareth with the risen Christ links creation and salvation, our experience and our hope. Jesus Christ can be considered *soku*, who uncovers this real unity of human experience as new meaning. Seeing as we do with eyes immersed in this temporal world and our lives experienced as becoming and thus dependent on what is yet to be, the connections made by the ambiguity of metaphor and their unfolding in time will continue to be better suited than more linear ways of thinking such as formal logic or analogy to perceiving Jesus Christ under the forms of creation as fullness of truth and the One from whom the eschaton derives.

This is so also if we consider the matter from the perspective of our reception of revelation. To comprehend God we need to hold discontinuities together because such comprehension is not unitary acquisition by a self-grounded knower, who can objectively judge this is (like) that, but self-disclosure of God creating and redeeming in this act of self-disclosure, and doing so by the workings of God the Holy Spirit within us. In being made aware of God, we are made aware of what in ourselves continues to be hidden (to borrow Derrida’s phrase, the suppressed element). We are revealed to ourselves as non-singular, emergent from and within a wider context than we had previously known, discontinuous and experiencing within a field. Metaphor (like Tendai’s Middle Way) uncovers reality in the non-singular, the ‘between’: it invites meditation on the gap. That being so, the plurality of this creation proves necessary to deepen comprehension by metaphor, including the plurality of the arts as means of knowing and the plurality of the faiths as means of believing. However, the arts considered in this study are not the literary arts, from which the notion of metaphor

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<sup>48</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 106.

derives and which show the multivalency of words in a “cumulative holistic process”.<sup>49</sup> Rather, the arts of garden, stage and mandala offer tangible or visual spaces, the beauty of which serves to open spaces in the contours of our imagining and draws us to inhabit them. The primary associations which such arts are likely to inspire will be not through words but scene and mood (*fuzei*).<sup>50</sup>

The correlation required by metaphor for discerning signs of Christ has conditions; as with *soku*, it is not that random juxtaposing will be effective. Here follow several such conditions for recognising good poesis; these are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. The juxtaposition is not to bridge a gap in terms of overcoming it, which would be equivalent to bolting on an additional sense. Rather, as meaning arises from the gap, the second term must offer both tensility and resistance: the terms function as traces giving shape to the gap.<sup>51</sup> And, if in *renga* the kind of shape formed is one which promises *yūgen* (which Ramirez-Christensen typifies as the Japanese sublime),<sup>52</sup> then in these metaphors which are signs of Christ, the shape of the gap will be one which figures transcendence and immanence, mystery and wholeness. The second term will have to possess integrity of its own. It is not cited simply to draw attention to the first term, but will be occasion for reflection on its own account. Examples of artistic beauty are suitable in that they continue to arouse affect: their inexhaustibility. Alongside such inexhaustibility there will be a givenness: rather than having been manufactured to fit the case, the term selected will have come to us in life’s experience, emerged in the drama of which Ben Quash writes. We can also judge the metaphor on its results. If it is good, it will deepen desire for God and loving care for neighbour. And, in line with the juxtaposing of Jesus and the Christ by the disciples at Emmaus, we can expect that it will strengthen insight, sacramentality and fellowship, and vocation (or the three so-called theological virtues of faith, love and hope

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<sup>49</sup> Ricoeur’s description of the construction of text; Ricoeur, p. 104.

<sup>50</sup> *Fuzei* may be understood to correspond to aura (*keiki*) or shadow (*omokage*) which Shunzei (1114-1204, notable *waka* poet and theorist) shows to be important in poetry; Ramirez-Christensen, p. 98. They are all ways of speaking of experience of the inter-relation of phenomena. Feeling, in Shinkei’s conception “is not the expression of individual subjective emotion”, it is invoked in reciprocal relations; Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 82-83.

<sup>51</sup> First and second term correspond to I. A. Richards’ well-known ‘tenor’ and ‘vehicle’, but aim to avoid the implication of qualifying phrase (rather than correlation offering new understanding) which affects Richards’ terms. For Richards, see McGrady, ‘Glimpsing the Divine’.

<sup>52</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 189.

respectively). The above are, of course, hardly rigorous definitions; as with *renga*, what is vital is the discerning heart.

### THREE CHECKS

As was said previously, the primary locus for understanding the operation of the Holy Spirit is in the Christian. The motivation with which I perform this poiesis of reading the sign of Christ with the beauty of another faith, this metaphor-making, is significant. This is no supra-lapsarian dream. The sign of Christ is always the sign of the cross. Christian self-giving is in intention a giving of life-blood.<sup>53</sup> Temptations not to do so will be as real in this affirmative way of response to other faiths as in Christian ascetic practices of formalism or rigorism.<sup>54</sup> Temptation to refuse self-giving may come as refusal to be affected by the truth of the art's beauty; relativising its truthfulness by treating its beauty as commercial object, as trivial and circumstantial. This, as refusal of truth, would be to refuse Inoue's 'uncovering of the subject'. But the same temptation may find a different entrance in us, as uncritical desire for the effects on us of the exotic, as affective greed. How may I discern which intuition in the juxtaposition of metaphor-making is awareness of God-with-us and which is deceptive? Here are three such checks.

- a) Is this intuition of the vision of God not incompatible with what we know of Christ crucified? For example, if the attraction of form of the *nō* stage speaks of the endless valuing of human experience, that all emotion aroused by experience has in the expressing of its truth the lineaments of beauty and that our part is to bear witness to this in such a way that we do not regard ourselves as apart from it, then the *nō* stage may carry something of the meaning of the foot of the cross. If, on the other hand, the stage can speak only of a wallowing in loss experienced as hopelessness (however refined this wallowing may be), then its beauty is shallow and incompatible with Christian insight.
- b) Is the intuition a result of responding to the beauty of the art for its authenticity? For example, in seeing the Kasuga *shika mandara* and appreciating its rare combination of

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Hebrews* 9: 22 and 12: 4. While the Christian context for self-sacrifice is the soteriological one of overcoming sin, it has its counter-part in the world of *kenmitsu* arts. Shinkei, for example, speaks of the *renga* poet whose heart is trained in *en* as one who values human feeling so well "he would not begrudge even his own life in return for another's kindness." Ramirez-Christensen, p. 80. The context here is the Buddhist soteriological one of being "keenly aware of the trackless passing of all phenomena".

<sup>54</sup> The categories are from Kenneth Kirk, *The Vision of God: the Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum* (London, New York NY, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931).

confident symbolism and depiction of ambivalent evanescence, am I responding to the faithful longing for the power of a transformed life in ordinary to which it gives expression, or am I romanticising the very worldly power of the Fujiwara?<sup>55</sup>

c) Am I making this art mean something or am I allowing myself to be formed (meant) by it? For example, when I sit in the Southern garden of the Daisen'in with its dual cones of sand, does the tranquillity I am recognising enter me from the beauty of the form of the garden: its proportions, the paradox of its small size and sense of vast space, the dynamic balance of its parts, the ambiguous promise of its cones, the carefully crafted experiential contrast to the swift busyness of the previous gardens lying in the midst of the city? And does it come touched perhaps with other emotions, including some recoiling from its emptiness? In these ways these emotions, this sensibility, become part of who I am. Or alternatively, am I valuing it as meretricious example of Zen garden arts, with its clever construction and creative rendering of themes of emptiness and no-self-nature?

To respond to the One who said, "I am the Way" is to respond to his command (or invitation), "Follow me". Such a response is embodied, human, personal, intimate, explorative, open-ended before (and more characteristically than) it is systematic, ratiocinative, integrating. It is expectant rather than defensive. It issues in metanoia. So, if I am responding to beauty as truth and allowing myself to be formed by it and do not find it jars with my orientation to Christ, then I must be open to the thought that God in Christ is to be known along the path of experiencing this beauty and through the religious system that has allowed it to be brought into being. I will look there for signs of Christ.

So, suppose that, appreciating Japanese religious art, we read it together with Christian believing as metaphor – what might we expect? Beauty of art seems particularly suitable for such treatment: it already invites from us engaged commitment and it does not run out of meaning. Moreover the medieval Japanese arts considered here carry, or indeed are, faith practices (no less than those of the European icon-writer): Shinkei and other medieval poets understood their *renga* as path of enlightenment. In a celebrated phrase, he wrote,

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<sup>55</sup> With regard to the character of those fashioning these arts, Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen speaks of *en* as encompassing "the chill, penetrating gaze of a sage"; p. 152. According to Shinkei, the poet's mind is one not "fixated on either form or formlessness, the Close Link or the Distant Link" (p. 150).

“the Way of poetry is the True Word of our country.”<sup>56</sup> This thought itself carries the structure of metaphor - the artist or viewer takes the practice of art and applies it as religious engagement: the *nō* stage is shrine dance-floor; Kasuga (and its mapping on a mandala) is the Pure Land; the *karesansui* garden of the Ryōanji is the Zen realm of no-mind (*mu-shin*). We recall the radical reversibility intrinsic to Mahāyāna thought: it is not possible to say which carries more weight, the parables of the Buddha in the *Lotus Sutra* or the concepts set out there. Applying understanding by metaphor to Christian-Buddhist relations may carry us further than we had realised we wished to go. But with metaphors the two elements are to be held in tension and not conflated. Any confusion of them overthrows understanding by metaphor and deposits simple (and probably false) identity. Use of metaphor remains dynamic play (drama). If, then, as part of our Christian eschatologically-attentive and drawn practice, we put the alluring beauty of Japanese religious art together with Christian believing as metaphor, we may expect our imagination to be surprised into new thought in ways that do not compromise either element but nevertheless generate further understanding, opening our eyes to the Kingdom as plenitude of God and pleroma, generating new occasions for thanksgiving and moral action.

## 2. Christ Jesus as *Ma*

So let us essay a metaphor from the world of medieval Japanese art and see what ensues. While it cannot have the determinative function of scriptural metaphors drawn from daily life in the land of Christ’s birth - vine and cornerstone, shepherd and king - it may illuminate and draw together, and in doing so be seen to be from the Holy Spirit. Here we ask four questions. What is the metaphor? What of Christ makes this metaphor suitable? What is the effect on our Christian believing of making it? And with what consequences?

### WHAT IS THE METAPHOR?

Christ is *ma*. Here then is the metaphor which, never quite seen, has been picking out a path before us, leading us off the street into the theatre, around the corner of temple

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<sup>56</sup> Ramirez-Christensen, p. 116. And again from Shinkei: “You must not think this way is inferior to the Buddha’s Dharma. In India, they preach the *dharani* in Sanskrit; in our own country, when the divine beings wish to soften their light in order to transform others, they express themselves in poetry.” Quoted and discussed in Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 159-160. See also LaFleur, especially Chapter 4.

buildings, unrolling a scroll and stopping to hear a poem. In an illuminating essay, ‘*Ma – Place, Space, Void*’,<sup>57</sup> Günter Nitschke traces specific usage of *ma* in Japanese from the simplest identifying of interstice to profound metaphysics. He concludes that, even as interstice, *aida*, the cognate Japanese reading, implies polarity and relationality. Traditionally Japan made do without a word for a Western sense of static, objective space. In Japan the notion of space, whether flow of geography or localised time, has always included variation and human subjectivity. He cites the arrangement of stepping stones at the Katsura Detached Palace (17<sup>th</sup> century) which guide our pace and the direction of our view. The *tokonoma* of the tea-room, as we saw in Chapter One, is space which enhances the relationship between host and guest, preparer and appreciator. Nitschke notes Komparu Kunio’s judgment that *nō* is the art of *ma*: “It epitomises the traditional Japanese artistic preoccupation with dynamic balance between object and space, action and inaction, sound and silence, movement and rest.”<sup>58</sup> Poems will often begin with a *ma*-phrase placing the reader, not so much in a time or location, as in an atmosphere; and the terms *ma ga warui* or *ma ga umai*, bad or good placing, are used in aesthetic judgments. *Ma*, he concludes, serves to unify awareness of polarity and to define a continuum, whether objective (time-space, for example) or a subjective one of external reality and internal mood. In the terms used in this current study, *ma* suggests field. In Mahāyāna thought it figures emptiness. *Kū* needs articulation: “A blank surface of sand in front of a Buddhist temple or an isolated sheet of white paper in Zen is not enough” to trigger what Nitschke terms experience of consciousness. He is writing specifically about the Ryōanji’s *karesansui* garden and the effect of the meditative practice of staring by which, he says, the onlooker ceases to be aware of either rock or sand; the energy flow reverses back onto the experiencer.<sup>59</sup> Forms are also needed, architecture and gardens, paintings and poems, to lure disciples into an awakened state. This Nitschke links with experiential understanding of the celebrated words of *The Heart Sutra*, “Here, O Sariputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In Günter Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 48-61.

<sup>58</sup> Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, p. 56; see Komparu Kunio, pp. 70-74. Ramirez-Christensen’s judges that *ma* constitutes “a major aesthetical-philosophical dimension in medieval Japanese arts.” She cites black-ink painting and poetry; Ramirez-Christensen, p. 34.

<sup>59</sup> Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>60</sup> Conze pp. 81-85. “Here” refers to the awakened state of the Buddha “on the level of compassionate transcendental wisdom” (Conze). Note also that along with form, the other four skandhas are also named as emptiness: feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness.

It can be noted from the above that *ma* and *kū*, which are two distinct words, have two different registers. The register of *kū* is metaphysical perception. But *ma* is experience; it has an external, aesthetic component. It is *kū* articulated. As such, it presumes form. Western art brings idea to expression, gives form to essence and in Christian art shows the not yet in terms of the already: an art expecting a spectator and open to didactic use. Japanese art manifests the flow between amplification and attenuation of form, uncovering the implication of the viewer in this reality: an experiential art.<sup>61</sup> *Ma* includes the temporal. It affects self-perception. These participative arts, in which *ma* articulates *kū*, are to the minds of the greatest Japanese medieval artists skilful means (*hoben*) by which may be realised the vow of the Buddha who tempers light and mingles with the dust. *Ma* involves. Nitschke notes that the *kanji* for *ma* (間) which currently combines gate (門) and sun (日) previously combined gate and moon (月): “depicting a delicate moment of moonlight streaming through a chink in the entrance way.”<sup>62</sup> This pictogram perfectly illustrates the necessary simultaneity of the given and the felt. It suggests the testing of the subtlety of our perceptions. And it offers an image which would be equally at home in the eleventh century *Tale of Genji*, the fifteenth century plays of Zeami or the twentieth century novels of Kawabata Yasunari.

Christ the moonlight under the door: *ma* of *yūgen*, of transience, of *honji-suijaku*. Readers will recall the role of moonlight in art (as in the Nachi mandala), symbolising the help of the enlightened wisdom of the Buddha,<sup>63</sup> and the importance of the *torii* gate at the entrance to sacred fields of the shrine, as seen in the Kasuga mandalas. Here is the interpretive

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It must be considered that Japanese *kenmitsu* arts of *ma* consciously evoke these and aim to uncover them also as *kū*. Conze understands the identity of *nirvāṇa* and *samāsāra* as the heart of *The Heart Sutra*.

<sup>61</sup> For example, Roland Barthes in his ‘fictive Japan’ comments on Japanese cuisine, distinguishing its invitation to the diner to participate in its artistic fabrication (as in *sukiyaki*) from Western presentation of completed dishes from the menu, “an itinerary of dishes”; Barthes, pp. 19-22.

<sup>62</sup> Nitschke, *From Shinto to Ando*, p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen, commenting on a *waka* of Jichin, writes of moonlight, “before which all thought and sorrow must vanish into emptiness”, as the moon is “a metaphor for the all-penetrating mind of the Buddha.” Ramirez-Christensen, pp. 74-75. Note also the range of meanings conveyed when the depiction of a celestial orb is differently interpreted as moon, sun or figure of both in one. See above, pp. 108-109. The dual nature of this element of the *kanji* for *ma* (both moon and sun) fits very well with the current discussion.

metaphor which the arts of Japan have offered. Can we recognise from what we know of Christ that which would allow us to employ this metaphor?

#### WHAT OF CHRIST MAKES THIS METAPHOR SUITABLE?

Much has been made of the importance of interval in divine unity,<sup>64</sup> the understanding that God experiences Godself also as other in the self-giving of the Persons which establishes relationship of mutual loving, the divine nature. It is an understanding that derives from Christians' reflection on the life of Jesus Christ in the light of his Resurrection and on their own experience of being formed as a people in the likeness of Christ by the Spirit. Such interval in the immanent Trinity is condition for that articulation of God's love which is the creating of this cosmos.<sup>65</sup> In this way, the freedom we find we have to interpret meaning from what we naturally experience derives from this interval: as creatures, we are given by love a difference which is not ipso facto alienated from the source of truth and meaning. This derived interval – of creation – is united with the innate interval of Father and Son in the Spirit through the faithfulness of the life of Jesus, the incarnating of that divine interval in creation. And so it is such interval – dissimilitude or difference - which allows for analogical insight into the truth of God's love. This understanding appertains in the first instance to Christ Jesus, as his life perfectly manifests God's love under the conditions of fallen creation.

So may Christ be spoken of under the image of space? In scripture, of the images applied to Christ many understandably refer not to space but to form. But the presence of Christ as freedom for divine love is also imaged in terms of place (temple - *John* 2: 21; refuge - *Hebrews* 6: 18; ark - *1 Peter* 3: 20-21) and in terms of passage (way - *John* 14: 6; gate - *John* 10: 9; ladder - *John* 1: 51). This is space understood as giving location and access. The title of Jesus in *Hebrews*, 'Mediator' or 'Go-between' (μεσιτης, 8: 6; 12: 24), marks space not as separating vacuum but as opportunity for relationship.

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<sup>64</sup> The term 'interval' is taken by John Milbank from musical usage and picked up by Eugene Rogers, p. 179, and Ben Quash, pp. 212-213. Other terms used in the present study include 'space' and 'room' and 'gap'.

<sup>65</sup> "In the free self-distinction of the Son from the Father the independent existence of a creation distinct from God has its basis"; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* Volume 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), p. 30.



This highlights a vital aspect of Jesus' role as priest and prophet, bringing together. *Ma*, as we have seen it in Japanese art, places us in a field of common experience, such as transience, which also thereby helps us recognise the holographic interweaving of all being. It brings us together existentially and, following from this, relationally also; as tea-drinkers gather in the *cha-shitsu*, *waki* and audience witness the testimony of *shite*, and devotees make pilgrimage to the shrine. *Ma* offers a sense, not of alienating absence, but of connection and of harmony in being situated. There are eye-catching aspects of these biblical images of interval which are tacit in *ma*, notably conversion through the prophetic announcement of the new and the priestly act of reconciliation. They are tacit in Japanese medieval art because the *boko* world of *ma* does not admit of any supra-cosmic transcendence. But the beauty of *ma* fashioned by Japanese *kenmitsu* artists correlates intriguingly in its effects with scriptural witness: where *ma* acts as *hoben* presenting *tariki* experientially, the biblical images explicitly declare the saving help of God and, in doing so as kerygma, also effect what they declare. Of course fashioning as beautiful form the Buddha's compassionate living of non-duality is not incarnation. But the correlation by metaphor invites us to look again for non-declarative forms of God's presence with us, room in which to be received in love and to re-imagine creation as matrix of the non-dual, to discover compassion in turning from our habitual subjective dominance over objects.

It may be asked whether kenosis can be linked with *kū*, emptiness, and therefore whether the articulation of *kū* as *ma* can be linked with the form by which we learn of divine kenosis, Christ Jesus:

who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. (*Philippians 2: 7-8.*)

This is a subject too wide to be aired thoroughly here, not least because kenotic theology remains controverted within Christian discourse. The place of its fuller explication would be within Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Here the focus is on experiential response to beauty and a few comments on this must suffice. As the quotation from *Philippians* suggests, our primary understanding of divine kenosis is a narrative one, a drama of character, role and actions: "slave", "humbled himself", "became obedient". It is an imaginative perception of divine loving told in terms of relationship, a counter-part to the parable of the prodigal. The emptying is not in the first instance an ontological matter of being and attributes. It is

making room for love expressed as obedience: an account of incarnate life as learning under the conditions of human life to live the responsive self-giving love towards the Father and with the Spirit which is the life of the Son in the divine Trinity.<sup>66</sup> The narrative is to the fore, but it is offered as giving appropriately engaging form to underlying truth, the abiding love of the divine Persons.

*Ma* also manifests in particular and attractive (although not narrative) form what is in intention universal truth concerning space of relatedness. The metaphor invites us to consider how these two faith perceptions, divine love and the resting of all forms in the potentiality of emptiness, may illuminate each other. In these Japanese forms - in the stillness of the *nō* actor and the minimalism of *karesansui* gardens - we find a movement of re-implication in emptiness, form as trace, the *sō* stage of the *shin-gyō-sō* scale. This is seen to bear its own aesthetic appeal. Knowing Japanese *ma*, we can read the *Philippians* narrative as movement of re-implication (dissolving) of form: Jesus accepting transience just as we have been alerted and encouraged to do by the *karesansui* gardens of the Ryōanji, Daisen'in and Kōmyōzenji. Scripture elevates such acceptance to moment of transcendent love. And the gardens displaying through their beauty an unforgettable attractiveness in privation refocus our perception of the cross and human suffering. Yet Jesus' emptying seems to be willed act whereas *kū* is presented as underlying reality. There again, as *kū* pertains in relation to form, *ke*, the image of this Japanese art invites us to reconsider how the space of God's loving and the body of Jesus of Nazareth imply and interpret each other. It will be remembered, for instance, how in the gardens the rocks can be thought to be the space, the interval or absence, in the midst of the fullness of the sand. Could it be, for instance, that that underlying reality which monotheists experience as absence of God is met, in our response to the beauty of *ma*, as divine fullness? There is much here which invites further thought; it is the contention of this thesis that beauty prompts such metaphorical correlation which is - by the will of God - expansion of understanding.

The kenoses of incarnation and death are not the only actions of making room which scripture associates with Christ Jesus. The empty tomb elicits the angelic commentary, "He is not here", echoed in Luke's narrative of the Ascension in which the two in dazzling white

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<sup>66</sup> Our recognition of this constitutes the 'transcription' of which Quash writes; Quash, p. 207.

tell the apostles that he “has been taken up from you into heaven”.<sup>67</sup> What kind of space is this? Does “He is not here” mark a clear boundary? If we think so, we are looking in the wrong place, understanding ‘here’ in terms of an either/or. The phrase refers, not to a continuing non-presence of Christ but to the rising of Christ: the emphasis is on ‘here’, not on ‘he is not’. The risen Christ is not Christ where we expect him to be, limited to the form we have seen, but the Christ who is ahead of our expectations. It is we who must go to meet him, go to become bearers of good news. We can see ‘here’ anew (as might *The Heart Sutra*), as suffused with and instantiation of the previously undiscerned whole. In the Resurrection narratives, this whole is the coming Kingdom. But space to see anew (in these New Testament narratives, the emptied grave and the emptied hill-top of Olivet) is not alien to the kind of transformative vision offered through Japanese art. The shrine grounds at Kasuga are the India of the Buddha’s appearing (in the vision of Myōe as dramatised in the Nō play *Kasuga Ryūjin*) and are the Pure Land of death and rebirth and are none the less the particular (and, as such, sacred) forest and mountain of Yamato. Our call to go, interpreted thus through the lens of *ma*, is not so much a call to depart as to see anew, to see truly, as it was for Myōe. Our metaphor suggests that we can find in the attractiveness of *ma* - relational, marked by trace, reversing energy from form to onlooker and so transforming perception and prompting blissful awakening to what is real – something of the attractiveness of the call to us of the risen Christ. The interval between our perception and the reality of the risen Christ, between not yet and already, like *ma*, makes room for transformation. And this being so, the *ma* we see will colour our vision of this transformation, of the salvifically space-creating presence to us of the risen Christ.

#### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS ON OUR CHRISTIAN BELIEVING OF PERCEIVING BY MEANS OF THIS METAPHOR?

The four connotations of *ma* identified earlier, as matrix of human sensibility, interpersonal, manifestation of non-duality and as sacred,<sup>68</sup> play their part here. But while having this expectation, we should recognise that the effect will be experiential before it is conceptual. We may learn afresh to pay attention to how God is present to us in our pre-conceptual responses. *Ma*, the moonlight under the door, as Nitschke insists, combines the given with the felt. Seeing Christ as *ma* invites us to recognise that our aesthetic senses of being given place and a greater whole in which we are participant prepare us as members

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<sup>67</sup> *Luke 24: 5 and Acts 1: 11.*

<sup>68</sup> See above, pp. 116-125.

of Christ. We shall find in our receptiveness to the flow of time expression of the interconnectedness of all and trace of Christ's presence. We shall expect our sense of self-awareness to take on the openness of *ma*, a consciousness available for witness (like that of the *waki*) and revisable, known not as the sure possession of an ontologically-distinct identity but situated and in relation. We shall anticipate communally-kept silence and stillness (as in Christian worship) to be modes of presence and intensification. We shall welcome space and see our own lives as traces, resting more in the gratuitous unformed than in the forms we grasp. In short, as we think of Christ as *ma*, we shall come to understand our own lives also as in the form of *ma*.

Held by the continuing inexhaustibility of the beauty of *ma*, we shall believe more viscerally that time and space originate as single image of the positivity of dissimilitude in God and, this being so, that all creation, including ourselves, the scenes stored by our memories and our religio-aesthetic inclinations, bears imprint of the life of the divine Trinity. And if, making the link of *ma* with Christ, we find in the presence of the beauty of space that which witnesses to the Kingdom of God and so prepares human beings for their true end, then also we shall find in our Christian recognition of, celebration of and witness to that beauty, in our experiencing as Christians of *yūgen* through garden and stage, truth that is two-natured, indivisibly and unconfusedly dependent origination in a field of Suchness and salvific presence of God's Kingdom. The metaphor asks us to rethink our conceptual world, considering not only that all forms rest on the emptiness of *kū* but that all phenomena partake of Nothingness, are *mu*. Further, that the phenomenon of Jesus Christ partakes of *mu*. Christ, we might say in line with the metaphor, is *mu* incarnate. But as the metaphor sees in the most intense human religio-aesthetic experiences the accessibility of Christ, it also opens at the heart of our *boko* world a window into heaven. Christ who is *ma* does not cease to transcend *mu*. The imprint of the Holy Trinity, felt in our response to beauty, is present here also in the sign which the metaphor is. This is not to say that the metaphor speaks of salvation without conscious acceptance of Christ. It is to say that it reveals all human occasions, and most intensely those occasions which are the most meaning-laden, those we feel the most deeply and those which touch us most closely with awareness of non-duality and of the sacred, to be moments of salvific address by God, moments of divine love.

The metaphor has led us once again to trust in the Field of Love identified by Inoue Yōji. Our experience of *ma* as beauty has alerted us to the stamp of creative, self-giving interval at the heart of the circle of the Trinity. This beauty, while manifesting *kū* by interchangeable *hoben*, a wave on the ocean of Suchness,<sup>69</sup> a beauty that shows reversibility, nevertheless offers joy inexhaustible and unique. Experiencing this, Christian hearts can be stirred with faith that being transcends the closed circle of Suchness to find its origin and fullness in the open circle of divine loving, that this beauty of reversibility is itself irreversible and that *tarikī* is truly gift. And it follows from this that we can receive all awakening to non-duality also as gift. The perception that Christ is *ma* itself establishes in our lived experience a field of polarities: reversible and irreversible; *hoben* and self-nature; *boko* and *deko*. It fulfils Mutō Kazuo's prediction that mediation (here, the betweenness of Christ) will create a field (in his terms, between the poles of natural theology and revelational theology) and, in inverting the polarities, make of their separateness the place of their mutual validation.<sup>70</sup> Mutō says further that such a field is space for self-transcendence in that it holds together what is known and unknown. 'Christ is *ma*' holds before Christian thinking a renewed engagement with theologies of the coincidence of opposites, applied to experience of the incommensurate in cultures and faiths. In doing so, it also holds out a path of personal transformation in Christ.

What does the metaphor 'Christ is *ma*' add to our understanding of the work of the Spirit? Previously in this study, following Inoue, field has been understood as field of the Spirit's operations: magnetic field to the Spirit's magnetism. That Japanese art makes *ma* beautiful we can judge prepares the way of Christ: Christ's faithfulness establishes the potential for this, for truth through form, and the Holy Spirit realises it in creation; in Mutō's terms, the Spirit enscribes a natural theology.<sup>71</sup> That the instantiations of *kenmitsu* belief in the arts of *ma* can by this beauty draw Christian attention to Christ reveals the operation of the Spirit for our sanctification: we are drawn by the Spirit to give thanks and to receive a mission, to put together. But we find these two operations of the Spirit, operations in creation and redemption, are one. We see the beauty, and that is the Spirit's work in creation (including

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<sup>69</sup> For discussion of this classic image from *The Awakening of Faith*, see Thornhill, pp. 100-109, and for its re-interpretation by Jihen to give precedence to the *kami*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>70</sup> On Mutō, see above, pp. 42-47 and pp. 156-157.

<sup>71</sup> Continuing to bear in mind this way of thinking is a simplifying, by means of appropriation, of the mutual participation of all three Persons of the Trinity in all economic operations.

through the faith of *kenmitsu* artists); we see that we see the beauty – hear its call - and that is the Spirit's work of sanctification in (and through) us. Both stem from the transcendent beauty of Christ's obediential love. This is a field of which the poles are respectively one of unity, the Christian 'already' of natural theology, and one of duality, the Christian 'not yet' of revelational theology. The Spirit inverts these polarities through Christ our mediation, transcending duality through consciousness of beauty, in such a way that we see the beauty of Christ in our unity with the objects of this world, pre-figuring the pleroma.

It is the Spirit who simultaneously creates and authenticates the metaphor in our experience, as moment of inversion; the Spirit puts the metaphor together (to the extent the metaphor is authentic). In doing so, we come to understand the Spirit as the Spirit of 'Christ is *ma*', so that all we learn of Christ from the metaphor - Christ present through our experiences of transience, of the value of feeling, of relationality and transformation, of the mandalic harmony of all potentiality in form - is what we learn of what the Spirit wills and is ministering to us for our sanctification, making all in all. If Christ is *ma*, we can borrow the Japanese term we met when discussing the composition of gardens and claim the Spirit breathes the *fuzei* of all such *ma*: the sigh which runs through creation is a *ma*-pitched sigh, as delicate and as intense as the feeling elicited in a lady of the Heian court as she sees moonlight seeping under the door. Or if Christ is *soku*, it is the Spirit who enables *en*. To say so is not to offer universally applicable theory; it remains metaphor, a tension of is and is not, and any vision gained from it remains vision generated by particular words, lines, colours and forms. But it is to say, in the sustainability of our metaphors the Spirit reveals Christ to us anew through the events of this world.

#### WHAT CONSEQUENCES FOLLOW FROM THE EFFECTS ON OUR CHRISTIAN BELIEVING OF THIS METAPHOR?

'Christ is the moonlight under the door' carries an implicit qualification: 'true'. Christ is the true vine; Christ is the good shepherd; Christ is the right way. These scriptural metaphors invite us to consider from our experience what is most fruitful in viticulture, what is most nurturing in the role of shepherds, thoroughfares that never lead astray. Christ is not any space, not any experience of awakening or of return to the purity of origins. Jesus Christ is the image who causes all images to run true. He is so for the reasons given earlier, that the world's creating springs from the Son's begetting and that it is solely through Jesus, as he

ever chooses to be obedient to God, that we are shown the Son in his loving relation with the Father. Jesus' life, death and Resurrection supply the image of the Son under the conditions of creation. So these metaphors for Christ, as well as elucidating from our experiences in the world the ways of God with us, also invite us to see our world differently, to see it as for God. In any metaphor, when a primary element is considered in correlation to a secondary, we first need intuitively to grasp the secondary in terms of the primary. A metaphor affects our vision of each element.

We can come to understand Christ by *ma* as expressed above: mediating and transcending polarities, luring us to awake to non-duality and be united with our originating purpose, making room for being. But we also come to understand *ma* by Christ and, just because it is Christ, the origin of all images, who is the other element in this metaphorical correlation, we shall find that doing so propels our appreciation of these spaces of beauty, and of their originating culture, beyond our current horizons. As we may now perceive a shepherd to be performing his role in a Christ-like way, so we may perceive a *karesansui* garden or *nō* stage from which the *shite* has just exited<sup>72</sup> as opening to the non-duality and purity of all in a Christ-like way. This Christ-like way is one of love. Not content that our being should become one drop in the ocean, Christ-like room is more than compassion; it is hospitality. The aptness of the metaphor (if it is accepted as such) draws our appreciation of Japanese religious art beyond awakening to Suchness towards the transcendent, beyond no-self-nature towards theosis. It does so in the way of art, that is in imaging - in the imagination - rather than by concept. With the metaphor in mind, we can experience the gardens as hope of heaven. Christ affects us, the art of *ma* affects us, and beauty forms the link in our consciousness.

The point of this metaphor is not about an external world, as if it gives us a rosetta stone by which to decipher clues about God written like hieroglyphs into another culture. We are not attempting to find Christ in Japanese culture, but to see signs of Christ: that is, by our perceptiveness becoming more acute, to grow in responsiveness - not to find but to be found, to make ourselves available to be altered. Christians praying with icons might say the same. If we hear Christ is the good shepherd, the point of the metaphor is not to regard shepherds differently (although we may), nor is its value primarily to do with how we

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<sup>72</sup> Readers may recollect Earle Ernst's description of the atmosphere at such a moment being "as though at vespers"; see above, pp. 92-93.

regard Christ. Its value has to do with what moral response it elicits from us, including trust, courage and attentiveness in serving others. Shepherds are the image, but the place of the form of Christ in the created world is in the shape of our responding. The metaphor has heuristic value to bring an experience to consciousness that it may issue in moral response.

Previously the call of beauty has been described not only as inviting us but, in our receiving of it, as obligating us. It is communication from my neighbour, and our understanding of the Holy Trinity leads us to expect God's address to us, which is God's love to us, to come through our neighbour. What is human is not alien to me, and the more so because it is not alien to Christ. However, beauty is always particular and so also is the neighbour, a particular neighbour. Finding beauty in Japanese art and thinking 'Christ is *ma*' obliges me to return to God thanks for this gift and for this neighbour from whose insight it comes. Further, as I understand the beauty as expression of the love of God and discover this beauty presents itself because of the compassion learnt and practised by artists and patrons, I shall read in their spiritual path the operation of the love of God, now understood as making room according to the image of *ma* placed in my memory. Seeing Christ as *ma* in the arts of *kenmitsu* could potentially lead to an immersion in the ways of life and thought of others of the kind St. Paul describes.<sup>73</sup> My response of thanks to God for this beauty makes explicit this operation of the love of God (work of the Holy Spirit) and presence of God (the presence of Christ known as referent of the metaphor) through *kenmitsu* culture. This is more than having our memories jogged by seeing the sacred in *ma*. It is real encounter, conveying in its own proper form of emptiness and trace hope of the Kingdom, and open as drama to the future. To read Christ with *ma* is to be made newly aware of our salvation. By this, as was said, our faces are formed as the faces of Christ in Japan. And by this the Holy Spirit 'surprises' the Persons of the Trinity with new gifts when the Spirit forms Christ as *ma*-shaped in our responsiveness.

Our response of thankfulness can lead us to ask whether in the arts of another faith there is that which is eucharistic or sacramental. Is *ma*, for instance, to be thought of as sacramental presence? Once again, the question broaches a wide topic and only a few sentences can be offered here as pointers to an answer. The terms have clearly gained in definition through the centuries of the Church, but even in their earliest range of Christian meaning as signs of the sacred, there must be some qualification made to their use in this

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<sup>73</sup> 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23.



case. Sacraments as we have received them are signs provided through the Church. They have to do with the prayer and praise of the Church, the sanctification of the Christian, and typically are associated with rites. In this sense it would not be helpful to apply the term to the arts of *ma*. But sacramental presence, before it is provided through the Church, is given to the Church. The Spirit ministers the presence of Christ sacramentally from the day of the Annunciation. Christians have been willing to name as sacramental those phenomena which repeatedly are occasion for increase in faith (de Caussade's 'sacrament of the present moment', for example). In the present instance, while this beauty may not be understood to issue from Christian prayer and praise, it is suggested it does indeed issue in such prayer and praise. The contention here regarding the beauty of art of another faith is that the primary locale of the presence of Christ is in the faithful seeing of the Christian community; and we may helpfully recall that the primary sacramental form of the presence of Christ from the time of the Ascension is the Church of the apostles itself. As previously noted, Jesus read his form as the Christ-sign from his life in the world and in doing so fully responded as Son to the Father: this true reading and responding – true imaging in form – can be understood to constitute sacramental presence. Christians reading (well) from the forms of the world signs of Christ and responding with increase in faith can be understood to be both discerning and living that sacramental presence. If it proved to be the case that many Christians regularly found their faith in God increased by the experience of particular *kenmitsu* beauty, then the phenomena which occasioned it might appropriately be described as sacramental. To think in this way is to suggest that in the Spirit all our world's signs have sacramental potential; that not only the Church but the creation is sacrament. This judgment refers to an identification which is not that of unitary identity nor even analogical comparability but imaginative correlation, as by metaphor. The power of the Spirit is realised in our ever-fresh readings.

Here is another way of expressing what it is that we have 'read' during the course of this study: *kenmitsu* art is occasion for sacramental presence as it discloses, through the beauty of its *sō* forms of *kū* marked with trace of *ke*, the form of Christ as *ma*. Understandings of this kind which *kenmitsu* art affords to the Christian help mark out a way of answering the question, 'what is Japan for?' That is, what can Japanese religio-aesthetic experience tell Christians about being human? And how and what may Christians learn of God from *kenmitsu*-believing culture? These enquiries are not attempting the question, what is the meaning of Japan? The latter question would be equivalent to asking, how does Japan look

from a God's-eye point of view? Rather, the questions ask what meaning we derive as we allow our minds to be re-made in Christ, our attention to be re-focused by him. Beauty alerts us to revelatory scene, not reading the form of Christ out of any culture but perceiving the Holy Spirit at work through our images enabling us to read the religio-aesthetic as a whole as potentially disclosive of Christ; that is, perceiving God's trinitarian love-in-dissimilarity unifying though beauty. In such scenes Christ is simultaneously known and not known, as scripture records of the risen Christ. Contemporary problematising of cultural essentialism, far from falsifying this approach, strengthens it by attending to all that persists disparate and incomplete. Our readings of Christ in these circumstances must remain particular, open to correction and attuned to the full disclosure of the eschaton.<sup>74</sup> Inoue, once again, has walked these paths before us: God's Spirit as love makes a field in which we all live; each culture, understood as our living in trusting response, is inherently expressive of such love.

Finally, we can ask whether our metaphor allows insight into the relation of this Japanese art and its religio-aesthetic world to the eschatological Christ. Does our vision of Japanese beauty find place in the pleroma of Christ? It will be remembered that Ricoeur urged of texts a principle of plenitude, that their meanings are all they can be. This can be held to be true of metaphors also: they mean all they can. Difference amplifies plenitude, while the continuing attractiveness of beauty, its transcendental quality of inexhaustibility, in this case provides the unifying or centripetal pull. With 'Christ is *ma*', the metaphor means all it can, sustained by the experience of beauty. It establishes a field of plenitude, open to the future, amplifying the meaning of Christ and the meaning of *ma*. This is not eschatological fullness, but it is not closed against its coming. Our imaginative meaning-building in response to the othering experience of beauty prepares us for the coming fullness of Christ: the beauty that comes to us through other faiths can be eschatological sign for Christians. Perceiving 'Christ is *ma*', we understand Christ as fullness and *ma* as sacrament. We present Japan's religio-aesthetic to God in our thanksgiving and allow Christ to transform it and us in his Kingdom. However, in conclusion, we recall the eschaton is yet to be and we remain

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<sup>74</sup> The import of "religio-aesthetic as a whole" in this instance is our putting together and making sense, a practice which employs both the intuitive and the reflective and which echoes the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessarily additive. Scenes, such as the three examples of *ma* discussed in this thesis, may be holographically suggestive of a whole. Metaphor as revelatory heuristic can be considered especially helpful when applied to a religio-aesthetic such as the *kenmitsu* culture of the Muromachi age which thrived on associations.

between two discrete world views, not trying to present a perfect fit but learning, as Abhishiktananda did, that in the discord of being between is our call to life.

### 3. The Metaphor in the Three Arts

It remains in this chapter briefly to draw together some (corrigible) pointers to the plenitude of 'Christ is *ma*' through the particularities of the figuration of *ma* in the three arts. This is to ask what the *ma* of stage, garden and mandala each contributes as metaphor of Christ; how, seeing each of them, God is present to us (not overlooking our constant understanding that presence is not unitary but embraces some measure of absence). As Christ is good shepherd, fruitful vine and right way, so to think 'Christ is *ma*' is to think Christ Jesus the necessary stage, natural garden and efficacious mandala – seeing the beauty generated by their lines, colours and forms, as we have done here, as occasion of their truth.

#### THE *KARESANSUI* GARDEN AND CHRIST THE SETTING OF OUR BELONGING

*Karesansui* gardens restrict their forms. In doing so, they still our active, dualistic minds and invite a contemplative heart. Nature is intensified in being abbreviated. Space is perceived as immeasurable. The *Kōmyōzenji* pin-points season and so draws attention to timing. The *Ryōanji*, in the unending poise of its dynamic asymmetry, stops - or perhaps gathers up - time. The *Daisen'in* is a continuing loop of emptying form (in the landscape gardens) and forming emptiness (in the south court). The art of *karesansui* gardens links time with the timeless through spatialisation. We are stilled; we are in flow. We are formed; we are without form. Meaning does not emerge; it is in the unbroken surface of the composition. The strength of the beauty of these gardens lies in their *ma*, their space or interval. It is this which is natural, immeasurable and in which we experience all (which encompasses ourselves) as flux.

Christ Jesus we have understood here as the sign in this creation of its origin (and end). This is to say, he is the form, the figuration, of that reflexive act of self-giving love by which the Father begets the Son. This act is interval in the godhead, and the creation stands as analogy of that interval, that gift of love; an analogy which Christ Jesus brings both to living reality and to light in our comprehension, in that his own life and death are interpretive

sign of it and are known as such through the revelation of the Resurrection. Christ and *karesansui ma*: two forms held in the creative tension of metaphor and each, not by our will (we are attentive receivers of the signal of beauty) but by their own wills. Christ, who is the origin of forms, wills to be interpretable form for our sake. The gardens exist not as allegories but abstract, to draw forth contemplative realisation.

In these spaces marked by rocks, we can see, in seeing Christ as *karesansui ma*, love - the originating and saving love for creation - as flowing, as form free from the reductiveness of self-nature. God who shares in co-dependent arising? Life without soul, articulation of *mu*? The gardens invite us, in our knowing of Christ (and therefore also of ourselves), to desist from reaching for knowledge of any determining essence. Rather their beauty, enveloping us in that *ma*, presents to us an encompassing nature marked by impermanence, ever being re-implicated in the emptiness from which it evolves and showing forth mere beauty. If this is truth which Christ gives us, as the beauty of the gardens intimates it to be, then our perception of his Incarnation becomes one of willingly-embodied transience. And in Christ's self-giving on the cross we can read a radically willed 're-involvement' in *kū* making room for all dharmas and grounding the simultaneously-arising dharmadhātu in love.<sup>75</sup>

Viewing these gardens, then, we see more clearly in Jesus' transformative life not only kerygmatic challenge to the world but manifestation of the inner harmony of all creation. The metaphor enables us also to receive our own loss of form not as lack but as the beauty of making space, of drawing other forms into the dynamism of a single composition, and of re-involvement in emptiness – that is to say, as scene which attracts. In the life of Christ Jesus created nature can be seen as space which is hospitable in its very evanescence, and God's presence is known in the attraction we experience towards contemplation of our transience.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> For an account of dharmadhātu, see Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 135-137.

<sup>76</sup> Noting that the *karesansui* aesthetic of absence marked by trace can be a more powerful suggestion of presence, as for example in the synaesthesia remarked upon in the placing of rocks so that they convey the sound of a torrent; see p. 86 above.

As these gardens encourage us to give ourselves in flux, to welcome our arising and dissolving, they crackle with life and the promise of renewal.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, we may conclude that the gift of salvation to us will be in some sense for flow, that the creation's processes of evolvment and involvement are themselves to be cause of God's everlasting delight. It may be that what we experience as change under the conditions of time we shall continue to experience as extension (epektasis) in the eternity of God's salvation, and that such extension carries experiences akin to letting go as well as those of growth through eternity. Such awareness will then colour present experiences of diminishment and loss in ways which make them more available to us as occasions of grace. Christ gives beauty through contemplation freed from passion.

#### THE SHRINE MANDALA AND CHRIST THE GEOGRAPHY OF OUR TRANSFORMATION

The *ma* of shrine mandalas works differently to that of the *karesansui* gardens, as we have seen. The spaciousness of mandalas is not the immeasurability of abstraction but the capaciousness of association. They do as esoteric mandalas do and gather together, placing all before us in good order. They take a small world – the shrine lands, the believer's life – and reveal it as deeper and broader than had been known. In their tri-partite space they display the recognisably local at the base (dust) as gateway to and already participant in the fully enlightened at the top (light). And linking these, mingling them, is the sacred sign as synecdoche, at once familiar and numinous presence, mediating trace of the real. Shrine mandalas may not be the art of *hongaku*, in the way that *karesansui* hold our attention to the real at the surface of all phenomena, but the *kenmitsu* rationale of this mandala form nevertheless expects nirvāṇa - in the enjoyment form of the Pure Land - to be realised in the midst of saṃsāra. Their space is a space of *tariki* inviting us to transformation now; their diaphanous beauty is inherent expression of the sacred accord we enjoy with all phenomena.

In Christ Jesus we are met by grace. Our lives previously had been lived within the closed room of the known, the cosmic. Through the salvific presence of Christ, that place - those lives - are opened to the transcendent. They are set free; and their freedom is in the ever-extending circle of the loving relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The space we

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<sup>77</sup> Here recalling especially the double cones in the Southern Court of the Daisen'in, figuring openly what is present in all such gardens, the expectation of regeneration through a return to originating power.

encounter in the person of Christ is that of another dimension, a new moral dimension, that of life lived in self-giving love. If these two forms of space, *tariki* and grace, are held in the creative tension of metaphor, each displaying universality and glued together by the call of beauty, to what extension of our perception of salvation will the mandalas lead us as pilgrims?

Their beauty heightens appreciation of multiplicity. They express eloquently the expectation that all things are transformative; all are what they are and are skilful means. Any phenomenon may potentially disclose saving truth. In particular, the mandalas order a landscape around stories. Enter the *torii* of Kasuga, walk its golden path and, as the deer come to greet you, they carry to you the message of the blessings of *kami* from many origins, the wisdom of multiple buddhas and the airs of diverse Pure Lands. By their ethereal beauty these mandalas evoke desire for places to be sacred, ordered to peace, hope and delight. And they orient us within them; they locate us. They make us present to this same desire.

At the same time they maintain a sense of journey, of more; the deer of the *shika mandara* suggest this but also, for example, the paths shown in the shrine grounds of the Kasuga mandalas. They open our eyes to see geography afresh; to see that recognisable space not only has extent, it has depth, the accumulation of meanings. The particulars of this natural world and the stories people tell - the intermingling, confusing, sometimes rough, sometimes uncanny legends - can be evocations of a spiritually-developing life. Drawn by experiencing the beauty of these mandalas and tutored by their distinctive vision, Christian imaginations can be enlarged. When we see Christ as *ma* in a shrine mandala, his attractiveness which the gospels portray awakens us to the presence of God in the midst of our experiences of diverse places, of culturally-storied human geographies. Now we find every space potentially a dwelling and disclosure of the incarnate One. We are continually amended as receptive to him through others, re-made as recipients of grace.

These mandalic spaces play with particulars; they cause them to align, combine, oscillate, mutate, coalesce, sometimes merge. To gain accumulating insight into the many associations is to grow in awareness of this world as a world of sacred traces. The mandalas draw us to envisage particulars not as discrete but as put together, as not definitively separable, and to envisage that it is in this way that they communicate what is true. The

cults re-unified a world by binding in, one by one, ever more figures of supernatural aid. In this their mandalas assist by showing what belongs together. So, the mingling with the dust which the mandalas figure, while not mediating Christian salvific transformation as such, speaks to the Christian imagination of the unlikely put together as God's own saving vow is made present and able to be encountered.

This presence – known as mandalic by the metaphor which the beauty of the mandalas supplies - calls us to co-operate with the Spirit's unitive work of love by means of our own putting together. Against any fear of syncretism, we shall attend to what others also have put together over time in faithful response to their experience of the numinous. Our exposure to *kenmitsu* through the beauty of these mandalas as they image hope enhances our aptitude to think by means of metaphor, to find God's presence through this reading together in love which we are led to do, and to know that this human capacity is God-given and is for the sake of our salvation. And we recollect this gift is given to us through the beliefs and labours of *kenmitsu* devotees of the shrines and the creators of their mandalas. In our mandalic devotion to Christ we find that in the stranger in her religious insight we are given a neighbour through whom we meet God. And, as it is Christ Jesus who is this mandalic space, we learn afresh that it is God who chooses the unlikely and that God does so because God wants us to learn to love.

#### THE *NŌ* STAGE AND CHRIST THE ARENA OF OUR END

The *ma* of the *nō* stage is no less sacred space than that of garden and of mandala. It shares many of their attributes, but also offers a further perception. It has the abbreviation, harmonious asymmetry and enigmatic quality of *karesansui*; its beauty invites *jiriki* awakening to non-duality. As does the shrine mandala, the *nō* stage draws worlds together, conveys a numinous air and evokes journeying; its beauty invites *tariki* encounter with compassion. It is a form carefully calibrated for display of a kaleidoscope of anti-mimetic, empty *kata*, which the space nevertheless shapes so that they accrue in emotional pitch to convey what is real in “verticals, moments of chorded experience” (Yasuda).<sup>78</sup> As Zeami famously noted, “It is often commented on by audiences that ‘many times a performance is effective when the actor does nothing’”;<sup>79</sup> as, for example, in the seated

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<sup>78</sup> See above, page 103.

<sup>79</sup> Zeami, *Kakyō*, in Rimer and Yamazaki, pp. 96-97.

song-poem, *i-guse*, when the *shite* sits centre-stage “as still as a rock”.<sup>80</sup> As Zeami explains, to bind together moments before and after that instant when nothing happens, the actor transcends his own consciousness. It is a moment that is *ma*, and its spatial comparator is the *nō* stage. The quality of *ma* characteristic of the *nō* stage is formed of the exchange between the cosmology of the *rokudō* and the dialectic of *hongaku* of which LaFleur wrote.<sup>81</sup> This stage presents itself as the *ma* of our lives.

In the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ Jesus we are met by the sign of our fullness, an advance of our end. In this way God has already given to our perception of the extensiveness of the *deko* world which Christ has opened for us shaping, pitch and rhythm. Our sanctification in Christ has recognisable character, resonant with our earthly lives, and a living, dynamic, developmental quality which we see in him. It is marked by continuity in moral worth and discontinuity in the security we seek through knowledge. It is this space of hope the risen Christ brings which beauty in its inexhaustibility binds by metaphor as deposit of heaven to that intimation of *yūgen* which is the *ma* of the *nō* stage.

Hence the *ma* of the *nō* stage in its attractiveness may offer the Christian a renewed sense of what it is to be on the way. We are both here and there: here, in unenlightened passion and the narrative of daily journeying and striving for the good; and there, which is the ‘doing nothing’ of the bliss of enlightenment, discovered to be not passionless but given through a quality of passion in attachment which transcends individuated experience. The *nō* audience experiences this when the lover of Narihira in *Izutsu* looks down the well and sees herself and him as in one, he beyond recall and she to be recalled the next moment beyond this interval of *ma* by the sound of the temple bell. We can see this also in Mary Magdalene’s attachment which is also the detachment of every Christian of “Do not hold on to me ... but go ...” (*John* 20: 17). It is her very passionate attachment which has led her to be at this place of meeting – or we may say, on this stage of encounter.

And the stage and its beauty remain. As the *shite* withdraws down the *hashigakari* through the curtain into the mirror room and the hush of an intense emotion experienced as common prevails and then dissipates, there is always this alluring arena, place of meeting and of remembering. The stage calls us to attend with all our best faculties to the depths of

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<sup>80</sup> The example and comparison are from Komparu Kunio, p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> See above, pp. 83-84.



experience, expecting that we shall not be alone there but discover a common humanity. And as metaphor of Christ, we find him the place of hospitality to all our experiences, joy and woe, and that he invites us to believe that these do not ultimately trap us in a cycle of despair but that they have meaning, not as signs pointing beyond themselves but inherently, and will take their place on the stage of that ever-expanding reflexive love which is the Son's relationship with the Father.

Does this metaphor allow us to expect our end to be a drama of resolution, narrative denouement to the complexities of our lives? Or a moment out of time, stored up as uniquely precious in the midst of a slurry of disappointment? This question touches on the debate Ben Quash holds with von Balthasar over the nature of drama. Quash argues that history as drama carries more value than do moments of glory, in that its open-endedness is necessary (as also against any 'epic' or 'framed' reading of drama as resolved reality) for engaging our participation as moral agents in a way that contributes to us living our lives as "of the fullness of divine gladness which the Spirit delivers within the life of God."<sup>82</sup> With such a judgment this metaphor (and this study) would agree. Such practice tending to such an end is not for the sake of resolution nor is it atemporal contemplation.

But the *nō* stage suggests a modification to Quash's presentation in his relativising of beauty. *Nō* is not a drama of moral development. The openness of its stage is not that kind of openness and does not allow for the discrete self that Western drama envisages. Rather, its drama is indeed directed towards beauty: the emergence of that intensity in the interconnectivity of all dharmas which is *yūgen*, witnessed in the amplitude of emotional engagement of one, the *shite*. So the openness the *nō* stage presents is a two-fold openness: open to the exchange between cosmological and dialectical (which is the exchange between not yet and already - a stage for hope) and open to the illumination of *hongaku* (such that it could be termed a stage for grace). If by its beauty the *nō* stage calls us to make it metaphor of the risen Christ, then (recollecting that what *nō* offers is not representation but experience) we find through it that our life's journey, led in faith as not yet seeing, is staged in the openness of Christ's encompassing love and also that its very intensities are grounded in the openness of the Christ who dies no more but is ever alive to God. The metaphor, then, encourages us to look not only to moral striving (including the witness of poiesis highlighted in this study) but also to expect, welcome and hold dear

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<sup>82</sup> Quash, p. 213.

those vertical moments marked by beauty which the Holy Spirit, sent of the risen Christ, gives. Such moments are not static or mystical escape but time-aggregated, transformative at the level of our sensibilities - a level which we discover does not exclude either the rational or the volitional (the application of our minds and bodies to the labour of understanding) - and are cumulatively formative of us in our response to God's love. They are what this study earlier termed 'scenes'.<sup>83</sup>

In the beauty of the *nō* stage God gives God's presence as our experience of chorded moments. It may be that both the booth on the mountain and the Jerusalem road are necessary together for saving truth; that such truth is always fully present but not yet fully seen, as we believe the (fully-present) ascended Christ to be Christ the (coming) King. The covered stage of *nō* is such a booth for transfigured vision. It interrogates us, asking whether our eschatology leaves us so driven by (possibly idolatrous) anticipation of an end that we fail to see and share the riches of human experiencing, that interval (*ma*) like created time in which the grace and spaciousness of God's love can be received.

The above are here merely to illustrate the application of the main contention that, in the face of the beauty of other faiths, Christians find we cannot and do not wish to assimilate those faiths, yet simultaneously find we are drawn to hold together with them what we already know of most value, Christ Jesus our Lord. Further, we find that we can do this, not by inventing likeness to Christ but in reading Christ there by means of imaginative juxtaposition such as metaphor. This practice, here termed 'poiesis', is at the same time a moral work, calling for the best of our heart's vision. We come to understand love as stage-shaped - a particular stage; freedom as garden-shaped - a particular garden; Kingdom as mandala - a particular mandala. These can only be hints because this practice cannot be a work of individuals alone, but develops as conversation among the people of God. Such activity serves God in itself: in seeking to magnify God under the conditions of creation, it participates in the divine love. However, service of God and our call are not fulfilled by

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<sup>83</sup> These scenes, however, are not outside the terms of Ben Quash's presentation. For Gerard Manley Hopkins, Quash's exemplar, the fashioning of the poems become moments of reading Christ, and these moments (and poems) are both dramatic and aesthetic, as is *The Windhover*. The poems then become occasions of further such moments for us: they resonate across time and so form us in response to Christ's loving presence - they themselves afford scenes, and it is by doing so that they contribute to the "communicable tradition of reading" which Quash notes (Quash, p. 205).

intra-Christian exchange alone. By grace they issue inescapably in participation in the one saving work of God for the whole of God's creation. Hence this study concludes by considering what the wider import may be of this practice, in four specific areas: theologies of the faiths; mission; dialogue and inculturation.

## Chapter 6 IMPORT

### 1. The Value of Different Faiths for Christian Believing

The intention of this section is to suggest a theology of the faiths arising from their perceived value for Christian believers, in the light of the preceding discussion on Christian response to beauty in Japanese art. Some may object to the enterprise as misappropriation (or theft). But not to attempt this would be to condemn us all to living in a fragmented world in which one abjured all influence from another. In practice lives cannot be so hermetically sealed, nor have faiths developed through history in such isolated ways. As there is commerce between the faiths, so each will find need to account for this in its own terms. Is this fair? Yes - it will avoid saying 'what the faiths mean' or judging their value for their adherents. It remains Christian theology – saying what God means - and to do this, it must be we who are the hearers.

#### MIRROR

The faiths have significance for Christian believing, as bearers of vision to Christians. To say this is to go beyond Jacques Dupuis' account of their lasting significance for their own adherents, which he explains by speaking of God's covenantal grace mediated by the perduring Logos. He looks for Christlikeness, for agapeic love, and his account, not surprisingly for one who tends to isolate the Logos (especially from the man Jesus), remains too logical. It does not take enough notice of the peculiarity of faith.<sup>1</sup> To speak of the faiths as bearers of vision for Christians is also to go beyond S. Mark Heim's account of the religions' ability to form their adherents to separate ends that are real because deriving from the life of the Trinity. In his account, our unity lies in our common creatureliness. But it leaves him without much to say about common participation in the eschaton; his pleroma is a kaleidoscope.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, both Dupuis and Heim have aided this search. Their intention to hold fast to Christian orthodoxy while suggesting value to other religions has moved us beyond the translation model of the fulfilment theologians and the 'dynamic equivalence' of religions implied by Karl Rahner's anonymous Christianity. Dupuis has insisted on an eschatology known through its moral character but open in terms of future

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<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 59-68.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 68-77.

doctrinal comprehension: the Reign of God. Such an eschaton permits us to recognise with him the religions' 'mutual asymmetrical complementarity': none has yet the fullness of truth. Heim has contributed a seriousness towards the integrity of other faiths and their religious practices as inherently able, by the grace of God, to achieve their ends. Yet each of these approaches, while containing much of worth, starts from an assumption of the difficulty the religions present for Christian believing. The present study has reflected not primarily on difficulty but on attractiveness.

There are theologians who have commented on the value of other faiths for Christian believing. Koyama Kosuke writes with sympathy of 'cosmological' religions, including those of Japan; that is, those religions which view life as self-existent, balance within a closed system. Their gods have effect in the cosmos and may cause it to take the shape it does, but they are not the reason for its existence and continuance. He contrasts these with 'eschatological' religions (including Christianity, but also Mahāyāna with its bodhisattva ideal). These latter have great value; they evoke change, meaning within a sequence, disclosure, judgment and salvation and tend to the universal. But the eschatological religions can also promote falsehood and, when they do so, the results can be more devastating than those of mis-directed cosmological religion. The *kenmitsu* cults with which this study has been concerned were a remarkable and vital amalgamation of eschatological salvation faith and cosmological cyclical believing. Koyama asserts that cosmological religions reflect an understanding primordial to human beings. Unusually for a Christian theologian, he comments that he finds an attraction to polytheism within himself.<sup>3</sup> The cosmological religions, with their reverence for time and place and with their inconvenience for totalitarian mobilisation, continue to have much to teach us. He gives an example from the 8<sup>th</sup> century of the resistance of the peasant farmers of Tado to the recruitment of their *kami* to Buddhist norms imposed by the central government of the landlords.<sup>4</sup> And Koyama refers also to the 19<sup>th</sup> century new religions with Shintō roots which opposed the Meiji government's nationalisation of Shintō into hierarchies of the imperial cult: "That god is

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<sup>3</sup> But see also von Balthasar who sets himself against any "derision of the gods" as they validly encompass the fullness of the universe – Christ will inherit the splendour of their theophanies; von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: I*, pp. 499-502. Also Keith Ward, who writes of the gods as "imaginative transformations of the powers and values of being ... revelatory of a depth and inwardness to experienced reality"; Ward, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Koyama, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai*, pp. 178-187.

different from ours.”<sup>5</sup> Such believing remains as stubborn parochial corrective to our grandiose and not infrequently destructive schemata which Koyama, recollecting only too vividly Tokyo after the fire-bombing of 1945, identifies as idolatry. And he offers a theological account for this corrective (drawing on Heschel’s dictum that to the prophet history is the record of God’s experience):<sup>6</sup> God chooses to make God’s experience in establishing gospel dependent on human answering. There is consonance between them; so for example, the pattern of patient receptivity we need in responding to beauty we find to be the pattern of God’s receptivity to creation. This is the foundation for Koyama’s insistence on theology as ‘neighbourology’.<sup>7</sup>

Raimundo Panikkar, whose theology is more conceptual than Koyama’s theology of the cross, hints at a similar conclusion.<sup>8</sup> By a new ‘Copernican revolution’ we come to understand faiths with all their human and divine dimensions, like galaxies, as places affording perspective rather than as centres around which all else turns. There is no centre. What we share is an existential capacity to participate in reality. Panikkar’s discovered ‘cosmotheandric principle’, rather than being a description of what is real, functions as a way of designating our reception of the process of participation: it is the way we experience. Other faiths serve to indicate this radical lack of a centre, as other galaxies do for our universe. Panikkar thus empties symbols of their power but also resists uncompromising relativism: the real is an advaitic ‘neither this, neither that’. So Panikkar, in refusing any ultimate formulation, calls on our experience of many faiths to present an understanding that remains dynamic with potential for transcendence. The faiths highlight the centrality of our existential capacity without reducing reality to our consciousness. Such a line of thought is parallel to the one pursued in this study, namely the transcendental significance of our response to beauty, including its ability to frame a common interpretive language. The faiths, then, have God-given value as mirror to our believing; they invite us to put ourselves in order.

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<sup>5</sup> Konkō-kyō: Koyama, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai*, p. 195.

<sup>6</sup> Koyama, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai*, p. 4 and pp. 54-55. Koyama asks, “Should we be more impatient with history than God is?” Koyama Kosuke, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 58ff.

<sup>7</sup> Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology*, pp. 89-94.

<sup>8</sup> For this account, see Panikkar, ‘The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges’.

## BETWEEN

Abhishiktananda, we recall, insisted on a value to Christian believers of other faiths (specifically advaita) distinct from that of corrective. He was held by the sign of Jesus Christ and by advaitic experience; he could neither deny nor relativise either. Having attempted to account for this in terms of correlation and equivalence, he turned from doing so to speaking of incommensurable levels: the truth of advaita does not destroy the truth of inter-personal relations. Are 'I and Thou' real or not? Neither real nor not real, but not an illusion; rather, they are appearance. There is embracing of opposites at the level of the true.<sup>9</sup> He went further and suggested osmosis between the incommensurable levels occurring in prayer and revealing correspondences.<sup>10</sup> At the end of his life Abhishiktananda found himself able to write of the life of loving union with God and neighbour - seen clearly in Jesus' experience of 'Abba' - as true advaita.<sup>11</sup> This was Abhishiktananda's stereoscopic vision. The faiths have the value of experiential truth arising from practice and this cannot be ignored; rather, they enable Christians to see the sign of Christ more brightly. In this, Christ remains more than normative for Christians.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that when Abhishiktananda brings the two levels of truth into alignment, bridges the two banks of the river, it is the juxtaposition of metaphor that enables this: 'Abba' is Jesus' advaita.

Appreciation of being between is multi-layered, as we have had cause to notice above.<sup>13</sup> The human person, *nin-gen*, is such only as one between, that is, interrelated with (all) others, in East Asian thinking. The 'between' is *aida, ma*, space. It alerts us to the unknown, the unknowable, which composes each person: the face out from which I look but which I can never see; the mystery of my arising and dissolving; life held in the tension between present and future. This unknowable bears analogy with the room which God makes for the cosmos. Both human person and creation are spaces known in the juxtaposition of

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<sup>9</sup> Stuart, pp. 230-231, Letter of 18. 3. 70. Abhishiktananda gives as examples of such opposites: acosmism and cosmism, transcendence and immanence, advaita and dvaita. And, in a rare comment on art, he suggests art offers access to this mystery; Stuart, p. 277.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart, p. 272, Letter of 20. 6. 72, and 284, Letter of 21. 1. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart, p. 282-283, Letter of 16. 1. 73.

<sup>12</sup> "He overflows on all sides ... Christ is beyond all concepts", Stuart, pp. 283-284, Letter of 16. 1. 73. Also, "The Christ that I might present will simply be the I AM of my (every) deep heart, who can show himself in the dancing Shiva or the amorous Krishna!" Stuart, p. 311. Letter of 4. 10. 73. At the same time, "There is no Christ, if he is not linked to a time, a place, an ethnic group." Stuart, p. 285, Letter of 30. 1. 73. Abhishiktananda rejected the question of Christ's uniqueness as false, being one of enumeration, Stuart, p. 281, Letter of 23. 12. 72.

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 137-138; also p.150, fn. 56 for von Balthasar's three occasions of divine interval.

incomparable or incommensurable elements, not voids left by two contradictory elements. Hence, both allow for osmosis. As such, they are in their turn analogous of the space called forth in love between the Persons of the Trinity, that 'ever more' which constitutes the divine mystery.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in tracing these analogues to the intra-trinitarian life, we can affirm their dependence on and participation in that originating difference.

The account Christians offer of the mystery of the Trinity undergirds our appreciation of relationship in differentiation. If we understand unity in the godhead as deriving not from the priority of being (as with Augustine) but from relationship encribed as singleness of will, how does this affect our perception of the faiths? The Augustinian model inclines to the hieratic and conformist: we may need diversity to distinguish truth, but this is by elimination or adaptation of the parts to the whole. There is about it the shadow of a Platonic fall from unity. But an understanding of the life of the Holy Trinity as rooted in communion (associated more with Orthodoxy) is potentially a dialogical or conversational model in which the single truth is the conversation itself, which is the exchange of love. In such an understanding, dissimilitude is not dialectical, in the sense of there to be overcome, but is precise condition of the single truth. And so the diversity of faiths, in as far as they are practices which aim at truth,<sup>15</sup> can be understood as contributory to the intra-trinitarian conversation of love in which the cosmos and especially human beings are created to participate - caught up into the common mind of the Three (and so divinised) without tending towards uniformity. This being so, other faiths offer to Christians entry into a 'between', and the stereoscopic expansion of vision and loving enlargement of heart that goes with this.

As was written above, the 'between' which offers life is not void separating what is contradictory. It is 'between' figured by - and made attractive by - response. Do we then need to maintain that the faiths are incommensurable? Kasulis suggests with regard to cultural orientations which seem incommensurate that, like languages, they do so because they speak of different matters; there can be no translation without loss but it is possible

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<sup>14</sup> To say this is to understand Father, Son and Spirit as strictly incomparable with each other. The Father is Father, for example, in being Father of the Son. Christian theology shows its attachment to the irreversible at its very heart.

<sup>15</sup> Or, we could say, 'in as far as their end is related to God' (and Heim, as we have seen, goes so far as to argue that their discrete intentional ends, including nirvāṇa, can be understood to have just this divine trinitarian relation); Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, pp. 181-197.



and helpful to become bi-lingual.<sup>16</sup> Can it be so with the faiths, as Abhishiktananda's experience suggests? Field, as posited by Mutō Kazuo, is formed between (and so derives from) poles: experiential truth (the capacity for believing) and sign (the faiths; and, in Abhishiktananda's terms, the levels). In such a conception the many faiths prevent us collapsing the two poles into one - faith in a universalised sign accounting for all experience - and so abolishing the field. Preserving the self-identification of incongruity preserves openness, life, mystery. Inoue Yōji paints for us what life is like lived in such a field, maintained by experience between faiths (and, in his case, cultures): it is attracted by beauty, calls forth trust and is experienced as a Field of Love. In summary, the faiths need not be regarded as contradictory, but can be appreciated as being held in the mind of the ever-more plentiful trinitarian God who values differentiation. They maintain a field of experiencing which is openness to Spirit-given life, and they can inform Christian believing through 'osmosis', which this study has traced in the contemplation of affective response and seen figured as metaphor.

#### STANCE

What stance towards the faiths is indicated by such a perception of their value to Christian believers? Osmosis brought to consciousness by means of metaphor is not indifference but nor is it (nor must it become) a stance of aggressive assimilation. In saying so, it is helpful to recall that the Spirit work's in creation is always consequent on the redemption wrought by Christ; it converges on the eschatological Christ. Believing this then, as we experience goodness and truth in the attraction of beauty in other faiths, what is different alerts us to what we have yet to receive from the Christ who is yet unknown (who is to come). The eschatological perspective that is given to us makes room for the faiths; to be dismissive or assimilative of others would be to seek mastery by taking what can be known in the present for the fullness of reality. To take one example, S. Mark Heim's picture is of different faiths having their own validity deriving from God. Each faith progresses on its chosen trajectory to a separate end: it has no necessary bearing on any other faith. From the Christian trajectory (Heim pictures them as mountains) this view still sounds somewhat dismissive of other faiths: they can be considered right and good up to a point, and that point comes when they have no place for Christ.<sup>17</sup> If, contrary to the picture painted above, it were

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<sup>16</sup> Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity*, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> However, note also Heim's concern to 'piece together', an under-developed aspect of his account; see above pp. 74-75. Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, pp. 147-148. While Heim

argued that the work of the Spirit in creation remains secondary, in the sense of preparatory to the work of Christ in redemption (as, for example, suggesting that each culture is its own Old Testament), then this may avoid an imperialism that would insert Christ in disguise into other cultures. But such a view too remains dismissive of other faiths: Christians would relegate those cultures to a side-show.

And so, if here we are not claiming other faiths are right ‘up to a point’, what are we saying in the light of the beauty of the art of other faiths? That the ways in which they are true are infinitely true: beauty has no ‘point’, no end-place. It has something infinite in it: delineated form – sides – but unsoundable depth. And that this particular in which we meet infinity rests on a whole, the wider, inter-laced unravelable belief system, as we have seen with Japan’s *kenmitsu* art. The belief system, if we will allow it, meets us in our affectivity with the claim of the incomparable. How then are we to discriminate between world views (and between different artworks)? We will be able to see limitations in other world views (and artistic limitations: East Asian art has not produced a Michelangelo), although it will be by some method equivalent to translation by which we do so<sup>18</sup> – the faiths remain like different languages, able to express different understandings. We may even be able to supply something to overcome particular limitations (through inter-religious dialogue), but these will only find a home in the other in as much as they contribute to the trajectory of the other world view, not replace it. This is cultural lending, not imperialistic colonising. And we shall find that we can borrow from a different faith. We shall continue to speak of these different ‘languages’ in our own native tongue (such as speaking of seeing the works of creation converging on the Kingdom) and they will speak of our faith in theirs. Our borrowings will continue to show the provisionality that all translation entails; a temporality sensitive to turns in meaning as mind-sets alter. There may be certain other conditions needed to prevent such borrowings becoming acquisitive, but at root this is how both languages and faiths live. Meaning, as we have seen, is engendered across the gap. The kind of space the beauty of *ma* in *kenmitsu* art offers is place for gathering, the poise of mutual appreciation in the simplicity of the tea-house, the association of all in the first sip

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understands there is a responsibility on Christians to be shaped by the image of God that others present, his concern is more with instilling respect than with hearing call through unshakeable attraction.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Barth’s account of Jōdo Shinshū could be read in this way. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume 1.2: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), pp. 340-344.

of tea, the infinite in the moment. It is an encounter of faiths which may allow but does not require their assimilation; it affords a stance like that of the incarnate Christ.

#### THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE FAITHS

If it is true that the faiths have value in affording us a stance which aligns us with God's patient loving attentiveness to us and God's delight, this is work of the Holy Spirit: grace making of Christians what we have not been. The faiths become call of God to us. As form, they recursively affect our choices. This includes our creativity which, in seeking out inexhaustibility, works with the Holy Spirit to render creation full in its reflection and expression of the unsoundable love between the three Persons, in anticipation of the redemption of all creation. It is not that we find the form of Christ in the faiths but that the forms we find in the faiths, to the extent that they seek the pathway of truthful beauty, in our imaginative creativity (and by the intent of the Holy Spirit) superimpose their attractiveness on the figure of Christ we know so that we intuit that they accord with, participate in and derive from the saving truth and fullness of Christ. Such a formulation leaves much scope for what is yet hidden from us. We do not yet know the fullness of Christ; it is often comprehended through paradox and metaphor. Hence we discern the work of the Spirit through creation, including through the faiths, not so much in form itself as by our response to form. That response, when true, is work of the Holy Spirit within us, shaping our minds and hearts for eternity. The Holy Spirit intimates the eschaton to us through the faiths in their affectivity.

Religions seek truth; and Christianity seeks in all its particulars to be true to Christ. But it is therefore not easy for Christians to understand how other faiths may be tending in the integrity of their particular forms to be true to the fullness which we know in Christ. Yet that is the conclusion this study has demanded, since the artistic beauty which shapes us derives from the totality of any given faith with its religious formulation intact. Consensus regarding artistic merit - which can arise regardless of the world views of those forming that consensus - is an indicator that the religious impulse which forms the art in question is patient of truth and able to be its vehicle, a condition which itself can only arise from the presence of the Spirit of truth. Such consensus also intimates a unitive direction to our affective responding, which is analogous of the Spirit's work in creation.<sup>19</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>19</sup> There may be many qualifications to such a statement, occasions when united opinion is wrong or shuns truth. These do not vitiate the underlying analogy: that diverse human

consensus when true points towards the work of the Spirit in rendering what is new as gift for the gladness of Father and Son. And if it be objected that the Church historically has not regarded the faiths and their art in this light, it may be countered that what comes new from the Spirit for the joy of Father and Son may include any new understanding Christians gain of the spiritual value of diversity of believing.

This claim again highlights Christian responding. It stops short of claiming that the faiths are in and of themselves Spirit-directed, of identifying the doctrinal sources of artistic truth with divine truth. It is not a claim that *kenmitsu* believing, the religion of Saigyō or Myōe, of Musō or Komparu Zenchiku, follows the Way with which Jesus announced identity. In this reticence, it leaves intact others' faith and art. Yet it also avoids denying the role of the Spirit through those faiths. 'Christ is *ma*' requires identity and separation simultaneously. It expands understanding by a quantum leap: the metaphor itself creates space for being. So the theological understanding of the faiths proposed here is one of space for becoming, opened up to us and for all by God through the Spirit's guiding of our (varying) affective response to forms.<sup>20</sup> The faiths, expressed under these forms, become signs to us: sacramental in that they partake already of Christ's redemption of creation, drawing our hearts to God, and nonetheless to be comprehended only in the light (of the not yet) of the pleroma. It is not that one faith is a metaphor for another (for Christianity), but that all authentic faiths stand in the figuration of their truth-seeking as metaphors of the Way of Christ.<sup>21</sup> Faith can say 'Christ is *ma*' where Christ is the fullness and *ma* the sacrament, mediated to us by the Holy Spirit. It is the attractiveness of the religio-aesthetic, its appeal, which is the driving force of the metaphor. That continuing attractiveness enables us to receive unassimilable truth-bearing as figure and sign of pleroma; it strengthens faith and

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affections finding agreement are analogous to the work of the Spirit in drawing human beings holistically into common response to God and common dwelling in the love of God.

<sup>20</sup> The variability of our responses indicates the 'not yet' of our comprehension of the pleroma. A parallel presentation may be that of the fictional Dante's journey in spiritual discipline in *The Divine Comedy*, guided both by the art of Virgil and the (imperfectly recollected) love of Beatrice.

<sup>21</sup> This conception diverges from Panikkar's '*circumincessio* of religions' (Panikkar, 'The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges', p. 112) in that it rests on the One whom we can know only as the eschatological Christ, the revealed One who is all in all. This corresponds to Dupuis' formulation of the role of Christ, "constitutively unique", (Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, pp. 156-157) and to the 'irreversibility' insisted on by the Japanese meontological theologians in their debates with Zen and Kyōto school philosophers.

desire. And while it attracts it also unsettles, as in our anticipation the parousia unsettles our complacency.

#### HOW MAY THE PARTICULAR FORMS OF JAPANESE RELIGIOUS BEAUTY AFFECT CHRISTIAN BELIEVING?

Much has already been said on the value of the particular arts of garden, stage and mandala considered here. If as Christians we are affected by the beauty of these arts, if we find our imaginations patterned by their forms and if we put together, for better comprehension of God's address to us through them, a metaphor such as 'Christ is *ma*', then we are already beginning to live in and from that space which is *ma*. Our hope that Christ is for all will be coloured by a sense of interpenetration of dharmas, strengthening a belief that what Christ does for one is done for all: its picture is a mandala. Our perception that the life of Jesus Christ manifests perfect differentiation from and perfect unity with the Father will coalesce with our contemplation of a *karesansui* garden as field of *mu* comprising both seen and unseen, arising and dissolving, figured in patterns such as *shingyō-sō*. Our belief that God is love and that Christ died for love of us will come to be understood under the conditions of awakening from an illusory self and in knowing the ambiguity of human passion in connection with this liberation: it is in such a drama as that at the well-cradle that God's saving love will come to meet us as the temple bell tolls. By the shrine mandalas we are led to believe that here, now, is the place of our transformation; by the *karesansui* gardens we are drawn to contemplation of form and emptiness;<sup>22</sup> by the *nō* stage we learn that what is unendingly profound emerges from what moves us in life as in a drama of scenes. As we do these things, we are already living our lives in Christ in relation to *kenmitsu* faith and may expect our perception of God's saving truth to continue to be extended by the forms of *ma*.

This is perception which does not operate by comparison and addition. What leaves its imprint is the distinctiveness of the beauty of form of the art-works, the quiddity of the atmosphere they generate (aura or *en*). The dislocation induced by the difference between the forms of Christian believing and these arts<sup>23</sup> draws our minds to the work of putting

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<sup>22</sup> For Japanese art as contemplative field-making, see Izutsu Toyo who comments that all empirical acts are "no other than the incessant field-making pulsation of the self-articulating creation of Nothingness, the non-articulated whole." Izutsu, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> As for Inoue Yōji, pp. 1-4.

together, poiesis, from the disparate forms we encounter. We comprehend by paradox. Koyama Kosuke has illustrated this, commenting on a *haiku* of Buson (1716-1783):

On the temple bell  
Perching, sleeps  
The butterfly, oh.<sup>24</sup>

Here is the transitoriness of all life. Koyama lets us know that he is not interested in an eternity which has nothing to do with transitoriness: eternity is eternity when it makes transitoriness eternal, and in the same way beauty is beautiful when it makes not-beautiful beautiful. The loudest can become quietest and the strongest can become weakest: “The huge gong is quiet for the sake of a small butterfly” – and we can suddenly imagine the gospel of Christ acting as the bell and offering a resting place for *kenmitsu* cultural appreciation of the evanescent, the incomplete and the abraded (an appreciation such as that of Kenkō, for example). The arts of Japan cause us to read the gospel of Christ in the light of these so that, in valuing them, we come to expect that we reverence Christ. We expect to find the truth of the beauty of evanescence, incompleteness and *wabi* in Christ.

Lying behind these specific arts and aesthetic values are the religious perceptions of *kenmitsu*. In offering the sense that the cosmos is pervaded by saving power, the bodhisattva vow operates in a way comparable to that of the Logos in Christian believing. Yet it is not any supposed dynamic equivalence which commands attention, but the singular differences of the life and art it generates: *yūgen* arising in contemplation of the dynamic emptiness of *karesansui* or from the tension inherent in *nō* between rebirth and the experience passion affords of ultimacy;<sup>25</sup> or the transformative mandalic sense of the presence of all things in one sacred geography. Once again, we recall this is religious perception afforded by aesthetic excellence (and accounting for this experience). Christian believing touched by the beauty of these arts must value *dō* and *yūgen*, bodhisattva ideal and sacred precincts, *hongaku* and mingling with the dust as – and because – it values the proleptic sense of already and not yet, and the sense generated by the Incarnation of the potentiality of this creation. It will be alert to, because hospitable to, deployment of the construct ‘as’, *nyō*, marking that illumination of reversibility which makes the *samāsāra* of this cosmos *nirvāna*. It cannot dismiss such perception, even as it seeks to remain true to

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<sup>24</sup> Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God*, pp. 78-80. The point Koyama seeks to make is a different one, characteristically moral: that other-centred self-denial reveals the beauty in our transitory world.

<sup>25</sup> LaFleur’s ‘dialectical’ and ‘cosmological’ Buddhisms respectively; see above pp. 83-84.

irreversibility and the distinction between creature and Creator. And it will listen for ‘the distant links’ which, across the caesuras of our lives, fit images of transience with human emotional perceptiveness and in so doing evoke experience of interrelatedness and ultimacy.<sup>26</sup>

#### NEW EMPHASES IN THE CHRISTIAN EXPRESSION OF TRUTH

Here are four areas in which Christian believing, tutored by the pattern of Japanese medieval religio-aesthetic practice, may discover new emphasis in its expression of truth.

First, *fuzei*. We have encountered *fuzei* in garden construction, but its equivalent is valued in all Japanese arts. *Fuzei*, ‘mood’, is received as something inherent and of self-evident importance. It draws into one movement particularity in nature, human responding and the sense of the inter-connectedness of all things. Our conception of ‘atmosphere’ does not do full justice to the significance of *fuzei*: the artistic merit, the truth, of a thing lies in its *fuzei* and is known by it.<sup>27</sup> Christian believing tutored by *fuzei* will discern signs of Christ not by objectivising dissociation but by attending to ambience.

Second, assimilation. This word has featured as an evil to be avoided in the preceding discussion of the right relations of Christianity and the faiths. That follows from Western essentialist thinking which can only understand assimilation as the absorption of one (lesser, or less fortunate) whole by another. In Japanese medieval religious practice assimilation occurred as a drawing out of the fuller implications, the truth, of faith practices. The radical inessentialism (Nothingness) taught by Mahāyāna meant that its assimilative power would flow both ways: *kami* might be taught the Dharma, but the Buddha would find his truest expression in Yamato in the service of Kasuga Daimyōjin. Aesthetically this meant not only that the religious arts could (and did) combine the widest range of human imaging (consider, for example, the figures depicted in the outer circle of the Womb mandalas or the scope of religious experiencing envisaged in the *nō* drama

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<sup>26</sup> For the distant link and this understanding derived from *waka* and *renga*, see above, pp. 175-178.

<sup>27</sup> One equivalent is *aura*, *en*. For Ramirez-Christensen’s explication of the place of *en* in *renga*, see above pp. 135-136. For an account of atmosphere being generated deliberately (and artificially) to theological ends in Western works of imagination, see Michael Ward’s engrossing description of what he terms ‘donegality’ (*fuzei*?) in C. S. Lewis’ Narnia novels. Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: the Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (Oxford and New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 75.

*Kasuga Ryūjin*). It meant further that the arts themselves became vehicles for extending assimilation, both by new combinations (as in the *nō* dramas *Tatsuta* or *Matsukaze* or *Takasago*) and by new forms: *karesansui* gardens and tea-houses were two products of an assimilative believing sufficiently confident to be pared down to *sō* form. The parallel Buddhist, Shintō and Confucian commentaries to Komparu Zenchiku's system for the *nō* actor's art (six circles, one dewdrop) is eloquent testimony to the spiritual vitality in the Higashiyama era of such assimilative instinct.<sup>28</sup> Can the sustained authenticity of the religio-aesthetic beauty of these arts cause Christians to re-consider what truth may even today be conveyed by combinatory believing? If so, we would be readier to suspend our attachment to Western ontology and find greater spiritual freedom in our practice of perceiving by metaphor (and distant link?), placing higher value on interval and paradox. We would learn appreciation before discrimination in all our attempts to be true to the work of the Holy Spirit in putting together (or 'ordering') the things of creation to the praise of God.

Third, participation. As these arts are ones of manifestation of reality rather than ones of expression of essential truth, they realign the viewer from being objective observer to becoming engaged participant. I do not so much view the garden as become a sensing membrane on which its *fuzei* registers, and in this way find myself integral to its disclosure (through beauty) of Suchness. The witness, who is witness to the whole, himself manifests this wholeness in his specificity. Such a way of seeing, nurtured by medieval Japan's religio-aesthetic, asks the Christian to be less possessive of his individual soul and more aware that his being is dependent on intimate participation with all. While it raises questions about how properly to offer prophetic address, it permits re-reading of Christian texts. For example, when Jesus in the Fourth Gospel says, "Before Abraham was, I am" (*John* 8: 58), the words can be heard less as a statement of Logos ontology and more as an account of the participation of perfect awareness in all moments of Dharma arising. We should not assume the wisdom of East Asia will bring less to theological enlightenment than Greek

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<sup>28</sup> Thornhill, pp. 24-52. Josetsu's confident and harmonious fifteenth century ink-painting of the Three Teachers tells the same tale. See Tanaka Ichimatsu, *Japanese Ink Painting: Shubun to Sesshu*, revised edn, trans. Bruce Darling (New York NY, Tōkyō: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1974), p. 67, fig. 66.



philosophy brought. In particular, this “holographic” awareness inculcated by the arts of *kenmitsu* offers to deepen our sense of communion in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

Fourth, heightened Christian awareness of the action of the Holy Spirit in our appreciation of religiously-inspired art may cause us to reconsider our attitude to the many gods. As Europeans, we are likely to find strong resistance within ourselves to doing so. The Greek, Roman and Norse gods have been long since banished from power: “Tell them that great Pan is dead.”<sup>30</sup> Our word ‘polytheism’, while it may have been coined to mean ‘belief in many gods’, derives from the contrast with monotheism and suffers from doing so. It invites ridicule of the absurdity of thinking it possible to worship many gods in the same way as monotheists worship the one God. Adherents are liable to be stigmatised as primitive, unreflective, un-scientific, fear-bound. Such attitudes feed our ingrained detestation of syncretism: we fear we shall fall into polytheism. However, today we have foresworn the single eye and strive to shake ourselves free of a colonial mentality and adjust to an emerging multi-polar world. We can recall that the Mediterranean and Germanic gods, before they departed living consciousness, were never merely placed in opposition to Christ as if they were comparable beings. Minds nurtured by stories of Apollo and of Odin, Thor and Loki brought new insights into the translation of the Judaic Christian gospel. Further, in relation to Japanese believing, we need to recognise that *kami* are not ‘gods’. This may be our closest English translation of the word but *kami* are distinct.<sup>31</sup> To take just one matter: any given *kami* may lack settled identity as either singular or plural. Kasuga Daimyōjin refers to one ‘presence’ encompassing at least four named and storied *kami* of Kasuga together with the *wakamiya*. A plural world requires us to comprehend others in their own terms.

What, then, may we as Western Christians make of *kami* and how does an appreciation of medieval Japanese art affect this? We can recognise that *kami* hold their ancient places in a

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<sup>29</sup> To say this is also to suggest something of what it is the gospel of Jesus Christ has brought to East Asia: that salvation comes not merely passively, as by nature rightly apprehended, but comes actively by grace, by sacrifice, inviting our positive collaboration.

<sup>30</sup> Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 17c.

<sup>31</sup> Understanding of *kami* has also altered through the centuries, especially under the influence of continental Buddhism. Such changes include: that they are named, that stories grow around them, and that shrine buildings and statues have been dedicated to them. They have become more anthropomorphic. Ienaga Saburō, drawing on the influential writings of Motoori Norinaga, offers an account of these processes in relation to material culture; Ienaga p. 19.

highly educated, sophisticated modern Japan.<sup>32</sup> Worship of *kami* is not primitive; it may have primal origins but it has shape-shifted over the centuries as has any ancient faith, including Christians' own, accommodating altered perceptions. We can affirm that *kami*-worship contributes to Japanese appreciation of the land in which they are set<sup>33</sup> and their own social bonds.<sup>34</sup> The still current vibrancy of shrine and festival celebrations precludes any need for 're-enchantment'.<sup>35</sup> Japanese when questioned may sound hazy about belief in *kami*, but individualised credal fideism is not the point; it is alien to the communal affirmation of blessing and celebration of original harmony which the *kami* cults articulate. Appreciation of medieval Japanese art can help open our eyes to this sensitive web of relationships; these place communities in Japan within wider contexts of obligation which can best be termed sacred. As such we can affirm that *kami* are indeed 'presences' and need not respond to them as threats.

To continue with the example of the Kasuga Daimyōjin, the *shika* mandalas can attract us imaginatively into a world of combinatory and accumulative believing. The single/plural nature of the Daimyōjin is manifest in a specific sacred geographical space which nevertheless entails further spaces of geography and of the spirit. Likewise the myths and narratives of the Daimyōjin overlay one another. These mandalas present a multi-layered world, encompassing many life experiences. They add further meaning to these life experiences by relating them to *kami*. Their confident attractiveness recruits our participation; we are not allowed to reduce 'this' to 'that'. Kasuga is also claimed as one site of origin for *nō*. The pine of the mirror-board which locates all the emotion of *nō* dance and poetry can be understood as *shintai* of Kasuga Daimyōjin. When Komparu Zenchiku wrote

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: the Way Home* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), offers an explanation in existentialist terms.

<sup>33</sup> See Sonoda Minoru, 'Shinto and the natural environment', for an account of the role of shrines in protecting forests in the earliest centuries of recorded Japanese history. Allan Grapard, 'The Economics of Ritual Power', offers a counter-view: that the accommodatory nature of *kami*-worship has allowed exchange of sacred sites and consequent exploitation of prime land.

<sup>34</sup> For an account of these at the Suwa shrine in Nagasaki, see John K. Nelson, *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine* (University of Washington Press: Seattle WA and London, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> Amos Yong, the Pentecostalist missiologist, has invited us, in Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2005), to re-consider the gods of contemporary tribal faiths in terms of spirits in whose activities we may well be able to discern marks of the one Spirit of God. Prescinding from any necessity for the many gods to be interpreted in a positivist way, the current thesis is suggesting something similar, at least in terms of interpreting in the influence of *kami* marks of the Holy Spirit's communication *with us*.

in the *nō* drama *Kasuga Ryūjin*<sup>36</sup> of Myōe learning of the Pure Land at Kasuga, he was not indulging some flight of fancy; he was bringing the drama of spiritual discovery home. The arts envelop us in this rich world of the *kami* which simultaneously proves to be that of the Buddha so that, if we would be true to the call of their beauty, our Christian believing can only be lived in and through this mandalic world of the many gods and the Buddha-nature. To be thus embedded in this social, natural and sacred world, irreducible to positivist realism, our Christian believing must be made spacious (as by metaphor or Mutō's field of polarities). Art's convincing portrayal of the world of the *kami* opens us to the possibility of combinatory believing.

The example of *karesansui* gardens only strengthens the case for *kami*-worship affecting Christian believing. We are likely to experience the beauty of these gardens as highly abstract and perhaps philosophical, and yet we come to understand that these experiences of beauty depend on the intimate links the gardens have with *kami*-worship, as detailed above.<sup>37</sup> Our most profound experiences of expanded awareness of reality, such as those at the Ryōanji *karesansui*, we find draw from and are embedded in the narrative specifics of myth and geography inalienable from *kami*-worship. We appreciate the garden and unwittingly we reverence the *kami*.

To read in *kenmitsu* art 'Christ is *ma*' is to perceive that the relationship with the one God into which we are placed in Christ already invests our lives in this world with an ambience which derives from the Kingdom, draws us into unlikely combinations in hope, shapes our lives as integral to God's self-disclosure and gives us our place in a network of relationships with many unseen powers. Receptive to the call of beauty across faiths, we discover the different faiths turn us in our Christian believing from assuming that we are the favoured inheritors of self-sufficient knowledge, any quasi-gnostic sense of being 'the redeemed', into attentive sentinels whose hearts register the disclosure of God's love through the specifics of human articulation of the truth of the graced creation in which we are set.

In the opening chapter of this study it was said that to enquire into the theological value of *kenmitsu* art could be likened to a journey and the journey to Emmaus was cited: a journey the end of which was not conclusion but manifestation, transformative communion and

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<sup>36</sup> The attribution is not sure; see Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 142-155.

<sup>37</sup> See pp. 87-89.

commissioning. As the end of this study comes now into view, we can look back over the way we have travelled and discern this pattern. Manifestation has come as encounter: sign figured for us through the transcendental beauty of art - a stranger met along the way. Transformative communion is experienced in living as Christian disciples from the space given through another faith: the middle way of *ke* and *kū*, *yūgen*, non-duality and assimilative vision found through the forms of garden, stage and mandala. And commission? That is now before us: call to tell what we have encountered in renewed Christian witness, attention to neighbour, and praise. It is with examples illustrating these aspects of this commission that the study concludes.

## 2. Mission

If in encountering the beauty of the arts of *kenmitsu* we read signs of Christ, is mission redundant? Should we not rather be encouraging others to be immersed in *kenmitsu* believing and praxis? Or silent before what they have to teach us? Neither of the two elements - Jesus Christ and *kenmitsu* art – encourages such quiescence. Both transform.

God is known in God's activity among us: the one *missio dei* of the three Persons which reconciles a fractured world and manifests in God incarnate the glory of all creatures made in the love of God. This divine activity is realised in us as we participate, through grace, in reconciling, manifesting divine mission. Christ came that we may have life and we find life as we follow him on the Way: not belief in a set of propositions nor adherence to an ethical code but daily response to the prompting of his Spirit in growing conformity with his love for the Father and for neighbour. Such action on our part is sacramental presence of the saving power of God. This *missio dei* seeks the unity of all creatures in the one mutual love as God's common love for us enables our common loving response. It follows that our human unity and our participation in mission come not so much from our origin, what we are or were, as from our end, what we shall be. Mission and our participation in it are eschatological; they derive from the already/not yet realised fullness of Christ and they draw us into all truth. This is to say, Christian mission, in as far as it participates in the *missio dei*, reveals the fuller meaning of the Incarnation, following from the Resurrection of the crucified One. As S. Mark Heim has put it, there is a "need to 'fill up' the incarnational

revelation of the Word through its appropriation in various cultural and religious contexts.”<sup>38</sup>

But how? Heim writes, “The Christian mission thus involves a ‘piecing together’ of the unified action of the triune God” - the Church’s mission to the world is complemented by the mission of the world to the Church. However, Heim’s version of ‘piecing together’ makes no clear distinction between our knowledge of God’s action in our own lives and our perception of the unified action of the triune God in the lives of others, specifically the adherents of another faith. Heim objectifies faiths: despite standing outside, we can at some level know what another faith is<sup>39</sup> and pop it in its place in the divine jigsaw of creation. For Heim we (as Christian missionaries) read from the other faiths the prevenient work of the Holy Trinity. The faiths may be separate peaks, discrete ends, but they occupy a single geography of the mind; we can begin to make out what of the Trinity is reflected in Islam or Buddhism. It is these readings which we piece together, an essentially additive task. This is a renewed version of the *logos spermatikos* of Justin Martyr: a single – and discernable - reason implanted by God in the cultures of the world.

This thesis has agreed with Heim in recognising in other faiths their reality: their practices achieve their ends. And it has agreed with Heim also on the importance of other faiths to us as Christians in furthering our living in the light of the Incarnation. Such an approach may be considered a reverse fulfilment theory: not that the Christ we know fulfils the faiths but that they ‘fill up’ (Heim’s phrase) the Christ we know. Where this thesis parts company with Heim is over what it means to put together. Putting together of metaphors, as advocated in the present work, is of a different order from Heim’s ‘piecing together’ the unified action of the triune God. Where ‘piecing together’ may suggest, for example, sewing up a coat from its parts according to a pattern of the whole, the juxtaposing involved in making metaphors (as also the Japanese poetic practice of intimating the ‘distant link’)<sup>40</sup> can be creative poiesis. Rather than narrowing a range of possibilities, it opens up space. Where for Heim mission engages with mystery (manifest through plurality) and seeks solution, here mission engages with that mystery expecting deepening. Mission is from the eschaton: not only can we not yet know the fuller meaning of the Incarnation, as we ‘put together’ we enter more

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<sup>38</sup> Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>39</sup> What Heim terms: “respect for, and in a certain sense submission to, the knowledge of God expressed in non-Christian traditions.” Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 148.

<sup>40</sup> See above, pp. 175-178.

deeply into a reality that has no end, just as love makes two lovers ever more distinctly themselves and more one. Here we touch again on the analogical connection between Ricoeur's principle of plenitude (that the meaning of a text is all it can be) and the pleroma of Christ. That lived reality which is the Spirit-inspired act of putting together performed in the light and power of the eschaton - creative poiesis that is true - manifests what it proclaims, the synergy of divine and human wills, a synergy known truly (and then limited by the finitude of our knowing) only in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>41</sup>

Mission lived in the light of the beauty of other faiths is no solipsistic artistic reverie. It remains urgent that the Word be proclaimed: the One who reconciles, heals and liberates. Life now is not as God intends and the time draws near; the parousia is upon us at any moment. The Christ whom we follow is the One for whom being and mission are identical, as von Balthasar has taught<sup>42</sup>: he comes from love, for love, as love. We gain the identity of our being to the extent we are in him, which is to say, participants in the *missio dei*.<sup>43</sup> Witness to God in Christ through proclamation, life together, service of others and worship is the Church's mode of life as Spirit-formed community.<sup>44</sup> The celebration of the eucharist itself is such witness, effecting what it proclaims, and its name as 'Mass' recalls to us its character as human incorporation in the *missio dei*.

Such mission is to all: to the one who has never heard of Jesus of Nazareth and to the one who has vowed to follow him; to the Church of Christ and to the sangha; to secularised Europe and to dual-believing contemporary Japan. We stand each and together as hearers of the Word. God's reconciliation of all is by God's will; all receive grace. Mission seeks to

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<sup>41</sup> Compare von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama V*, pp. 416-417, where he writes of Spirit/Church synergy interpreting Christological divine/human synergy. This issues in liturgy which is intimately tied to mission, mission that originates, continues and is brought to perfection in heaven. This echoes the teaching of Orthodox churches on mission as 'the liturgy after the liturgy' (see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 207-210, quoting Stamoolis and Bria). For another account of Stamoolis' Orthodox theology of mission, see Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: the Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2006), pp. 79-81.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Volume III: Dramatis Personae: the Person in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), pp. 149-150.

<sup>43</sup> See von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama III*, pp. 263, 271, 527.

<sup>44</sup> The formula of the International Missionary Council, discussed in Bosch, p. 512. Another version is found in the Anglican Communion's 'five marks of mission': proclaim, nurture believers, serve, transform unjust structures, safeguard the integrity of creation.

magnify that grace, including in the places of our hearts currently hidden from us. So Bosch quotes Ivan Illich that missiology is “the study of the Church as surprise”.<sup>45</sup> Hence Christians cannot withdraw from witnessing by word and deed to the Christ whom we know. By doing so truly, we receive ourselves at God’s hands - and this must mean at the hands of others.

Much weight has been given here to what we do not know, to the hiddenness of Christ, to the apophatic nature of the pleroma, and to the ‘not yet’ of the eschaton. Such darkness is no reason to withdraw from witness. On the contrary it is all the more cause for astonishment that we are able to say we are receivers of revelation, for we receive even this darkness as revelation. The pattern again is that of Mary Magdalene on Easter morning (*John* 20: 11-18). She began in darkness, not realising she knew anything of the Resurrection. Then she came subsequently to see and to recognise, showing that, even in her darkness, the Spirit and the testimony of Christ had prepared her heart to be able to receive revelation: grace preceding cognition. She saw and recognised with both heart and eyes, with affections and reason. In recognising, she was enabled to perceive her want of knowing; which is to gain insight into the fuller mystery of Christ. And with this insight, awareness of darkness, she became apostle to the apostles. Such revelation of mystery is the mandate for our witness. In missionary circles this has been formulated as saying the ‘already’ outweighs the ‘not yet’<sup>46</sup> and this formula may serve, providing always we recall it is for the sake of the not yet, the coming Christ, that we are sent.

Mission understood thus may be characterised as ‘presence’. ‘Presence’ stands in contrast to Pietism’s quantitative attitude to mission.<sup>47</sup> Lande characterises ‘presence’ as qualitative understanding, open, dissolving secular-religious boundaries. It rests on God’s universal presence. It encourages listening with expectancy to the Spirit, and the acknowledgment of realities other than one’s own. Mission is always within a world with a history of relating or failing to do so. It points to the Incarnation. We are incorporated in the *missio dei* and live that mission ourselves as presence of Christ, through the Spirit, as well as expecting to encounter such presence in what is different. In the terminology of this thesis, we are called

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<sup>45</sup> Bosch, p. 493.

<sup>46</sup> From Oscar Cullmann, referred to by Bosch, p. 509.

<sup>47</sup> For a convenient summary of the context and sources of Twentieth Century understanding of mission as presence, which include Heidegger’s existentialism and Bonhoeffer’s ‘world come of age’, as well as the French worker-priest movement, see Aasulv Lande, ‘Witness as “Presence”’, in *Contemporary Issues in Mission*, ed. by J. Andrew Kirk (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1994), pp. 67-79.

by the Spirit through difference, specifically through the attractiveness of its beauty, into a Field of Love and we are made by this experience 'bi-lingual', living from and between polarities with unpredictable results. In responding to Japanese artistic beauty, our faces are formed by the Spirit as the face of Jesus in Japan; it is in this way we find ourselves living mission as presence. This is good news, to others as well as to myself. In other words, Japan, her religions and cultures, can make a Christian more Christ-like. And in doing so, her fashioning of beauty, practised as it was in medieval times for awakening to Suchness, is found also to strengthen the witness to her of Christ.

Having considered the general implications for mission of the approach taken in this thesis, we may turn to ask what particular insight into our call to mission is offered by this consideration of Christian response to the arts of *kenmitsu*. The beauty of the *nō* stage is illustrative of this way. It is constructed as a bridging and meeting of worlds, but with a beauty that values this bridging in its own right and which prompts expectation and contemplative attention. The drama of which it speaks is not one heading for resolution, but a drama of witness. Truth is made manifest and received in common amid the compromises of human life and death, the ambiguities of passion and the play of the gods. The stage itself offers the figure of a contemplative field. We cannot say whether trust in the Field of Love will prove salvific for all. Our hope is given to us through knowledge of the effects of such trust in our lives. And as the *nō* stage suggests to us we are not individuals, but bound together, one human membrane, so seeing the stage, we gain the hope that our own response of trusting presence, of witness,<sup>48</sup> affects others and draws out inextinguishable truth, just as the witness of the *waki* draws forth the dance of the *shite* and shared moments, as it may be, of *yūgen*. The metaphor 'Christ is *ma*', when drawn from the *nō* stage, invites us to understand that our presence as witness is in response to the beauty of others but also catalyst of that beauty, and that this witness of presence is itself participant in and manifests the loving (second) response of the Holy Spirit in giving gifts of gladness to the Father and the Son. The effect of such witness will be, as we have said of the artistic figuring of *ma*, the moonlight under the gate, to valorise human affective

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<sup>48</sup> The use of the English word 'witness' to indicate both active mission and passive receptivity is paralleled by (and here suggested by) the role of the *waki* as Buddhist pilgrim in *nō*. On the importance of the role of *waki* as witness to *shite* and the effect of the role of the *waki*, see Royall Tyler, 'The *Waki-Shite* Relationship in *Nō*', in *Nō and Kyōgen in the Contemporary World*, ed. by James R. Brandon (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 65-90.



response and our transience and to uncover the transcendental potential of imaginative endeavour: Christian missionary presence as trace marking space for becoming.

We may return at this point to two young Western missionaries at a darkened shrine in an *onsen* village.<sup>49</sup> Were their differing reactions to the ambivalent air of that place in keeping with such mission? All cultures by their very declaration of entitlement to meaning have the potential to oppress and destroy, and have in fact done so. Our icons become idols; Koyama is quite right.<sup>50</sup> Mission as presence registering truth will not fail to be critical and prophetic. It may be called to suffering on this account, and its witness to the fullness of the mystery of Christ come through the darkness of passion and resurrection. By this means, there will be those who will come to hold fast to the Christ we know and make their own the witness to God's transforming, incarnate power within the fellowship of the Church. But the darkness of the shrine also portends what we have yet to know of God's fullness; and the ways of the *kami* which it observes remain as figuration of that fullness. The goal of Christian mission which is participant in the *missio dei* is not that the world shall confess Christianity as we have received it. The reflection on experience which has been at the heart of this thesis leads rather to agreement with David Bosch's conclusion that the three models we have for witness to people of other living faiths - exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist - are all too neat and leave no room for surprise.<sup>51</sup> He advocates exploration with *poiesis* rather than *theoria*<sup>52</sup> and suggests a fourth way, that of 'abiding paradox', marked by continuity as well as by discontinuity.<sup>53</sup> We have said here that 'abiding paradox' is means

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<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 19-21.

<sup>50</sup> See above, pp. 41-42 and 207-208.

<sup>51</sup> Bosch, pp. 483-489.

<sup>52</sup> And in this respect he commends Klaus Klostermaier's *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban*, trans. Antonia Fonseca (London: SCM, 1969), "For both dialogue and mission manifest themselves in a meeting of hearts rather than of minds. We are dealing with a mystery." p. 483.

<sup>53</sup> For this, its link with earlier Protestant discussions and its omission from *Transforming Mission*, see Gerald H. Anderson, 'Theology of Religions: the Epitome of Mission Theology' in *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered*, ed. by Willem Saayman and Klippies Kritzinger (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1989), pp. 113-120 (p. 120). Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Edinburgh 2010 Volume 2: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), Theme Two: 'Christian Mission Among Other Faiths', pp. 34-60, traces the theme of continuity and discontinuity through twentieth century Protestant missiology. In *Transforming Mission*, Bosch writes of the need for "a theology of religions characterized by creative tension" between revealed faith in Jesus Christ and the confession God has not left himself without witnesses among the nations; that is, between mission and dialogue. For "we do not have all the answers" and must be prepared "to live

for our minds to be opened to the 'ever more' of God<sup>54</sup> and that *poiesis*, as the imaginative disclosure of meaning through art and metaphor, is a way of continuity and discontinuity. Used in a wider sense, as creative collaboration in forming a life and a people, such faithful and exploratory *poiesis* is the way of Christian mission.

### 3. Dialogue

"We affirm that witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it." This was the statement of the World Council of Churches' World Conference on Mission and Evangelism at San Antonio, Texas, in 1989; a statement quoted by David Bosch and which, according to Gerald Anderson, Bosch himself drafted.<sup>55</sup> It is a statement with which this engagement with the beauty of Japanese art concurs. Our mission and our dialogue are mutual: both rest on commitment to God and to the differentiation of the other person.<sup>56</sup> And they can be complementary only in as far as they are distinct. It is argued here that the bearing of Christian mission is towards uncovering unity and that of dialogue towards uncovering difference. Hence the complementarity: for there to be consciously received unity, we must know one another,

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within the framework of penultimate knowledge". There may remain within this formulation some hint of fulfilment theory, that with better knowledge we could discriminate between those aspects of other faiths which witness to God and those which do not, although the fifth of Bosch's 'necessary perspectives' for a renewed theology of the religions, "that religions are worlds in themselves, with their own axes and structures", checks any such tendency; p. 485.

<sup>54</sup> Bosch notes that R. Pape has argued for 'another religion' as formative factor in theology, alongside scripture, tradition, reason; Bosch, p. 483.

<sup>55</sup> Bosch, p. 487; Gerald H. Anderson, p. 119.

<sup>56</sup> As Bosch notes. This follows a perspective on dialogue which Alan Race terms 'tradition-specific' and identifies with J. Alfred Cobb Jr. It is marked by making no assumption of common ground but maintaining an openness to previously unnoticed reality. Race distinguishes this perspective from his own, which he identifies with Leonard Swidler and the Global Dialogue Institute. This second perspective does not allow for mission; commitment is not to a tradition but to the process. It expects a "primal originating principle underlying all realities" and that the process will evoke "a new religious consciousness". Race notes Paul Ingram's interpretation that the first perspective contemplates different ends (as we have seen S. Mark Heim doing) and that the second "embraces dialogue without remainder as the defining matrix of truth" but may fail to take our differences of experience and culture seriously; Alan Race, *Interfaith Encounter: the Twin Tracks of Theology and Dialogue* (London: SCM, 2001), pp. 95-99. The question is whether dialogue itself is the goal; von Balthasar has given cogent reason from Christian experience why it is not, for which see pp. 232-233 below.

which is to know our difference. And to comprehend our differences we must be hospitable to each other's hope for unity. Christian mission, as we have seen, takes its cue from the eschaton and seeks to witness to that wholeness by preparing for it. This is a Spirit-led and creative poiesis of 'putting together' which is and can only be in Christ, as Christ in perfect agreement of will with the Father is the source of unity made known to the Church – the unity from which the Church receives its particular origins.<sup>57</sup> Christian approach to dialogue, however, can also be said to be from the eschaton, the manifesting of love which grows ever-deeper in maximal differentiation.

Uncovering difference does not need to lead to a consolidating of distinction or a hardening of our positions. Rather, as we become more aware of our differences and hear more clearly the texture of a phrase and discern the course of a habit of mind, we become more conscious of the reality of our call to love (and to receive love), more conscious of whom the other is for whom we mean to be present in love. Increasingly we shall live through the perceptions of the other as our own. Differentiation allows love to grow. And this thesis has argued further that awareness of difference can come to us with delight in the differentiation, its texture and course; it is not only that difference calls us to love but that difference implants the desire to love - calls forth love from us. For the Christian all deepening of love rooted in acknowledgment of difference points to our creating in love in the withdrawing by God of Godself, that we may in distinction be. And this creating in turn, as we have seen, is expression of that differentiating love which is our understanding of intra-trinitarian relations: the greater the distinction of the Persons, the stronger their love and unity. Here is the source of our confidence that our hospitality to difference and the practice of dialogue as love derive from the fullness of the eschaton.<sup>58</sup> In dialogue, we uncover difference and, to the extent we do so for the sake of loving, that difference will deepen our love and so be the occasion of our unity (articulated as mission).

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<sup>57</sup> See, for example, *John* 14, especially verses 16 ("I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever") and 19b and 20 ("because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you"), and from *John* 17 verses 16-26.

<sup>58</sup> Von Balthasar, drawing from Aquinas, writes thus, the *processio* within the godhead "constitutes the Son as the Father's dialogue partner". Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Volume I: Prologomena*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 646.

Dialogue can indeed extend and deepen witness, not least because, by causing us to grow in love, dialogue makes us more who we are called to be; which is to say, the other person makes us more ourselves.<sup>59</sup> And this being so, as we engage in interreligious dialogue, it is given to us in this way also to manifest the One to whom we point.<sup>60</sup> The Spirit of differentiation and unity orchestrates conversation that seeks truth, derives from truth, of itself participates in truth, and which issues in fruit of understanding, respect, peace and service. The Spirit works in synergy with the Christian and this work of the Church incarnates Christ's love for the stranger, the type of God's love for an estranged world – not only in the person of the Christian participant but in mutually offered and received love. This means also that interreligious dialogue causes us to recover the dialogical nature of Christian understanding: our attentiveness to the interplay between what the Christian tradition has handed on and what the world is saying participates in the dialogue of the Spirit between God and God's creation.

These reasons for dialogue are Christian ones<sup>61</sup> and de Lubac argued that, when engaged with those beyond the Semitic monotheist traditions, we should speak not of 'dialogue' but of 'encounter', as the partners of different faiths have no common history or methodology.<sup>62</sup> There is truth in this: contemporary perceptions of dialogue emerged principally from the writings of Jewish scriptural and philosophical thinkers such as Rosenzweig and Buber around the period of the Great War.<sup>63</sup> They rest on an understanding of personhood that it cannot be assumed but is given, as von Balthasar comments. The sense of address and response constituting a person has no parallel in Indian or Chinese discourses. Hence to enter conversation expecting dialogue is already to presume, to enter from somewhere. Nevertheless this is what we do. If we meet as those

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<sup>59</sup> This would be the most fruitful way of reading Vinoth Ramachandra's comment, that we need the other in dialogue to change us to conformity with what we believe. Vinoth Ramachandra, 'A World of Religions and a Gospel of Transformation', in *Edinburgh 2010 Volume I: Mission Then and Now*, ed. by David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (Oxford: Regnum and Carlisle: Paternoster, 2009), pp. 139-151 (p. 148).

<sup>60</sup> Lande points out that the Christian practice of interreligious dialogue is indebted to 'presence' missiology; Lande, p. 74.

<sup>61</sup> S. Mark Heim has pointed out: "Whatever valid generic values interreligious dialogue may serve ... there are specific Christian dynamics that commend it." Heim, *The Depth of the Riches*, p. 147.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in David Grumett, *De Lubac: a Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York NY: T&T Clark, 2007), p. 141.

<sup>63</sup> Von Balthasar gives an account in *Theo-Drama: Volume I*, pp. 626-628.

with commitment (the perspective of J. Alfred Cobb Jr),<sup>64</sup> then any interreligious encounter will already carry an interpretation in embryo. For Christians such meeting is dialogue, and it will belong to the dialogue to discover what interpretation it carries for the conversation partner. Furthermore de Lubac's suggestion of discrete traditions hardly carries conviction today. A globalised world has caused Western-generated concepts such as personhood to be widely disseminated.<sup>65</sup> The World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 invited conversation between entities treated as comparable and understood by means of the Western sociological term as 'religions'. And there has now been over a century of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, accepted as such.

What particular insights into call to such dialogue of difference are offered by this present consideration of Christian response to the arts of *kenmitsu*?<sup>66</sup> They are of two kinds: alteration to the Christian's participation in the world (the matter of dialogue) and alteration to the Christian's perception of dialogue (the practice of dialogue). Considering first Christian participation in the world, those arts may cause Christians to perceive this world - the world God has made, loved and redeemed - as *boko*, a world of placed rocks, of *shite*, of *shintai*, of *ma*, characterised by reversibility, assimilative vision and awakening. It is to the love of such a world that these arts cause us to come. The irreversibility I find in Christ, the surpassing of expectation through assurance of hope, and the freely given gift of integral personhood – all marks of a *deko* world – come as all the more gratuitous in their grace and truth for coming to a *boko* world. And further, I shall find myself saying that in

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<sup>64</sup> See p. 228, fn. 56 above.

<sup>65</sup> Recent angst over the applicability in Asian societies of the UN Declaration on Human Rights is a case in point.

<sup>66</sup> We must first note that any dialogue influenced by these religious arts will not be one between Christians and *kenmitsu* practitioners. The world of *honji suijaku* has departed. Other configurations of reality gained prominence during and after the fifteenth century (among them Gozan Zen and Yoshida Shintō). The destruction of the power of Mount Hiei by the forces of Oda Nobunaga in 1571 dealt a fatal blow to the resourcefulness of the Tendai esoteric-exoteric tradition. Edo era neo-Confucian scholarship and the policies of the Tokugawa shogunate both favoured definition (limitation) over assimilation (although aspects of the seventeenth century mind, such as those revealed in *haiku* of Bashō, can be understood in the light of earlier *hongaku* perception; see LaFleur, chapter 8). After 1868 the Meiji government forced legal separation between Buddhism and *kami* worship, nationalised as Shintō, so that Japanese religious practices today cannot be characterised by the medieval unitive vision of the synthesis of the universal and local, the hidden and the open. Term such as 'dual-believing' or 'syncretic' would come closer to describing the religious practices of many contemporary Japanese. Nevertheless, it is contemporary Japanese who are the primary inheritors of the *kenmitsu* vision and any dialogue influenced by response to *kenmitsu* arts would gain in depth by their contribution to the conversation.

the effects on me of the forms of *ma* I discover Christ in this *boko* world; that the arts convey not only Suchness mingled with the dust, but in their beauty convey to me the divine Son mingled with the dust: never-exhausted loving and saving transcendence incarnated. In other words I will bring to dialogue the re-imagination of the world, and therefore of Incarnation and salvation, which these arts encourage in me.

Turning then to Christian perception of dialogue, if I hold that Christ is *ma*, my expectation of dialogue will be that the space between us, the space of (and for) difference opened by Christ, will have the quality of *ma*.<sup>67</sup> Just as I shall expect this conversational space to relate us in our difference and, in doing so, partake of Christ, be Christ-like betweenness, form of Christ and room for our (saving) loving, so I shall expect this same conversational space to exhibit the “dynamic balance”<sup>68</sup> and the deeply-felt and renewing effects of the beauty of *ma*. Christian response to the beauty of Japanese art does not allow us dialogue which says, “Our difference is this; it is overcome by that.” Rather, it encourages us to say, “Our difference remains place of contemplative beauty; it has an inexhaustible quality to it” and, the Christian will add, “from God and for love.” The beauty of the shrine mandala can be illustrative of this way of dialogue. Its attractiveness draws viewers into another place, a place that is not a blank but is both storied and a Pure Land, and at the same time is the place of our daily experiencing. It causes us to expect the reality of *tariki* and in doing so inculcates in us transformative practice. As the shrine mandala combines *samṛāsa* and intimation of *nirvāṇa*, so the space of dialogue combines both difference and loving contemplation of the source of difference. Dialogue has the beauty of such a mandala - as it were, the deer which carries messages between worlds - and the foundation of the beauty of dialogue is Christ.

Hans Urs von Balthasar praises dialogue (“One of the most fruitful new approaches of Christian life and thought”) and rests the truthfulness of “internal human dialogue” on the Incarnation, the “genuine dialogue between God in heaven and God as a human being on earth”, and the sending of the Spirit of the Son into our hearts (*Galatians* 4: 6).<sup>69</sup> Truthful human dialogue derives from the *missio dei*. He also notes that dialogue alone is

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<sup>67</sup> Hence the practice of *renga* might also offer an analogy for inter-faith dialogue.

<sup>68</sup> The phrase is from Komparu Kunio, who writes of “compositions of nonaxial space”; Komparu Kunio, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> For this account of dialogue and its limitations, see von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Volume I*, pp. 34-37.

“inadequate to express the action taking place between God and the world, Christ and the Church, the Church and the world, man and his fellow man, in all its dramatic proportions.” In this respect, von Balthasar points to the “breaking of dialogue” witnessed in the discourses of the Fourth Gospel (owing to “hatred, fanaticism, jealousy and ultimate alienation”) and that the breaking off from communication in the passion of Christ signifies not God’s failure but the Word’s furthest penetration (to “the adversary’s deepest and most secret dungeon”), source of renewed dialogue: “a new well-spring of dialogue can burst forth out of the iron silence of death; here we have Easter and Pentecost in one.”

With this dialectic of dialogue and mission in mind, and having considered each in response to the beauty of Japanese art, we can reflect again on their relation. Dialogue, with its understanding and appreciation of difference, aids mission. But also the good zeal of mission, which does not cease to hope when dialogue breaks, renews and sustains dialogue. Unity and difference are mutual. Nevertheless, they remain in tension. The San Antonio report, with which this discussion of dialogue began, adds, “We are well aware that these convictions and the ministry of witness stand in tension with what we have affirmed about God being present in and at work in people of other faiths; we appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it.”<sup>70</sup> In the light of our consideration of field according to Mutō and Inoue, there is more that can be said. This tension within religious praxis between dialogue and mission, difference and unity, stands as one pole of a field which is constituted by contradiction in that at the other pole stands response to beauty, awareness of something of inexhaustible value, which Christian reflection names as transcendence and presence but which is received in common without judgment as to whether it is identical for different persons. We live our faith within this field of response and action, receptivity and reflection, between the ineffable which is indivisible and the many signs, between the already experienced and the not yet. Our mission and our dialogue occur within such experiencing. Mutō reminds us that Jesus Christ himself, the known unknown, mediates this life lived in contradiction, the One who is both particular person and at the heart of every human being, identical with truth. And Inoue reminds us that our response, whether coming as mission or dialogue, is the Spirit-given one of trust in the field as field of God’s loving.

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Gerald H. Anderson, p. 120.

## 4. Inculturation

This thesis has implications for any programme of inculturation.<sup>71</sup> But more than that, the nature of inculturation has been its overarching theme. The question has been how to respond to intimations of grace given through arts which inhabit a different religious milieu. The purpose of attempting to perceive signs of Christ when in a rock garden or Shintō shrine has not been to abolish the shrine nor to claim the garden, nor to make comparisons, whether between European and Japanese ways, or between Christian and *kenmitsu* ones. The purpose has been to know God's revelation of Godself in Christ Jesus more fully by attending to the Spirit's disclosure of Christ through the world. This world was made in him, for love of it the Father sent him and its form he has shared. For a human community to attend to this disclosure is to seek to turn all to praise, to enact the priestly vocation given to Adam and Noah. This same intention to render praise from all occasions of life, from diverse times and cultures, lies behind the contemporary drive for inculturation. Inculturation is more than adaptation of the liturgy to make it comprehensible to non-European thought-forms. It is to draw the path of Christ from those forms, to recognise Christ anew with heart and mind. This is church growth, not in numbers but expansion of vision and will. As we have seen already, perceiving Christ through difference requires us to recast our practice of theological reflection, of mission and of dialogue. This final section will consider ways in which we should expect attentiveness to particular difference to affect the symbols with which we express human incorporation in Christ.

### FORMS OF INCULTURATION

First it will be helpful to say more on the understanding of inculturation. Von Balthasar, who laboured so fruitfully to draw our hearts to the form of Christ through the beauty, goodness and truth of this world, wrote of inculturation as the message of Christ permeating the world not from outside but "like leaven": "The cultural materials that exist in the world must be taken up and adapted, albeit critically."<sup>72</sup> This is to be through "a

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<sup>71</sup> Examples of such guidelines include the adaptation envisaged in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* III (Abbott, p. 156-157) and *The York Statement* 1989 (David Holeton, ed., *Liturgical Inculturation in the Anglican Communion: Including the York Statement, "Down to Earth Worship"*, Bramcote: Grove Books, 1990).

<sup>72</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Volume IV: the Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1994), pp. 464-465.



loving appreciation of existing values; it must calmly be shown that they are genuinely fulfilled only in the message of Christ.” He admits this is difficult because culture can exhibit “an earthly perfection, like a work of art” but understands that the Christian reality’s “relationships of continual transcendence” break open earthly forms. It is even more difficult for the Church because of the danger of amalgams between Christianity and secular culture: “the salt of the gospel is in danger of losing its savor.” Von Balthasar here rests the practice of inculturation on a theology of fulfilment, the extent of which is then subject to critical reflection. It reads like a recycling of the Chinese rites controversy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>73</sup> At that time the Jesuit mission in China, following Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), saw within “original Confucianism” a system of earthly wisdom compatible with and fulfilled by Christian teaching.<sup>74</sup> The huge promise of the mission was then undermined by European doubts about the degree of compatibility. But such a way of fulfilment casts other shadows. To be able to claim original Confucianism as compatible involved the Jesuit mission in polemic against other ways, the neo-Confucianism of Wang Yang-ming especially, but Buddhism and Daoism also. For all the warm and ready sympathy of the Jesuits, such inculturation remains a way of discrimination and the major elements discriminated against were and still are the faiths of the people. It follows also that such discrimination amounts to a preference for the elite over liberation for the poor, as Aloysius Pieris repeatedly reminds.<sup>75</sup>

This highlights a further, related difficulty with von Balthasar’s approach to inculturation, one which has been present throughout European consideration of the subject and which continues to dog discussions today. It assumes ‘culture’ to be an entity essentially divisible from acts of worship and the beliefs and reflections which accompany them. This thesis has

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<sup>73</sup> For an account which evaluates the history from a Christian missionary perspective, see Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: the Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1994).

<sup>74</sup> Confucian literati opposed to the prevailing neo-Confucianism agreed with Ricci’s identification of original divine creating power with the God of Christian revelation; Ross, pp. 147-149.

<sup>75</sup> See A. Pieris, *Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity*. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1996). Andrew Ross is careful to refute contemporaries’ complaints against the China mission that it attracted only the elite: the burgeoning churches were composed largely of other classes. Nevertheless the adoption of Confucian thought preserved discrimination against the out-castes; Ross, p. 166. So Pieris requires us to ask the question, whose culture?

argued the opposite.<sup>76</sup> The brief description of Japan's fifteenth century 'religio-aesthetic' given above<sup>77</sup> is enough to show that any results from such an approach could hardly be expected to be marked by authenticity. The division into religion and culture has allowed European consideration of inculturation to draw on a model of translation.<sup>78</sup> This has frequently meant 'dynamic equivalence' - translation which employs certain new images and thought-patterns as more readily comprehensible than more literal rendering.<sup>79</sup> Where literal translation walks cautiously, attempting to avoid contamination, dynamic equivalence embraces but, in doing so, has to be all the more confidently dismissive of any incompatible religious import adhering to such terms.<sup>80</sup> Inculturation of this kind remains the insertion of an alien religio-culture (a form of Judeo-Hellenistic Christianity considered canonical) into a sanitised simulacrum of others' thought-worlds. Equivalence brushes off difference. This is not to dismiss it; it has proved a powerful and creative way. But it is to recognise its serious limitations and to recollect us to the attentiveness which God seems to ask of us in allowing (or bestowing) such diversity of culture and belief.

Anscar J. Chupungco in writing of liturgy has carefully set out for readers the development of contemporary patterns of Christian inculturation (and their precursors). He distinguishes

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<sup>76</sup> As does Pieris. See also LaFleur, chapter 8. Here through detailed exegesis, he uncovers the literary practice of Bashō as religious vision. LaFleur argues that syncretic forms were not facile but a conscious, religious decision not to separate out elements.

<sup>77</sup> pp. 79-84.

<sup>78</sup> Behind which lies an understanding of Incarnation as translation. So von Balthasar, writing of 'the union of heaven and earth', writes of Christ that he "translates his eternal relationship with the Father in the terms of time and creatureliness." Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama V*, p. 120. This differs significantly from the presentation by Ben Quash (drawing on Donald Mackinnon and Rowan Williams) of 'transcription' (p. 217), recognition of which derives from the contingency of our human experiences eliciting faith, not knowledge. Such a transcription model is open-ended, is drama, and implies a Jesus who, in every event, must learn to act in relationship with God as the Son relates to the Father. Von Balthasar's 'translation' by contrast is magisterial, 'from above', 'epic' and rooted in ontology. So is much of the Church's inculturation.

<sup>79</sup> Chupungco offers the example from Igbo of 'to wear an eagle's feather' being used to mean 'dignity'; Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacraments, Religiosity and Catechesis* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 40.

<sup>80</sup> The classic example from Francis Xavier's time in Japan is his translation for the term 'God'. He first employed the esoteric Buddhist term 'Dainichi', which might be accounted a rough form of dynamic translation. Then, realising the seemingly incompatible religious associations of this term, he substituted the transliteration 'Deusu', an empty (but irredeemably foreign) vessel for his Japanese hearers which the missionaries could attempt to fill with Christian meaning. Ross comments on this episode that it proved disastrous, not least in that the memory of it kept the Jesuit missionaries to Japan from attempting anything more than superficial inculturation; Ross, pp. 29 and 112.

two further methods. These go beyond dynamic equivalence in that they seek not merely to reproduce what Christians already hold, but to add to these from the resources of another culture. 'Creative assimilation' employs contemporary native cultural patterns to amplify imported ways that form the core of Christian discipleship. Chupungco's examples are marriage and funeral rites.<sup>81</sup> He notes that while the Church does not expect this to be the ordinary method, it is sometimes the only realistic one. In other words, we may judge that the method of creative assimilation admits there is more to be learnt; that the received patterns of Christianity may be sufficient in their originating sphere, but display a deficiency in cultural breadth. Once again the method whitewashes difference: in adding to what is already held, it assumes compatibility (and may in practice prove acquisitive, equivalent in the ritual sphere to breaking intellectual copyright). The other method is 'organic progression', filling in lacunae. Its dynamic is to move beyond the content of the tradition to fulfil its intention.<sup>82</sup> While the lacunae are identified through the impact of what is new in a culture, it is the intention of the tradition which determines what is organic. In practice this is creativity used to strengthen a conservative sense of self-identity. Once again we may note these methods are not to be dismissed but in themselves they are insufficient: they choose always what is most compatible and offer little incentive to engage sincerely with difference. In particular they rely on the distinction between culture and religion which is unsustainable (Pieris adds, especially in Asia<sup>83</sup>).

These last named two methods of inculturation are employed to bolster the desired approach which remains one of translation, transmitting a message from one medium to another. Andrew F. Walls (writing of mission) has drawn attention to the labour which translation involves, including its complexities and ambiguities, but also, he comments, its ultimate impossibility.<sup>84</sup> This thesis has emphasised the impossibility. It has also aimed to

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<sup>81</sup> And he draws attention to the elaboration of baptism in the early church with anointing, giving of milk and honey and the washing of feet, Chupungco, pp. 44-47.

<sup>82</sup> Chupungco, pp. 47-51. The examples of organic progression which Chupungco cites include permission to use repeat anointing during the course of an illness and to use vegetable oil other than olive oil, but he also includes "the possibility to draw up particular orders of Mass", which on the face of it offers to liturgical innovation a wide scope. Nevertheless the discussion is (necessarily) framed in terms of defence of this method against critics who would set far narrower limits, rejecting organic progression altogether.

<sup>83</sup> Aloysius Pieris SJ, 'Inculturation in non-Semitic Asia', *The Month* 19.3 (1986), p. 83-92 (p. 83).

<sup>84</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll NY and Edinburgh: Orbis and T&T Clark, 1996), pp. xviii-xix.

show the potential of that impossibility; how the untranslatable and incommensurate may be source of new revelation and sign of God's fullness coming to us. Attentiveness to difference tutored by love of beauty must be a condition for any inculturation.

Pieris accounts for Christianity's relative lack of purchase in Asian minds and hearts by arguing that it arrived too late. He classifies religions into the 'metacosmic' (positing "an immanently transcendental horizon") and the 'cosmic' (the numinous "encountered in the context of an ecological spirituality").<sup>85</sup> The former, he says, are like helicopters, the latter like heli-pads: they have different, compatible functions. By the time Christianity seriously attempted any landing in South and East Asia, the pads were already occupied; in other words, the cosmic religions were already associated with a different overarching metaphysic or grand narrative. This broad argument has a certain anthropological plausibility. But what may carry greater religious significance are the different ways metacosmic religions assimilate (and are assimilated to) cosmic beliefs. Buddhist emptiness and absence of self-nature allow reversibility, the equivalence of forms and their identity with emptiness, as we have seen. While this combinatory perception gave rise to poetry of great depth and gardens to kindle contemplation in Higashiyama-era Japan, it was already being undone by a certain irreversibility mediated through the myths of the *kami*. Indeed 'metacosmic' and 'cosmic' cannot be so neatly separated (as Pieris' classification of Confucianism as 'cosmic' intimates): Buddhism has had its 'cosmic' elements and the *kami* cults their transcendental vision. For Christians, 'metacosmic' irreversibility, that God is alpha and omega and that all is from Christ and to Christ, has provided the basis of assimilation.<sup>86</sup> It has made for a more critical relationship with the 'cosmic' but one which, arguably, has proved no less artistically fruitful; the 'cosmic' inextricably tied to the transcendent by the flesh which the Word became.

Pieris' formula also begs the question of how one 'metacosmic' faith relates to another, a relationship which is increasingly understood by Christians to be entailed in the universality

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But he says also that the attempt revealed "Christ had meanings and significance never guessed before" and that there was (is?) no escape from this labour, an experience which is "to live on terms set by someone else".

<sup>85</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, p. 66. Cf. Koyama Kosuke's distinction cited above, p. 207.

<sup>86</sup> But note Mark Mullins' point that this can have the opposite effect; eg. that Korean Pentecostalism has been assimilated to shamanism. Mark Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: a Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pp. 175-177.

of their believing. We have seen above that such relating can be characterised by trust under circumstances of contradiction (as it was for Abhishiktananda), and that such relating will be in via and without resolution. Inculturation, then, should not be thought of as an end-point, Christian fulfilment of the hopes of others, but the fruit of successive moments of creative relating. Pieris, who rejects the division of culture and religion, prefers the term 'inreligionisation':<sup>87</sup> forms of Christian believing emerge not in spite of or after other faiths but as ways of practising other faiths. He looks, for example, not to 'an Indian Christianity' but to 'a Hindu Christianity'. He himself envisages this by identifying Christ with Asia's poor, of every religion.<sup>88</sup> This is not the place for a critique of this liberation theology beyond noting that, in the terms of the present investigation, such identification runs the risk of collapsing difference, mainly by eliding what is distinctively Christian, including in native Asian versions of Christian believing.<sup>89</sup>

#### ENRELIGIOCULTURALISATION

What is advocated here is a Christian way which takes seriously Japanese medieval spiritual vision as 'religio-aesthetic'. It seeks continuity with the received cultural forms of Christian believing, while also taking into account Christian ability to respond to the beauty of the forms which convey a *kenmitsu* world view. It develops an imagination which is in Christ but is also formed by these arts. It will not think to be able to append Buddhist perception (as, for instance, it may be claimed Yoshida Shintō did in the fifteenth century) but will be jealous for the integrity of that perception. It is an experimental inculturation which expects to live in (and welcome) the tension of continuing difference. Its primary aim is not to make

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<sup>87</sup> Pieris, 'Inculturation in non-Semitic Asia', p. 83; Pieris, *Fire and Water*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>88</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, p. 74.

<sup>89</sup> In his study of indigenous Japanese Christian churches, *Christianity Made in Japan*, Mark Mullins uncovers a set of paths of inculturation, different to those of the missionary churches, with strong emphasis being given to the experiential and to power in relation to the spirit world for the sake of current well-being. These churches, which he refers to as 'indigenized', have sought to develop Asian forms of Christianity by by-passing the faith's 'Europeanisation', re-reading the scriptures with eyes open to Asian spirit worlds and, in certain cases, with a renewed care for understanding originating Jewish perceptions. Some also draw consciously on Asian wisdom traditions: Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930) provides an example of this, with his care for the values of Confucianism and Bushidō. While such projects are open to criticism (not least in claims to discern a purer form of Christianity) and are not necessarily any more successful in making converts than the Europeanised Christianity introduced by the missionaries (as Mullins notes), he considers that they are serious attempts to answer the questions of inculturation faced by all. We can add that they offer an unexpected parallel to Jules Monchanin's project of inserting the pure gospel at the fountain-head of Asian spiritual life (see above, p. 56).

Christ palatable to unbelievers but to see with the eyes of Christ the many ways in which the Holy Spirit reveals God's love and so to re-envision Christian reflection on God's saving ways with God's creatures. It means to be an holistic way; not re-casting received Christian doctrine (alone) but renewing ways of following Christ (including especially worship and devotion) in the light of Asian art. It can be summarised in a (regrettably barbarous) neologism: neither 'inculturation' (which intends to claim a culture for Christ) nor 'inreligionisation' (which intends to disconnect Christ from received Christian culture) but 'enreligioculturalisation': a way which seeks conversation and truth, not dominance. Such an encapsulation bears the difficulties of a portmanteau word, but for that reason may also serve to highlight our readiness to live with complexity and to do so as people in transit.

In what way does the approach advocated here differ from dynamic equivalence, creative assimilation and organic progression? Unlike dynamic equivalence, it is neither intending nor ultimately considering it possible to utilise concepts of the host religio-aesthetic for the purpose of translating meaning from Western Christianity: it is not assuming an underlying likeness. A practice of 'enreligioculturalisation' draws close to creative assimilation. It can be thought to be seeking to amplify received Christian understanding from the resources of the other. 'Christ is *ma*' extends our received perception of the form of Christ. But unlike creative assimilation as inculturationists practise it, the interpretive value of the metaphor 'Christ is *ma*' does not depend on evacuating the host religio-aesthetic of its overarching religious meaning. Rather, it relies on continuing dissimilarity - tension, or a field of contradiction - to effect the extension of our perception.<sup>90</sup> The practice also differs from organic progression. It is organic, in that it is in continuity with historic Christian faith, but it is not progression. Rather it aims to hold its practitioners in contemplative receptivity, an existential openness by which every creative move takes us not closer to completion (the establishment of a fully-inculturated church, for example, or the resolution of theological conundrums thrown up by the impact of another faith) but deeper into mystery.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> This is in distinction from the way followed by many forms of Buddhism in earlier centuries which, as we have noted, proved eminently assimilative. The distinction is once again that between Buddhism's 'reversibility' of signifier/signified and Christianity's 'irreversibility'.

<sup>91</sup> The method employed (on a wide ecclesiological scale) by Vincent Donovan in his work among the Masai, as recorded in his celebrated study *Christianity Rediscovered: an Epistle from the Masai* (Maryknoll NY, London: Orbis and SCM, 1982), I take to be an application of these three forms of translation, committed to transmitting a message from one medium to another. For all its innovation (and humanism) it remains a species of fulfilment theology:

The 'enreligioculturalisation' envisaged here allows both for the integrity of another faith and for experimental Christian forms deriving from encounter with that faith, while being bounded by neither. What assessment can be given of experimental forms, such as *nō* drama on Christian themes? Yasuda's *Martin Luther King*<sup>92</sup> seeks to portray King as saint or bodhisattva. In doing so, he assumes an equality between the two, which leads to a sense that King's "free at last" is more about uncovering nirvāṇa in samṛāsa ('free') to the loss of 'at last'. Yasuda's *nō* proves unable to accommodate the prophetic: the significance of time as capable of bearing redemption lies outside the *nō* stage. Kadowaki's *The Baptism of Christ* handles the transcendent by resorting to a 'phantom *shite*' unknown in the tradition (in Kadowaki's *nō*, the unseen Father and the Spirit), to elevate the symbolism already present in *nō*: namely, the divine inherent in the natural.<sup>93</sup> But this is use a questionable innovation to conflate two different faiths. Justice is done neither to the saving God of Christian faith nor to *nō* by allotting God a role in the drama; we cannot write the presence of God into this kind of cosmic drama with the piping of a flute. The weaknesses of these two dramas relate directly to the religious background of *nō*. It may be that God's work is rather to be sought in our response to *nō* (and to the religio-aesthetic which generated it).<sup>94</sup>

Turning to Japanese gardens, we may consider those gardens constructed in the United Kingdom under Japanese influence.<sup>95</sup> These have not been created with a view to conveying religious truth. Amanda Herries, distinguishing religion from culture, finds understanding of either lacking in the forms of Japanese gardens in Britain:

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God has already spoken to the other in ways we (as Western Christian missionaries) can with patient collaboration unearth and recognise. To make such an assessment is not to reject Donovan's method; mission requires such attempts, as indicated above. But it is to deny that they can be the whole of Christian encounter. God means us not merely to uncover the congruent but also to remain attentive to the unfamiliar, to the suggestion of meaning through the irreconcilable.

<sup>92</sup> Kenneth Yasuda, 'Martin Luther King, Jr.: A *Nō* Play', in *Masterworks of the *Nō* Theater*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 485-507.

<sup>93</sup> Kadowaki Kakichi, "'The Baptism of Jesus': *Nō* Play and Mass', *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, 44.1, (1990), pp. 3-10. See also Virgilio Fantuzzi SJ, 'A Christian "Noh"', *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, Volume 45.2 (1991), pp. 120-126.

<sup>94</sup> Although it could fairly be said that both these Christian *nō* represent fruit of such response. In themselves they may not be examples of enreligioculturalisation as understood here, but in the motivation to create them, they are.

<sup>95</sup> See Amanda Herries, *Japanese Gardens in Britain* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2001) and Tachibana Setsu, Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins, 'Japanese Gardens in Edwardian Britain: Landscape and Transculturation', *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004), pp. 364-394.

it was often ignorance of the significance of these basic elements [religion] which made the Western interpretations look different from their Eastern inspirations. Cultural differences also had an effect: the West failed to appreciate the asymmetry essential to Japanese garden design, or the importance of creating a balance between the *in* and the *yo*.<sup>96</sup>

Some, as Amanda Herries comments, sought simply to display unusual plants imported from Japan,<sup>97</sup> or Japanese elements.<sup>98</sup> Others, attempting to reproduce the pattern of Japanese gardens, have created stunningly attractive amalgamations, as at Tatton Hall in Cheshire, or Compton Acres in Dorset which includes intricate design, colourful flowering plants, mature trees and elements in red paint. Amalgamation seems to have occurred even when the garden designers (and gardeners) were themselves Japanese working in the UK. As Tachibana and his colleagues comment, “The Japanese gardens at Newstead and Cowden performed like the classically inspired gardens in 18th century landscape parks”.<sup>99</sup> Whether following Josiah Conder’s pattern book or Reginald Farrer’s refusal to imitate in favour of translating into new forms of art (“a perpetual renewal of life”),<sup>100</sup> the Edwardian planners of Japanese gardens never attempted enreligioculturalisation. It remains to be seen whether current enthusiasm for Japanese gardens will embrace response to their religious roots.

Christians may be drawn to the powerful and beautiful ‘garden of the cross’ (the *Kanmin-tei*, the ‘Quietly Sleeping’ garden), designed by Shigemori Mirei (1896-1975) for the Zuihō-in of the Daitokuji. This is a conscious attempt to shape, in Japanese *karesansui* garden idiom and on behalf of a Zen monastery wishing to honour its sixteenth century Christian founder, a response to Christian allegiance. As such, however successful, it will not be an example of Christian enreligioculturalisation. It is fashioned with Shigemori Mirei’s characteristic vigour and causes the viewer to pause and look afresh. In this it conveys authenticity, but it is

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<sup>96</sup> Herries, p. 6. But it can be argued both asymmetry and *in-yo* also have religious significance.

<sup>97</sup> e.g. Lionel de Rothschild’s Exbury gardens. Herries, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> e.g. Heale House in Wiltshire. Herries, p. 30.

<sup>99</sup> Tachibana, Daniels and Watkins, p. 390.

<sup>100</sup> Tachibana, Daniels and Watkins, p. 386-387. Farrer had been on a Buddhist pilgrimage to Ceylon and was more concerned for authenticity; he sought a renewed representation of English scenery informed by Japanese garden arts. Tachibana, Daniels and Watkins, pp. 385 and 390.



debatable how significant the Christian element is for that authenticity.<sup>101</sup> It may be we still await a Christian meditation garden formed in conversation with the *karesansui* tradition.

If that is so, it is even more the case when we turn to consider shrine mandalas. Circular designs as representations of reality have a long history in Christianity. One notable creator of these was Hildegard of Bingen. Marsha Newman, who has written on the meaning of three of Hildegard's 'illuminations', comments that they reflect "a Christian universe radiating with the divine energy of original creation, and reiterating through its cycles and seasons the foremost purpose of existence, the fulfilment of divine love."<sup>102</sup> They parallel Japanese mandalas in that they are expressions of vision, representing a many-layered reality embracing the cosmos and eternity, and in that their primary function is experiential rather than catechetical, calling forth prayer, reflection and transformation.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless even such inspired Christian devotional artefacts are quite distinct in their nature from Japanese shrine mandalas. In the first place they do not have the talismanic properties held by mandalas in *mikkyō*.<sup>104</sup> In Japan representations of shrines became associated with this esoteric ritual practice and came to be understood in their own right as mandalas, attaching the mandalic world to a particular sacred geography. Such localisation is lacking in Christian devotional designs. This is not by omission. The risen Christ as the true Temple absorbs such cosmic vision of locality with the result that Christian sacred sites become places of stronger presence and prayer rather than interchangeable (reversible) instances of salvation, manifestations of a Pure Land. The *kenmitsu* vision which inspired the shrine mandalas remains both at odds with Christian conception and inspiring. It retains aesthetic appeal and it gains in contemporary conditions by association with identity and

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<sup>101</sup> The cross of stones appears to this observer to be more than mere marker; it sincerely evokes the faithfulness and mystery of the suffering both of martyrs and of *kakure*; it takes its place in forming *ma*. What is less sure is whether the garden's use of the cross can convey anything of redemption and resurrection (Christian 'irreversibility') within the *karesansui* form. The garden could be characterised as a Zen meditation on Christianity, rather than a Christian meditation informed by Zen.

<sup>102</sup> Marsha Newman, 'Christian Cosmology in Hildegard of Bingen's Illuminations', in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 5.1 (2002), pp. 41-61 (p. 41).

<sup>103</sup> Newman, pp. 42, 43 and 60. She writes this of Hildegard's vision of human transformation: "Hildegard blurs the distinction between the human and the divine by portraying humanity as a spark of the divine radiance, and by arguing that the way to human holiness is in seeing and recognizing its own divine nature. As humankind becomes more capable of seeing the eternal dimension of natural existence, it becomes increasingly drawn to this vision, and is transformed by it." Marsha Newman, p. 56.

<sup>104</sup> Christian icons or relics would offer a closer parallel.

environmental wholeness. Any Christian enreligioculturalisation prompted by these mandalas would retain that awareness of tension while also seeking signs of Christ through the *ma* of sacred lands. I am not aware of any Christian shrine mandalas to date.<sup>105</sup>

## SHINMEIZAN

Before passing on to enquire about the effects of the metaphor 'Christ is *ma*' as enreligioculturalisation, one remarkable lived experiment in Japan deserves mention. Shinmeizan (earlier, 'Seimeizan'), founded in 1987 in Kumamoto-ken, is a Catholic house of prayer and interreligious dialogue, established under the auspices of and formed as one legal entity with the nearby Zen-Nenbutsu temple, the Schweitzer-ji.<sup>106</sup> Not only in its establishment but in every aspect it is a conscious response to the religio-aesthetic of Japan. It is located deep in the forested hills. Its buildings and gardens have traditional Japanese forms and include a meditation hall. Its liturgy takes its cue from the tea ceremony and its prayers draw on Shintō, *zazen* and *nenbutsu* practices. There is a deliberate emphasis on experience (and especially on prayer as experience) as a necessary component of inter-religious understanding<sup>107</sup> and every attention to the effects of religiously-significant aesthetic for which this present study could hope is given there.<sup>108</sup> Shinmeizan is deliberately practising inculturation and dialogue following the agendas of Vatican 2 and succeeding official documents. Outwardly it conforms to this precise

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<sup>105</sup> For examples of Christian mandalas drawn in full awareness of the Asian religious tradition, see 'The Christ Mandala' by Nalini Jayasuriya; also the conceptions underlying the art of Jyoti Sahi in Eric Lott and Jyoti Sahi, *Faces of Vision: Images of Life and Faith* (Leicester: Christians Aware, 2008). These display forms of enreligioculturalisation from India and Sri Lanka.

<sup>106</sup> For an account of the founding of Shinmeizan, see Franco Sottocornola SX, 'A House of Prayer and Interreligious Encounter in Kumamoto', *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, 41.1 (1987), 203-207. For its development, see Franco Sottocornola SX, 'Seimeizan 1987-1992: Five Years of Interreligious Encounter', *The Japan Mission Journal*, 47.2 (1993), 119-129 and Franco Sottocornola SX, 'Seimeizan: a Place for Prayer and Interreligious Dialogue in Japan', *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, 75 (1999), 119-125.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Mullins in his study of indigenous Japanese Christian churches found that religious experience was considered a necessity by all of them (in contrast to the teaching received from foreign missionaries), with the notable exception of Uchimura's Mukyōkai; Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan*.

<sup>108</sup> While at Shinmeizan I attended open-air vespers said facing West at sunset and mattins said facing East at dawn. These simple, but profound and carefully considered, offices were at once both aesthetic and religious, and had the power to arouse novel awareness of the cosmic and of the profundity entailed by hope in the transcendent.

(juridically-framed) approach.<sup>109</sup> But if at first its innovations were validated on the basis of an underlying cultural affectivity around which all could gather (a particular Japanese spirituality of nature, for example, regarded ultimately as secular), the rationale now appears to have shifted to acknowledging the religious dimension of the practices on which Shinmeizan draws.<sup>110</sup> What is significant about Shinmeizan is not the letter but the spirit. So Franco Sottocornola writes, “Celebrating Mass in this setting [a *tatami* room in a Temple] I found myself acting, and feeling, and living the Mass in the ‘spirit’ of the ‘tea ceremony’.”<sup>111</sup> Or again, he writes that it is a question of “letting the spirit and style of the ‘*cha-no-yu*’ imbue our hearts, and then act accordingly”<sup>112</sup> so that the “spiritual values of the ‘*cha-no-yu*’ tradition could be an enrichment of the spirituality of the Mass itself”.<sup>113</sup> This is a helpful description of what here is meant by enreligioculturalisation as creative religious practice.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For example Sottocornola writes of the tea ceremony, with regard to the Mass celebrated in that spirit: “it seems important to stress the fact that this cultural symbol is not strictly connected to one particular religious tradition ... it has now become a sort of ‘vaguely religious’ and yet ‘strongly spiritual’ secular rite in Japanese life and culture.” Also, that the object is not “to ‘celebrate the Mass’ as a ‘tea ceremony’, but to *inculturate* the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the ground of the ‘*cha-no-yu*’ tradition.” Sottocornola, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass’, pp. 15-16. Working with colleagues on an inculturated solemnisation of marriage, he found it necessary to drop the intention to share a cup of *sake* at the end of the ceremony, after the manner of the Shintō rite, as too many confused this drink with the consecrated cup of the nuptial Mass (personal communication).

<sup>110</sup> “We emphasize prayer made in contact with nature. This aspect of Seimeizan’s practice is linked both to a special attention to the Shinto tradition, where nature carries a deep religious meaning, and to the desire to provide a common element of religious experience for all people who come, whatever religion they belong to.” Sottocornola, ‘Seimeizan 1987-1992’, p. 121. Or again, “To fully appreciate the importance of the exchange of ‘religious experience’ in interreligious dialogue, one should remember both the transcendent origin of all true religion, and the role of signs or symbols to express it”: the “only tools the human mind possesses in order ... to be taken, beyond itself, towards the infinite”. Sottocornola ‘Seimeizan: A Place for Prayer and Interreligious Dialogue in Japan’, p. 125.

<sup>111</sup> Sottocornola, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass’, p. 14.

<sup>112</sup> Sottocornola, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass’, p. 23.

<sup>113</sup> Sottocornola, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass’, p. 16.

<sup>114</sup> Takamori Sōan, founded by the Dominican Oshida Shigeto, has been an instance of a Christian hermitage founded under the influence of Zen Buddhism. Web-site: <http://www.dominicos.telcris.com/en/takamori.htm> (viewed 29. 11. 2011.); also Claudia Mattiello (comp.), *Takamori Sōan: teachings of Shigeto Oshida, a Zen master* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Color Efe, 2007). Abhishiktananda met Oshida in 1971 and wrote of him: “an intensely Christian heart in a Buddhist psyche”; Stuart, p. 243.

## JUXTAPOSITION, INCARNATION AND THANKSGIVING

Sottocornola comments that “the ability to ‘juxtapose’, without structural modification of either of them, two elements or customs which would seem to be so different or even contradictory” is “typically ‘Japanese’.”<sup>115</sup> This (recursive) cultural preference invites something more than creative assimilation as identified by Chupungco; it allows concurrent appreciation of the aesthetic experience of different religious traditions to be an authentic and even necessary component of any form of ‘Christianity made in Japan’.<sup>116</sup> Juxtaposition has previously been identified with a less complete form of adaptation, termed ‘acculturation’.<sup>117</sup> An example would be the employment for Christian worship in India of oil lamps of the style of those found in Hindu temples. Such acculturation takes something out of context and utilises it in a different one. It has raised anger among those of the originating culture, who see their inheritance being misappropriated.<sup>118</sup> In its more complex forms its trend is towards inculturation, as it seeks to claim comparability. But here Sottocornola claims something beyond utilitarian acculturation. Juxtaposition can enlarge vision by encompassing not just two elements but the two contexts or world views which give rise to them. It should be free from the criticism levelled at acculturation in that it does not seek to elide the other, and it differs from syncretism in that its field of meaning derives from the interplay of difference (or contradiction) between the two, not from denying it.

What then unifies the field of meaning? It is experienced in what Sottocornola above identifies as “acting, and feeling, and living ... in the ‘spirit’ of ... ”: that is in the aesthetic response (interpreted as spiritual and religious) of the person (or community). What is being said is that maintaining unity of person or community does not depend on choice to exclude the other, but rather on honesty regarding one’s own contradictions, such that simultaneous aesthetic appreciation of two world views can be admitted. For *kenmitsu* assimilation this carries no great challenge, as there is no investment in the distinctive unity

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<sup>115</sup> Sottocornola, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass’, p. 13. The juxtaposing of classical verses in the composition of *nō*, not haphazardly but by intent, offer a particular example of this practice in *kenmitsu* art.

<sup>116</sup> To borrow Mark Mullins’ designation. Fr. Sottocornola also muses on the possibility of Mass celebrated in *matsuri*-style; Sottocornola, ‘The Tea Ceremony and the Mass’, p. 14.

<sup>117</sup> On acculturation, see Chupungco, pp. 27-28.

<sup>118</sup> Kakkallil notes Hindu anger over Christian use of ‘OM’; J. Kakkallil, ‘Liturgical Inculturation in India’, *Questions Liturgiques* 77 (1996), 110-116 (p. 115), with my thanks to George Guiver CR for this reference. Pieris also fulminates against such ‘instrumentalizing’; see Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 53, for an example of the anger of Thai Buddhists at Christian borrowing.

of the person; each co-inheres with all. It is otherwise for Christian thought: the experiencing person is distinct. As the Christian comes to understand that her experience of appreciating concurrently incommensurate ways is given by God, so she finds afresh that her unity derives from (and remains hidden in) God. Appreciation which gives rise to a field of contradiction is itself a reminder that meaning and the self-identity of the human person who receives it are eschatological and not yet experienced as complete. Christ is our mediating and revelatory sign, the One who is simultaneously at home in the completion of all and in the contingency of daily life, the one through whom we know what it is to be a person and in whom we find meaning.

The word the Christian tradition uses to express the bringing of divine meaning into contingency and the contradictions of life is 'incarnation', referring not solely to the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth but by the accomplishment of that life extending to all instances of the Holy Spirit bringing to living form the promise of true life through the creative and transformative Word of God. It is a term sometimes employed to speak of what lies at the heart of any programme of inculturation.<sup>119</sup> Here what has been termed 'enreligioculturalisation' when looked at from the perspective of human intention, could more illuminatingly (and euphonically) be termed 'incarnation' when understood as God freely presenting Godself in the midst of human religio-aesthetic cultures for the love of all God's creation in all its particularities. When we seek to live faithfully juxtaposing Christian believing with another faith in response to our aesthetic appreciation of the other, Christ, who is the love of God for all the world, may by grace given through the Spirit take new form in our common Christian life.

Are we then to be '*kenmitsu* Christians' (to adapt Pieris' terminology)? There are no *kenmitsu* believers and Western Christians could hardly take their place. We are Christians by the grace of God. But the gardens, *nō* and other classic elements of a certain Japanese culture can inform our hearts who live seeing the world redeemed by Christ. An inculturation sought by living in expectation of incarnation can be characterised as an inculturation of thanksgiving; that is, as eucharistic. We come to see all the created world as potentially sacramental, providing hosts for the life of the incarnate God, which do not

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<sup>119</sup> This usage is dismissed by Chupungco for impropriety: it "should be set aside to express the unique mystery of God, who took our human nature." For its use, including at Vatican 2, see Chupungco, pp. 17-19.

thereby lose their distinctiveness but show their own being intensified. These will include the unknown places and those we do not fully comprehend, and most especially the works of human spirit.<sup>120</sup> Von Balthasar advocated that theology be done in the light of artistic practice and Ben Quash has shown how exposure to Western drama can inform our attempts to read Christ together with our experience of the world, in particular by acknowledging the existential revelatory moment (rather than by seeking 'epic' closure). Such practice of inculturation cannot be one of detached perception but is done with ready engagement of our faculties and acknowledgment of blessing, rendering back to God what God in love has given. The understanding it involves is not so much analytical comprehension as contemplation of what remains inexhaustible, life-giving mystery. Such practice leads, like the walk to Emmaus, not home but to transformative manifestation, to eucharist and to commission.

Juxtaposition holds elements together without confusion for the sake of love and the better understanding of each. One searching and creative form of juxtaposition is that poetry which supplies 'the distant link', described earlier.<sup>121</sup> Another is metaphor. These forms offer a 'surplus of meaning' (Ricoeur) which here has been understood as analogous both to Christ's *pleroma* and to the perception of extension in trinitarian infinity in Gregory of Nyssa's account of *epektasis*. We shall conclude, then, by considering effects of the metaphor 'Christ is *ma*' as inculturation (enreligioculturalisation or incarnation) to suggest the potential of this aesthetic approach to our plural world.

#### THE METAPHOR 'CHRIST IS *MA*' AS INCULTURATION

What particular insights into Christian call to an inculturation of thanksgiving are offered by this present consideration of Christian response to the arts of *kenmitsu*? We have recognised 'Christ is *ma*' in the *ma* of the *nō* stage as inviting our witness to the variety and profundity of experience as acknowledgment of our unity and so figuring a mission of

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<sup>120</sup> For a theology of sacrament which understands creation and redemption to be in harmony and sacraments as being in continuity with and fulfilment of natural sacramentality, Philip Tovey commends and summarises Schmemmann in Philip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship: exploring the Eucharist* (Aldershot/Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 22-32. What causes experiential cognition of sacrament (and which we may align with what below is termed "the existential revelatory moment") is helpfully characterised by Schmemmann as "epiphany", in that it "manifests the reality of the signified without losing its own reality"; Tovey, p. 26.

<sup>121</sup> See above, pp. 175-178.

presence and in the *ma* of the shrine mandalas as encompassing difference as occasion of contemplative transformation and so figuring a dialogue of difference. What will recognising 'Christ is *ma*' in the *ma* of the *karesansui* garden teach us of inculturation? This *ma* neither draws together moments through sequences of *kata* nor utilises symbols to enfold diverse levels of perception in a single location. It presents one whole together, eliminating (notably in the case of the Ryōanji's *karesansui* garden) all interpretive structure except for the dynamic play of its components. All is garden: rock, space between, rock again, wall, direction in which the eye is drawn, *shakkei* and the composing of the viewer's mind. It carries a cultural memory of divine and human meeting space, but it is no such space and there are none identifiably present with whom to meet. The garden is not a location, comparable to the shrine lands of Kasuga. In terms of thanksgiving, there is no giving to be done; indeed, the garden encourages no secure sense of self, of possession or of discrimination. Already I am garden – movement, rock, space, distance, proximity. How may such *ma* influence Christian practice of inculturation? The garden intimates this (any) form is already existent; it is at once static and plastic, empty and concrete, alive and not alive. It manifests the three ways of Tendai's *santai*, which together are equivalent to awareness of Suchness. As Christians, we may say the *ma* of the *karesansui* garden figures the plenitude of that order when Christ is all in all, that is the extensiveness of incarnation. Saying so, we have named the garden as referent of inculturation: it is how our thanksgiving looks when overtaken by Christ its subject. Rising then from contemplating the rocks - which is also to fall again into the world of discrimination – we shall have been made aware that inculturation is properly no process, no project, but the extensiveness of grace in the divinisation of all.

Here is the destination of our Emmaus journey. This journey of inculturation from West to East has been undertaken placing hope in what is not yet seen and has been accompanied by what sets hearts burning and opens scripture. It is undergone not for our sake alone, but in expectation that all faithful journeying will prove eucharistic, will arrive not at conclusion but at manifestation of God's covenant in Christ with the earth. Such thanksgiving, which ignites action and forms the human person in communion, partakes of the love of the Persons of the Trinity. In the effect on us of the beauty of *ma* in *kenmitsu* art, we are met by Christ Jesus and our incorporation into his self-giving love is strengthened. Christ makes room for us; his love for his Father steals upon us as moonlight under the gate.

## AFTERWORD

The point of this thesis has not been to assert a previously-unnoticed attribute of Christ, that of *ma*. Indeed, its central concern has not been with concept at all, but with behaviour. It began with experience and quickly found that to evaluate experience it is necessary to consider the relationship of God with the one experiencing. This is because discernment of God's ways with us depends on consideration of human appropriation of God's freely-given grace and that such consideration is apposite and necessary in an inter-meshing world of many originating (and seemingly incompatible) visions, between whose differing truth claims we are in poor position to pronounce. It is the fruits of our engaged living which require our evaluation. And among these, our response to the compelling beauty of art offers itself for such consideration, not least because in discussion of the worth of particular works of art there can be agreement (Kasulis' dark or intimate knowledge) between those who hold incommensurate beliefs. Such concern with the appeal of the art of other faiths is not to be reckoned as unbelief or inconstancy. To the contrary, this is faithful response to the God who has created the material in diversity and the aptitude of human communities to envisage it as meaningful and who in Godself has chosen to experience its multiplicity through the mystery of human limitation and sought thereby to redeem it and bring it to fullness. In this light faithful response to the allure of art's beauty can be regarded as answer to divine call.

This thesis has sought - by returning repeatedly to a limited range of experiences and considering them afresh from different viewpoints and in different contexts - to build the case for the appropriateness of a particular disposition or stance: attentive, modest in its claims to be judge of others, appreciative, responsive and adventuring. It is a case which draws on the belief that what we learn of God's love for us through Jesus Christ - God's trust and God's welcome to diversity, freedom and wholeness through delight and selfless generosity - are true to the character of God in God's intra-trinitarian relations and therefore condition the shape of our end, our fullness. It has been argued that it is to such redemptive love that this stance responds and in so doing participates in our redemption. Delight in the faith practices of others is not simply wired into our created being; it is operation of God the Holy Spirit bringing all to perfection in Christ. Such a stance shapes our relation to God around the particular and especially that fashioned in human sincerity.



The particular, whether of line and tone or shade of emotion or historical resonance, will be the occasion of the manifestation of this transformative work of the Spirit in us. It is a stance which resists smoothing away differences by means of comparison or assimilation; it preserves unresolvable dialectic (as we saw was lived by Abhishiktananda) while reaching for a creative theological poesis, an answering fashioning of image, form and sign.

The results of such composing have less the character of object (proposition or representation of reality for the sake of mastery) and more that of heuristic, naming as means of seeing, or of something more fluid still. The particularities of *kenmitsu* arts, as encountered in this study, condition us to expect that kind of extension of our appreciation of God's salvation which, like a colour or scent, will rouse human sensibility, strengthen our aptitude for mutual involvement, manifest the ever-fresh potentiality of phenomena and invoke the sacral (and sacramental) in human affairs, confirming us as subject to these. We have followed this through the theme of space. The juxtaposition of metaphor is one such extension. It has been advanced here as apt form of mediation between incommensurate embodiments of ultimacy. Finding resonance I align, and this can bring about a new 'between' and accumulative 'osmosis' (to borrow Abhishiktananda's word) of meaning, an emerging of two-natured truth. I am suggesting that we can recognise such creative response to the beauty of the practices of other faiths as way of thanksgiving and the occasion for it as epiphany of incarnation, the relations of the three-fold God lived through the flesh.<sup>1</sup> We find the value of difference resides in the intra-relations of the Persons of the Trinity; it is not to be overcome but lived from. So we name God there, and any further perception we have of God's salvific intent will be shaped by this poesis and this beauty. This is the stance to which God summons us through the attraction of the dissimilar.<sup>2</sup>

Turn from the busy Shijō-dōri in Kyōto down a narrow side street, the Iwagami-dōri, and you come to Francis House, with its memories of the twenty-six martyrs of 1597 and a

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<sup>1</sup> I am not, of course, claiming that the Incarnation of Christ is to be understood as juxtaposition; rather that our confidence in the poesis of juxtaposition (that, in putting together our believing and the good we find elsewhere and making something new of this, Christ is there) derives from the Incarnation, which is its *raison d'être*: God-with-us in the multiform life of this world, including in suffering and transience. In chapter six our active role in this was termed 'enreligioculturalisation', perception through truthful fashioning where the religious and aesthetic are one, and understood as God's action in incarnation viewed from the side of our experience.

<sup>2</sup> A stance also characterised in this study as contemplative, witnessing and prayerful: three dispositions inculcated by garden, stage and mandala respectively.

museum of Kyōto Christian culture. Among the displays is a *makyō* (magic mirror), of the kind belonging to some of Japan's *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians).<sup>3</sup> Its reverse has a relief of cranes and pine, its obverse a surface polished to reflect; an object to be treasured similar to mirrors in many households. But shine a torch on its face and on the wall opposite a figure of light appears: Christ on the cross, not unlike the raised figure on some *fumie* which the *kakure* historically had to trample and thus hide their faith by denial. Such mirrors sustained the faith of Japanese Christians under persecution. This *makyō* may stand as sign of Japan's religio-aesthetic practice as occasion of God's self-manifestation.

In Buddhist imagery the mirror is as the Real, lacking in self-identity, perfectly reflective of phenomena. It proclaims Nothing and acts as does the awakened mind: the mirror-mind. In the *kami* traditions *shintai* have often been mirrors, placed where other belief-systems might expect a statue of the god. The mirror plays a central role in the story of the Heavenly Rock Cave, as we have seen,<sup>4</sup> ensuring the continuing light of Presence. John K. Nelson, in his work, *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine*, recalls his first visit to Kyōto's Fushimi Inari shrine and his surprise at finding at the end of the sacred mountain trail simply "a round mirror tilted slightly towards the sky": "Then it suddenly dawned on me – so *this* is what Shinto holds as divine! ... the *actual phenomena* of the world itself."<sup>5</sup> Iyanaga Nobumi views the whole system of combinatory associations of medieval *kenmitsu* as a hall of mirrors "in which all the images are reflecting one another".<sup>6</sup> So with the *nō* stage for instance, the mirror room and mirror wall identify a space in which the audience finds its participation in reality manifested in gods, ghosts and all the levels of being.

The *kakure makyō* offers a further dimension. Reflecting the Real without distortion, when light is given the *makyō* manifests in Japanese form and practice the image of the immensity of divine love: sign of the real presence of that forgiveness and hope in which the *kakure* placed their trust. The *makyō* of Francis House is both mirror and compelling

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<sup>3</sup> Viewed 27. 4. 2007. The *kakure* of the *sakoku* era may more properly be distinguished from their descendants of modern times by use of the term *senpoku kirishitan*: see Stephen Turnbull, *Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: a Study of their Development, Beliefs and Rituals to the Present Day* (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1988), pp. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 108. And note the continuing political importance of the mirror at Ise as Imperial treasure.

<sup>5</sup> Nelson, *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine*, p. 26. But note he adds (p. 27), "I look back on this experience now with a mixture of embarrassment and acknowledgment, the former as it applies to my naivete about what I was seeing".

<sup>6</sup> Iyanaga, p. 176.

divine address eliciting response. It can be read as vehicle of God's benediction on Nothingness, God's presence in the eyes of the beholder through the effect of Japanese arts and, simultaneously, God's continuing redemptive involvement in the history of Japan and that of the world.

All that has been written above stands only at the threshold of the encounter of Christian tradition with Buddhist and Shintō life and practice. If it serves to encourage Christians to attend reverently, expectantly and imaginatively to the inexhaustible occasions of attraction from those sources - a *roji* in preparation for entering the tea room - it will have fulfilled its purpose.

**APPENDIX ONE****COMMONLY RECOGNISED ERAS OF JAPANESE HISTORY**

552	Asuka/Hakuhō The arrival of Buddhism
710	Nara The capital at Nara
794	Heian The capital at Heian-kyō (modern Kyōto); aristocratic government
1185	Kamakura The Minamoto shogunate and Hōjō regency with their base in Kamakura; the beginning of feudal Japan
1333	Muromachi The Ashikaga shogunate ruling from Kyōto
1568	Azuchi-Momoyama The unification of the country under Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi
1600	Edo The Tokugawa shogunate, ruling from Edo (modern Tōkyō)
1868	Meiji The end of feudal Japan; restoration of the Emperor who moved to Tōkyō
1912	Taishō An era of troubled democracy
1926	Shōwa The reign of the Emperor Hirohito
1989	Heisei The reign of the Emperor Akihito

Adapted from *The New Nelson Japanese-English Character Dictionary*  
revised by John H. Haig (Rutland VT, Tōkyō: Charles E. Tuttle, 1997)

## APPENDIX TWO

## GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE WORDS

<i>Amida</i>	Amitabha, Buddha of the Western Pure Land
<i>aware</i>	quality evoking empathy
<i>basho</i>	place, field
<i>boko</i>	concave
<i>chadō</i>	the way of tea
<i>chanoyu</i>	the tea ceremony
<i>deko</i>	convex
<i>en</i>	allure
<i>engi</i>	dependent origination
<i>ensō</i>	calligraphic circle as expressive of enlightenment
<i>fudō</i>	environment/milieu
<i>fumie</i>	Christian image on which Japanese were required to trample
<i>fuzei</i>	atmosphere
<i>geta</i>	wooden sandals
<i>Gozan Zen</i>	institutional hierarchy of Zen temples
<i>gyō</i>	semi-cursive; see <i>shin-gyō-sō</i>
<i>ha</i>	breaking; see <i>jo-ha-kyū</i>
<i>haiku</i>	seventeen syllable poem
<i>hashigakari</i>	bridgeway of a <i>nō</i> stage
<i>hi-ai</i>	compassion, mercy
<i>hoben</i>	skilful means
<i>hondō</i>	hall for Buddha image and ritual in a temple
<i>hongaku</i>	originary enlightenment
<i>honji</i>	real ground
<i>honji butsu</i>	buddhas manifest as <i>kami</i>
<i>honji suijaku</i>	<i>kami</i> as manifestations of buddhas or bodhisattvas
<i>ikebana</i>	art of flower arrangement
<i>inyōdō</i>	divination utilising yin-yang theory
<i>jiriki</i>	salvation by self-power

<i>Jōdo-shū</i>	Pure Land Buddhism of Hōnen
<i>Jōdo-shinshū</i>	True Pure Land Buddhism of Shinran
<i>jo-ha-kyū</i>	beginning-breaking-rapid scale of elements in <i>nō</i>
<i>kabuki</i>	theatre of Edo era
<i>kagami no ma</i>	mirror room; <i>nō</i> dressing room
<i>kagami ita</i>	mirror wall; rear panel of <i>nō</i> stage, with a painting of a pine
<i>kami</i>	gods, spiritual presence
<i>kakemono</i>	hanging scroll
<i>kakure kirishitan</i>	hidden Christians of <i>sakoku</i> era and their descendants
<i>karesansui</i>	dry gardens
<i>kata</i>	movement patterns in <i>nō</i>
<i>ke</i>	phenomenal form
<i>kenmitsu</i>	esoteric-exoteric combinatory Buddhism
<i>kō</i>	lay associations of a shrine centre
<i>kōan</i>	verbal test in Zen requiring intuitive response
<i>kokoro</i>	heart and mind
<i>kū</i>	emptiness
<i>kyū</i>	rapid, see <i>jo-ha-kyū</i>
<i>kyōgen</i>	comic drama
<i>ma</i>	space, interval
<i>maeku</i>	preceding stanza in <i>renga</i>
<i>mae-shite</i>	<i>nō</i> principal ( <i>shite</i> ) in first act
<i>mandara</i>	Japanese esoteric mandala
<i>mikkyō</i>	practices of esoteric Buddhism, especially Shingon
<i>mono no aware</i>	the moving quality or pathos of things
<i>mu</i>	nothingness, transcending discursive reasoning
<i>mujō</i>	impermanence
<i>mu-shin</i>	no-mind, free from consciousness
<i>nantei</i>	southern court or garden
<i>nenbutsu</i>	Pure Land formula repeated either as prayer or thanksgiving
<i>nō</i>	lit. accomplishment: dance theatre of <i>kata</i>
<i>nochi-jite</i>	<i>nō</i> principal ( <i>shite</i> ) in second act
<i>norito</i>	shrine ritual prayers
<i>nyō</i>	as, thus

<i>nyōrai</i>	buddha, thusly come
<i>onsen</i>	hot spring resort
<i>ōshakei</i>	three-fold dynamic in artistic arrangement: heaven, earth, human
<i>raigō</i>	welcoming appearance of Amida at time of death, often as painting
<i>rakkyo</i>	completion (of formation), Zeami's stage of yin (Thornhill, p. 74)
<i>renga</i>	linked verse
<i>roji</i>	dewy path; garden approach to tea room
<i>rokudō</i>	six phases of existence
<i>sakaki</i>	cleyera japonica: evergreen tree used in <i>kami</i> ritual
<i>sake</i>	alcoholic rice beverage
<i>sakoku</i>	Tokugawa shogunate policy of excluding foreign presence in Japan
<i>santai</i>	three interdependent truths identified in Tendai thought
<i>senzui</i>	landscape, as in garden styles
<i>shakkei</i>	scenery borrowed or 'captured' in garden design
<i>shika mandara</i>	deer mandala of Kasuga shrine in Nara
<i>shimenawa</i>	plaited straw rope designating the sacred in shrine ritual
<i>shinbutsu bunri</i>	Meiji government policy separating Buddhism and Shintō
<sup>1</sup> <i>shinden</i> (寝殿)	Heian era mansion with extensive landscape garden
<sup>2</sup> <i>shinden</i> (神田)	divine rice fields, growing rice for use in <i>kami</i> ritual
<i>Shingon</i>	esoteric Buddhism of Kūkai
<i>shin-gyō-sō</i>	calligraphic scale: cursive, semi-cursive, flowing
<i>shinnyō</i>	the true thusness, suchness
<i>shintai</i>	host for the spiritual presence of <i>kami</i>
<i>shite</i>	principal in <i>nō</i>
<i>shōgun</i>	presiding feudal military commander
<i>shoin</i>	study-style room
<i>shugendō</i>	esoteric shamanistic mountain asceticism
<i>sō</i>	abbreviated; see <i>shin-gyō-sō</i> scale
<i>sōan</i>	grass hut, hermitage
<sup>1</sup> <i>soku</i> (如)	as, <i>nyō</i>
<sup>2</sup> <i>soku</i> (疎句)	in <i>renga</i> , distant link
<i>Sōtō Zen</i>	meditation Zen of Dōgen
<i>suiboku</i>	monochromatic ink wash painting
<i>suijaku</i>	trace, <i>kami</i> as manifestation of Buddhas

<i>tarik</i>	salvation by other-power
<i>Tendai</i>	esoteric Buddhism of Saichō
<i>tokonoma</i>	alcove in <i>shoin</i> to display <i>ikebana</i> and <i>kakemono</i>
<i>torii</i>	gate marking shrine
<i>tsukeku</i>	following stanza in <i>renga</i>
<i>wabi</i>	aesthetic of impermanence and no self-nature
<i>wabi cha</i>	simplicity as a way of tea formalised by Sen no Rikyū
<i>waka</i>	classical Japanese verse, often in 5-7-5: 7-7 pattern
<i>waki</i>	witness or 'side doer' (Komparu Kunio, p. 158), secondary role in <i>nō</i>
<i>yamabushi</i>	itinerant ascetic, pursuing <i>shugendō</i>
<i>Yamato</i>	ancient province in Kinki region of Japan, origin of Imperial house
<i>yūgen</i>	aesthetic of unsoundable depth of interconnectedness
<i>yukata</i>	cotton kimono
<i>zazen</i>	sitting meditation



**APPENDIX THREE****ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. ***Karesansui* of the Ryōanji, Kyōto**
2. **Ittekikaitei *karesansui* of the Kōmyōzenji, Dazaifu**
3. **Horai-san at the Daisen-in, Daitokuji, Kyōto**
4. **Nakaumi *karesansui* of the Daisen-in, Daitokuji, Kyōto**
5. **Kanmin-tei of the Zuihō-in, Daitokuji, Kyōto**
6. **Stage of the National *Nō* Theatre, Tōkyō**
7. **The Position of Players on a *Nō* Stage**
8. **Kasuga *Shika Mandara*, Nara National Museum**
9. **Nachi Falls Mandala, Nezu Art Museum, Tōkyō**



1. **Karesansui of the Ryōanji, Kyōto.** 15th century?

(Wikimedia Commons image from user Cquest under the creative commons cc-by-sa 2.5 licence)



2. **Ittekikaitei karesansui of the Kōmyōzenji, Dazaifu.** 17<sup>th</sup> century?

(Wikimedia Commons image from user Chris 73 under the creative commons cc-by-sa 3.0 licence)



**3. Horai-san at the Daisen-in, Daitokuji, Kyōto.**

16th century?

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**4. Nakaumi *karesansui* of the Daisen-in, Daitokuji, Kyōto**

16th century?

(Wikimedia Commons image from user Ivanoff under the creative commons cc-by-sa 3.0 licence)



**5. Kanmin-tei of the Zuihō-in, Daitokuji, Kyōto.**

Designed by Shigemori Mirei, 1961.

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### 6. Stage of the National *Nō* Theatre, Tōkyō.

(Reproduced with the permission of The-Noh.com)



### 7. The Position of Players on a *Nō* Stage.

*shite* - centre; *waki* - front right; orchestra - rear; chorus - right; stage hands - left rear

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8. Kasuga *Shika Mandara*. 13<sup>th</sup> century; colour on silk; h. 76.5cm; w. 40.5cm

(Reproduced with the permission of the Nara National Museum)



**9. Nachi Falls Mandala, Nezu Art Museum, Tōkyō.**

12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century; colour on silk; h. 160.7cm; w. 58.8cm.

Designated National Treasure of Japan.

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