

BOOK REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF ZEN BUDDHISM. By *Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J.*
—Translated from the German by Paul Peachey. New York :
Pantheon Books, 1963. Pp. 335. Ill.

In line with the illustrious scholastic tradition of the Jesuit Order, Father Dumoulin, professor of philosophy at Sophia University, Tokyo, has penned *A History of Zen Buddhism*.

The task proposed by this title is an ambitious one, and the most salient question would seem to be how well equipped is the author to accomplish it. Indeed, he has done his best to acquaint the Western reader with Zen, for which we ought not to grudge our unqualified thanks.

But at the same time I wish to offer here a few points of criticism as I see them.

The given list of source materials is found to be sadly wanting. For one thing, modern studies on the subject in Japanese were not used extensively enough. It is unfortunate, too, that he relied to such a great extent on translations of the original texts into the Western languages, for they are perforce limited in their interpretations in every way. Among those studies he failed to take note of are some I made on the early history of Zen in China from Bodhidharma down to Hui-nēng and his immediate successors. I mean to claim no great authority here, but these works in Japanese were based on new materials discovered in the Tun-huang Caves, tracing to an even greater extent than before the course of development Zen thought took from the 6th to 8th centuries. And then the wealth of material to be found in the principal "Sayings" (*J. goroku, C. yü-lu*) of the T'ang and Sung masters is hardly touched upon by the author. These "Sayings" cannot go unmentioned, if the book can claim its title, as they are the very pillars upholding Zen history.

The term *ch'an* (*J. zen*), in its origin, was adopted for a phonetic reason, that is, the Chinese character *ch'an* was applied in the process of transliterating the original Sanskrit *dhyāna*, meaning meditation. *Dhyāna*, or *jhāna* in Pali, became *ch'an-na* which was later abbreviated to *ch'an*. Hence the native Chinese meaning for the ideogram *ch'an* has nothing to do with the doctrine, as we are given to believe by Father Dumoulin (p. 55). As

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Zen advocates the importance of the meditation exercise, many have come to identify *Ch'an* or Zen with *dhyaṇa*. But “zen” has in it none of the meanings of the Sanskrit word. Zen philosophy in itself stands independent of this practice. After Hui-nēng, the term takes on even less the literal sense of the Indian word. In a way, the unique position held by Hui-nēng in Zen history is due chiefly to his insistence that there be the awakening in *prajñā* (transcendental wisdom) rather than mere absorption in quiet sitting (*dhyaṇa*).

The difference between the two T'ang schools, the northern (“gradual”) and the southern (“sudden”), is due to the emphasis on the *dhyaṇa* discipline by the first and the stress on the *prajñā*-awakening by the second. (See p. 87). The experience of *prajñā*-awakening is “sudden” by nature, that is, it is without mediation or is im-mediate. It is, so to speak, performing a leap over a discontinuous gap, going over to another plane of thought. The *dhyaṇa* exercise which leads to *samādhi* or a uniform state of mind moves along on a continuous plane, thus being “gradual” or graded.

I cannot go further without remarking on the major contention of this book, which is that Zen is a form of mysticism. Unfortunately, some years ago, I too used the term in connection with Zen. I have long since regretted it, as I find it now highly misleading in elucidating Zen thought. Let it suffice to say here that Zen has nothing “mystical” about it or in it. It is most plain, clear as the daylight, all out in the open with nothing hidden, dark, obscure, secret or mystifying in it.

The Father writes :

History reveals the form and leads to the essence of things... The object of this book is ... to elucidate its inner form from history, and to make its living values apparent (p. vii).

History may reveal the form and lead to the essence of things, yet if the essence of things is not clearly grasped at first, its history may be more deformed than need be. I should like to demonstrate that in order to write a good history of Zen the author must be fairly well prepared to penetrate the essence of Zen.

For example, Ma-tsu stated that “Tao is everyday-mindedness.” This simple definition conveys one of the most profound and far-reaching of philosophical insights, and the essence of Zen is most succinctly expressed here.

A master was once asked what Ma-tsu meant, and he replied, “When sleepy, sleep; when hungry, eat.” The profundity may not be immediately apparent. I quote from Ma-tsu again on this.

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A monk approached Ma-tsu and begged him to say a word after all possible logical propositions have been uniformly negated [*neti, neti*]. Ma-tsu said, "I don't feel well today. You best go to Chih-tsang [one of his chief disciples] and ask him about it."

What did Ma-tsu really mean? He makes every philosopher's head ache to the breaking point; even Dionysius would wail over his "every-day-mindedness." The enigma worsens still more when the whole episode comes to an end with Ma-tsu's remark, "Chih-tsang's hair is grey, while Hai's [another of his disciples] is dark." (See *Hekigan Roku*, Case 73).

In this dialogue, one can trace Bodhidharma's "Your mind is now thoroughly pacified," Hui-nêng's "Original Face" and Pai-chang's "No work, no meal." It is essential that a Zen historian be thoroughly acquainted with the inner meaning of these statements, for they are the guiding lights and the "inner form" of Zen history.

There is, in every one of us, something which concerns us far more deeply than the "Five Houses" of Zen; and this something is a subject of the utmost significance for Buddhists as well as Christians. What made Godhead come out from his Unknowability into this world of relativity and enable the writers of the Biblical accounts to report the story of creation? Who was the reporter that personally witnessed all those events happening at the time of creation? Who was it that heard God speak, and recorded, "He saw it [creation] and found it good"? These questions, phrased here in Christian terms, are what concern students of Zen as well as its history. Their attention is first directed here at the Ultimate Point. To locate and take hold of this Point and see it with your own eyes, is the main business of Zen. All the other things issuing from this experience are of secondary significance.

From this consideration, it may not be too far fetched to conclude that creation is not an event of the past, that it is a continuous creation that fills every moment of our human life, that the God of creation is thus in every one of us, and finally, that we human beings—individually and collectively—are its witnesses. And this fact is what induces us to respond to the essence of the Biblical stories as the "gospel truth."

Zen discipline consists in looking into one's own Nature, or Self-nature, which is no other than Subjectivity itself. It is not a relative subjectivity in which the object stands as its antithesis, but the absolute subjectivity. When this is taken hold of, we become the witnesses of creation where all things come out of the Nothingness—or Emptiness, to use Zen terminology. This point of Emptiness is the spot where Christians and Buddhists

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can shake hands and say *Tat Tvam Asi* (Thou art it). But Zen reminds us of the other side of this truth: We are One, and yet two. Herein is our "everyday-mindedness."

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ZEN IN WESTLICHER SICHT. ZEN-BUDDHISMUS—ZEN-SNOBISMUS. By *Ernest Benz*. Weilhelm/Oberbayern: Otto Wilhelm Barth-Verlag, 1962. Pp. 107.

This book affords us a good opportunity to discuss the nature of Zen "snobbism" which is said to be rapidly spreading in the West. As a historian of religion, the author attempts to delineate the nature of Zen snobbism, to trace its spiritual genealogy in the history of the West, and to lay bare the direct incentives to its rise. He is persuasive in analyzing the nature of Zen "snobbism" and in tracing its spiritual genealogy in the history of the West. Having described the history of religious "snobbism" in the West and having discussed Zen "snobbism" as its latest form, the author then characterizes the distinctive feature of that Zen "snobbism" as follows:

Besides the self-conceited consciousness of being initiated into esoteric sources of wisdom and salvation which are as eastern in origin as they can be, what marks off the Zen snobs is that they are inclined to reach for the fruits of this recognition—satori, or enlightenment—as quickly and effortlessly as possible, and then by an enormous material expense at once to compensate the want of preparation for the actual disciplinary efforts and to purchase the social prestige as well as the self-consciousness of exclusively possessing the highly cultivated object. (p. 74)

Zen snobbism in the specific sense of the term consists in putting on airs of having great enlightenment while in fact having no experience of one's own, but only an intellectual, literary knowledge of Zen philosophy and experience. (p. 77)

As for the direct incentive to the rise of Zen "snobbism," the author's discussion goes wide of the mark. He regards a specific tendency on the part of those writers who have introduced Zen to the West as the direct incentive. According to the author, this tendency is the tendency to westernize Zen, that is, to rationalize and secularize Zen. The result of this tendency is the uprooting of Zen from the religious soil of Buddhism. The author traces this tendency in the works of such writers as Nukariya, Ohasama and Herrigel. But he envisages Dr. Daisetz Suzuki as the central