

Buddhist-Christian Roundtable Discussion

THE TRANSCRIPT below documents a dialogue held at the Higashi Honganji in Kyoto, on May 21, 2013, between representatives of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha and a visiting group of Anglican Christians from the Leicester Diocese of the Church of England. The status of both groups was informal. The discussion was held mainly in English with occasional points being interpreted into or from Japanese. The transcript has been edited for smoother reading, and some general headings have been added which indicate the main topics.

The participants were as follows:

Shinshū Ōtani-ha: Rev. Inoue Takami 井上尚実 (group leader),¹
Rev. Mine Makoto 峰真, Tamai Chika 玉井睦, Teraoka Minato 寺岡
みなと, and Kisa Ito (from California).

Church of England: Rev. Alan Race (group leader), Jude Atkinson,
Rev. Sonya Wratten, Rev. Kimberley Ford, and Yoshimi Gregory.²

Convenor: Michael Pye (General Editor of *The Eastern Buddhist*).

Introduction

Pye: It is a very great pleasure to bring you all together here today. You are representing two great traditions, two religious and spiritual traditions, and we are hoping to have an exchange of views between these different

¹ Inoue Takami is also a professor at Otani University in Kyoto.

² Yoshimi Gregory was at that time Secretary of the Anglican Communion Office, London.

traditions. We should probably begin with a few exchanges about the main features of Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗) and the Christian faith as understood in Anglicanism, in case there are some questions or misunderstandings. Then we can move forward to an exchange of views about the social aspects of religious life and our understanding of social responsibility. That is the main idea underlying this meeting. Just now the party from England has been hearing about Jōdo Shinshū during a guided tour around the head temple of the Ōtani Sect, the Higashi Honganji. This morning we also visited a temple called Konkai kōmyōji 金戒光明寺 at Okazaki 岡崎 in Kyoto, a temple of the Pure Land (Jōdo) denomination. There, we saw the Mieidō 御影堂 where Hōnen 法然 is revered, the Amidadō 阿弥陀堂, and also the big cemetery, so the group has some idea of the importance of ancestors in Japanese Buddhism. We also saw the Shinshū *betsuin* on Marutamachi Street and visited one or two Shintō shrines nearby. On the way to the Higashi Honganji, we visited the Rokkakudō 六角堂; here we saw the statue of Shinran Shōnin 親鸞聖人 and heard about his early religious development. At the Higashi Honganji itself the group was shown around by Kisa Ito. Here, we were able to inspect the new roof of the larger hall, the Goeidō 御影堂, which was being renewed. From high up, we had a good vantage point from where to spot the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 in the distance, the head temple of Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha 浄土真宗本願寺派 which also goes back to the teaching of Shinran. Here at the Higashi Honganji itself, we also saw the Amida Hall which was currently undergoing refurbishment and the Goeidō which houses images of Shinran Shōnin, Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622), and other saints or patriarchs of this tradition. All in all the visitors have therefore had some wonderful impressions of the Higashi Honganji. I am recalling this just to set the scene. Now I think we should begin with some questions from either side for a little while, in order to get started.

Wisdom and Compassion

Race: Very well. I would like to begin. During our visit today, we saw statues of the two bodhisattvas who are representations of wisdom and compassion. So I wondered if you might tell us about the relationship between wisdom and compassion in this tradition. Remember that we are at stage one in our learning about it. It's very central; I understand that. At the same time they are two words which are not foreign to the Christian tradition. But perhaps we emphasize different aspects of their meaning, and if so, it would be interesting for us to hear about it. Then we may be able to respond as well.

Inoue: There are many bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. You probably know about Mahayana and traditional Theravada and the difference between earlier Buddhism and Mahayana.

Race: You might just say a couple sentences about that too, quickly, if that's possible.

Inoue: All right. In the Mahayana tradition, we believe that there are many cosmic buddhas, but in the earlier tradition, there is only Śākyamuni Buddha. So as the original archetype of the bodhisattva ideal we have Śākyamuni before he became the Buddha. But in the Mahayana tradition, we suppose, or think, that there are very many buddhas in the cosmos. There are many bodhisattvas too. There are two representative bodhisattvas who are especially popular in East Asia. One is Avalokiteśvara, Kannon 観音 in Japanese, who is an attendant bodhisattva of Amitābha, or Amida 阿弥陀 in Japanese, the Buddha of infinite light who is the main Buddha in our tradition. Kannon may be thought of as male or female, but in East Asia she is usually thought of as female. Apparently, he changed gender on the way from India. Kannon represents compassion. Amida Buddha has two attendant bodhisattvas and one of these is Kannon as mentioned. The other attendant bodhisattva is Seishi 勢至, representing wisdom. In Mahayana Buddhism, wisdom and compassion are usually regarded as two important features. The Buddha (Amida) has both compassion and wisdom.

Race: What is he wise about?

Inoue: The Buddha is enlightened, so he has infinite wisdom, but he also teaches and saves all sentient beings. That was his Original Vow, and for that he needs compassion. Originally, he had the compassion to save all beings, and after becoming a Buddha he is doing his work to save all, so both aspects are there. He needs wisdom to be a Buddha, having infinite power, and he also had compassion to do all that is necessary. The attendant bodhisattvas, and actually all sentient beings, help in his work.

Pye: At Konkai kōmyōji, in the Mieidō, we saw Kannon-sama to the right of Hōnen Shōnin, and to the left we saw Monju 文殊 (Mañjuśrī).

Inoue: Monju, yes. Monju is also a bodhisattva of wisdom.

Pye: I see. So Seishi and Monju are both bodhisattvas of wisdom.

Inoue: Yes. Usually Kannon is the bodhisattva to whom Japanese and Chinese pray for safety and for salvation. Kannon transforms his or her body to all situations and he or she can help everybody in whatever situation they may be—even if they are in hell.

Pye: So would you next please tell us why there is a statue of Shinran at the Rokkakudō? And what is the connection with Kannon-sama?

Inoue: This is about the time just before Shinran went to seek out Hōnen and ask him to be his teacher. He met Hōnen at the age of twenty-nine. When Shinran left Mt. Hiei 比叡, where he had been trained as a Tendai priest, he gave up the disciplines of the Tendai 天台 school, came down from Mt. Hiei and confined himself in the Rokkakudō where the main figure, or object of worship, is Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪観音, the Kannon of the fulfilment of wishes. According to one of his wife's letters (he later married), he was not sure what to do next, having given up monastic training on Mt. Hiei. So he prayed to Kannon for guidance, because people in those days believed that if you pray to Kannon very seriously, the bodhisattva might give you counsel in your dream. On the morning of the ninety-fifth day of his stay there, on April 5, 1201, Kannon appeared in Shinran's dream and advised him to go to Hōnen's place of residence. In fact, this dream is very complicated and not easy to explain in brief. However, the dream was the main reason why Shinran left Mt. Hiei and went instead to Hōnen's residence, in order to ask Hōnen to give him the Pure Land teaching.

Salvation and Particularism

Wratten: You mentioned salvation. Christians talk much about salvation, and you may be aware of that. So, I have a question. It may seem a little heavy and we've only just begun our dialogue. But, well, it is always quite a pertinent question. You see, I'm involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue in Leicester (England). We have a lot of Muslim people in my local community and the question of salvation always arises in our dialogue sessions. I'm wondering about the Shin Buddhist view of the salvation of people from other faith communities. What is your own personal view of that?

Inoue: By "others" you mean . . . ?

Wratten: I mean people who are outside of the Buddhist tradition.

Race: Yes, Muslims, Christians, and so on—people of other traditions.

Inoue: That's a difficult question.

Wratten: It's a very difficult question! But maybe you can give just a little of your perspective?

Pye: You mean, people who are not Shin Buddhists. You are asking what happens to them?

Wratten: Yes, what happens to them?

Race: What's available for them (laughter)? Do they get the same salvation?

Wratten: It's about questions like, "Can they be saved without converting?" because that would be one of our questions. And, in Christian-Muslim dia-

logue, some Christians would say that you can't be saved except by Christ and if that is your perception of salvation in the Christian tradition, it would mean there is no salvation without becoming a Christian. But others might say, yes, Christ saves all whether you know about Christ or not. Do you know what I mean? That would mean that you're saved anyway (laughter).

Inoue: It's a difficult problem, but there are different levels to it, a doctrinal view and my own personal view. Which would you like?

Race: Both might be helpful (laughter). Your personal view would be particularly good.

Inoue: All right. This is my personal interpretation. The most important thing for Shin Buddhists is to have sincere faith in the Original Vow made by the Bodhisattva named Dharmākara, which he made before he became the Buddha Amida (Amitābha), the golden figure you saw earlier today. According to the sutra known as the *Sutra of Eternal Life*, he made that vow as a bodhisattva, and a bodhisattva's vow says that unless all sentient beings, that is, all humans and animals—all living things—are saved, he will not become a Buddha. That is basically his vow. Actually, all bodhisattvas make this universal vow in the first stage when they become a bodhisattva. It is a vow to save all sentient beings. In particular, this bodhisattva Dharmākara, known in Japanese as Hōzō Bosatsu 法蔵菩薩, vowed that if, when he was about to become a Buddha, all the sentient beings were not free—not delivered from suffering—he would not become a Buddha. Becoming the Buddha Amida, he fulfilled his vow, and so I believe that this aspect of his vow is most important. I think, therefore, that all people, regardless of their faith, Christian, Muslim, or whatever, they are in principle saved. But what you do need to do is believe in something. It doesn't have to be the Shin Buddhist, "Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu," which means "I take refuge in Amida Buddha." But you have your own God in whom to take refuge. And so do Muslims. That's my personal understanding and also that of other modern Shin thinkers in our tradition, as far as I have heard. The most important thing is to follow the teachings or the religious traditions most familiar to you. If you are born in England, and you are Anglican, then follow that path because that can lead to the same goal as ours. And if you listen to the Shin teachings, as a non-Shin follower, and read Shinran's writings, I think your understanding of your own tradition may be increased, and this will influence your understanding of Christianity, too, in a good sense. So, Shin Buddhism is not exclusive. In a book by Ugo Dessi (a former student of Pye sensei), there is a chapter on Japanese religion and globalization

where he talks about inclusivism and exclusivism.³ The exclusive and the inclusive options are both found in the fundamental Shin teaching, but in the inclusive approach the center of the inclusion is still Jōdo Shinshū. So that isn't really pluralism yet, but at least it's inclusive.

Wratten: Thank you.

Race: Yes. Ah well, I think I understand that. There are some Christian writers now who want to push that kind of approach a bit further. They say that in some sense, we can have patterns of thought where our distinctiveness remains but we can participate in one another's traditions and, in reality, some kind of higher form of unity. This becomes what is called the "pluralism" view. There are other Christians who have a Christian version of what you explained, which would correspond to the inclusive view. So, in other words, the encounters in modern times, because of travel, us coming here, you going where you go, and so on, make us stretch even some of our fundamental ways of thinking. This is because we get new information, new impressions, new experiences, and new encounters which require some change in some of the ways in which we think.

Inoue: So may I ask you the same question? In your tradition, what is your position on the salvation of others?

Race: Well, for me personally, I would be very happy to say that there is a sense in which the distinctiveness of the main traditions, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, has within it something precious that all of us might need. And, there is a sense in which the truth of reality cannot be encapsulated completely by any one of them, and maybe there is something truly unique within all of us that is required for the bigger picture. So certainly, I'm happy to say that you are saved, whatever that means. I mean, the word itself is capable of many dimensions.

Wratten: But that wouldn't be the view of all.

Race: It's a minority view now, but there are more people who are beginning to think like that.

Wratten: What do you think, Kim (Kimberly Ford)? It's interesting to hear different Christian points of view.

Ford: I think if I'm honest with my tradition, as I was growing up in America it would have been exclusive. That is, salvation would be for Christians only; because the teaching that I grew up with was that, according to the Bible, you have to believe in Jesus Christ and that is how we are saved. But

³ Ugo Dessi, *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*, Religiöse Gegenwart Asiens 5 (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007), pp. 190–208. See also Ugo Dessi, "Shin Buddhism and Globalization," in *Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessi (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

now, working as a missionary, I think I have come to have a much bigger view of the world. I have worked with Tibetan monks, and with different cultures and religions, and I can see how all of us have within us that same ability to work towards peace and compassion and wisdom. That is the faith within us all, so that I think I can no longer be the judge of another person or say that I am saved and you are not. I don't have the right to say that. This is a matter only for God, Buddha, or whoever it may be, who knows our heart. So, something in me has changed quite a bit as I have grown and learned about different cultures.

Inoue: Shinran said a similar thing about this, namely: I am not the judge of good or evil or of those kinds of moral or ethical matters. So, Shinran would not have said that you are saved or not, or anything like that.

Race: Yes. How can we know?

Generational Change

Ford: I have a different question now. In England, which is at least in name a Christian country, it's very much a part of our experience now that we are struggling to keep the Anglican tradition alive. It is not dying; in fact it is very much alive, but those who attend church are mainly of an older generation. We are finding it more difficult to bring in the younger generations in order to keep the tradition alive. Some fifty years ago it was very much a part of our culture, and it was very common to go to church, whereas now there are not so many attendees. Do you find that this is happening in your tradition and culture as well?

Inoue: Yes, of course. Modernization affected Japanese culture especially after World War II. Beginning with the Meiji period (1868–1912), when Japan opened to the world, our tradition of Japanese culture began to decline. We accepted everything western, we tried to be and to think in a western way, and much beautiful Japanese tradition disappeared in the course of the one hundred and fifty years of the modern period, especially after World War II. Up to the end of World War II, children's education was mostly based on Confucian values. They were taught in that way at school and therefore maintained traditional moral values up until the end of World War II. But after World War II, whatever had been current during the war, in particular the Japanese educational system, was blamed for everything that was bad during the war. Consequently, the new school and education system emphasized science and technology, and put less emphasis on moral values and religious education. In fact, it is currently forbidden to teach values as education in public schools, although some Japanese politicians are trying to change

that. I am not sure whether this is good or not. In our denomination, many typical Shin followers are elderly, especially in the countryside, but the younger generation in Kyoto today, as I can see in my college students, even those from temple families, is not familiar with the tradition of Shin Buddhist manners and values, which have somehow mostly become lost. So we need some kind of new system in educational matters. At least at our private schools, that is in the denominational schools, we need to teach them how to behave in front of elderly people or how to behave in ceremonial situations, and so on. Compared with Christian systems, I think Japanese Buddhism does not have a very effective Sunday School program. It is better in America maybe, where Buddhists have an arrangement called “Dharma School.” Japanese American children go to temples and receive basic instruction, but in Japan we do not have such a system.

Wratten: Kisa (Ito), you are from California, aren’t you, so do you see a difference between America and Japan in that regard?

Ito: Well, the way that the temples operate in the States is different. Again, the result of the war changed things a lot. With the Japanese American community at least—other Asian American communities are different because their immigration periods were a little different—we have reached a point where I am part of the fourth generation of Japanese Americans. So, we are kind of more “American,” I guess you would say. In that sense, I think after the war, there was this feeling of “Oh, we should assimilate. We should be as ‘American’ as possible because we don’t want to stand out any more.” It was the whole thing about, “Well, if they don’t think we’re Chinese, then they know we’re Japanese and that’s bad, so we need to be as American as possible.” On the other hand, there were also the more traditionally-minded people who felt like saying, “No, we should be proud of who we are. This is not right, what they’re doing to Japanese Americans. So don’t be afraid, be loyal.” There was a very strong, loyal community and people felt very strongly about keeping the temple community together. So I think that to this day, there are still people who are very loyal to the temple, but of course it is true that the younger generation—I would say most of my friends—are not that religious. When we grow up, we go to [Buddhist] church and we have Sunday service, but we don’t really know what the Dharma talk is about or anything. I’ve noticed that when people start becoming adults, they get more curious and have thoughts like, “What am I? What do I believe?” because people start asking you about it. I think this starts about the time when you get into college. But otherwise, I would say, as Inoue-sensei was saying, that when you are young, you do not really know what is going on.

Wratten: As a young person, do you find that temple life and life everywhere else—college, work, and school, etc.—sit side by side, or do those lives clash? I ask because with some of our younger people in Leicester, there certainly is a clash. We call it “the east and west” clash but it’s actually not that anymore. It’s more about having traditional values from their [Asian] parents and grandparents and trying to live by them at home, and then at college living another kind of life with all kinds of modern values.

Ito: Well, I think with a lot of the Jōdo Shinshū temples in the States, at least the Higashi Honganji ones, and probably Nishi Honganji ones too, they have more recently acted as community center-type places. So, there is a basketball team, there are girl scouts, there are boy scouts, there is a band, a choir, and so on. All of these are things that bring people together in a kind of community center way, and you just happen to be going to “church” at the same time. Most people do not refer to it as “temple” and just call it a “church,” so even though we are at a Buddhist temple we refer to “going to church on Sunday.” It means that a western idea is being brought in. But, I would not say that that is much of a clash. Rather, it is just a little strange being a Buddhist growing up in America when most of your friends are not Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists—unless you live in a community that is predominantly Japanese American. Since most of my friends were Christian, that was one thing that would make me want to stay away from: being too *obviously* Buddhist. But then, what would make a Buddhist obvious?

Interfaith Consciousness and Dialogue

Gregory: I’d like to turn to a different question. In Japan, is there any kind of interest, an active interest, in interfaith dialogue as such? I mean, in Japan, when you hear the word “interfaith” what does it mean to you?

Inoue: My understanding is that in the Christian community there is more interest in interfaith dialogue than there is in the Buddhist community. I attended a conference in Kyoto that was organized by Kohara Katsuhiro 小原克博 (a professor of Doshisha University with strong links to the Protestant Church in Japan), who is very active in interfaith dialogue. In that conference, I felt that Buddhists in Japan were not so much interested in interfaith dialogue today, when compared with our Christian friends. I wonder why? I cannot explain the reason. Japanese Christians are more active than Buddhists.

Gregory: Just to pursue the question: so maybe there is pressure from the Christian communities to open your doors for international dialogue, interfaith dialogue, and so on? In that case, from your point of view, you would

see the Christian faith as your partner. However, if you are going to look at any other religion, other than the Christian faith, what would your natural interest be? I ask because in Britain, as I said and as Sonya said too, interfaith activities quite normally arise between Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. That comes naturally to people in the British context. I am just wondering what would be the equivalent situation in Japan, if there is one?

Inoue: Other than Christian? There aren't so many Muslims in Japan. Maybe the "new religion" type comes into question, or the "new new religions." There are many new religions that are very active. So personally, if I were to do interfaith dialogue, then representatives of those new religions would be participants or dialogue partners. And maybe Shinto too. Shinto has many organizational forms, and it is difficult to pin-point which tradition or which shrine is representative of Japanese Shinto as a whole. But Shinto priests or Shinto groups could be our partners. Actually, in Japan, the most active group in interfaith dialogue, or in globalization, is formed by the new religions and Shinto, much more so than traditional Buddhist denominations. This is because they see globalization as a good opportunity to go out and engage in dialogue with other traditions, while traditional Japanese Buddhist denominations are not so interested in the global scene or globalization. One of the reasons—this is just my guess—is that Jōdo Shinshū, for example, has so many members in Japan and our most urgent problem is preventing the loss of traditional members because of the process of modernization. Therefore, the question of how we might spread the message to younger generation Jōdo Shinshū families is more critical than meeting new friends right now. That is my personal impression. As an organization, the Higashi Honganji is more active in, how do you call it, proselytization, among younger generation Tokyo residents, because they do not have any serious, personal orientation.

Spiritual Searching Among Young People

Race: Do you find that there is receptivity for the spreading of any spiritual message? We have a similar challenge not only in England but in the whole of the western world. How can we meet it? We need to work out how religion can be meaningful in the world today, given all the scientific knowledge about how the world works, and given cultural differences and various perspectives on identity, about who we are, our history, and so on. That all adds up to a major shift. So, how can we be convincing towards others about central things that may be precious to us? Is there really a search? Is there a

thirst for things? Sometimes it is said in the western world there is a thirst for spiritual understanding. I do not know whether that is totally true, but there is some truth in it. Would you say that it is true of Japanese society?

Inoue: Yes, I think it is.

Race: You think so? Then there should be an openness, a receptivity, for your message.

Inoue: Let us look back a little way to the 1990s. At that time very many young, educated Japanese people were attracted to Aum Shinrikyō オウム真理教—do you know that religion? They were very intelligent and they were searching for something, for some meaning. They were very well educated and good at reading and understanding. And, although the person they followed was wrong, they needed something and were searching. Even today, I think the younger generation does look for something spiritual, some guidance or teaching.

Race: But where do they find it (laughter)?

Inoue: In *manga*, maybe. (laughter).

Wratten: Nowadays young people elsewhere know a bit about Japan. I know that Jude Atkinson's two sons told us so much about Japan seen through the eyes of *manga*. It is amazing.

Inoue: Yes. Take “Evangelion.” This animation, or *manga*, has been very popular for some time. It has a very spiritual side. But people don't like the traditional forms of religion such as reading, chanting, or saying the *nenbutsu* 念仏.

Chanting, Ritual, Liturgy

Pye: Why do you do chanting actually? I mean, in Shin Buddhism.

Inoue: (gesturing and laughter) Shinran said the only thing we need to do is say “Namu Amida Butsu,” nothing else (laughter). We don't need to chant. We do no practice, actually. That means, no religious practice based on our own power, or our own will. So, when you feel like saying “Namu Amida Butsu,” just say “Namu Amida Butsu,” and that's fine. But that is not enough for those members of the younger generation who search for something. They are looking for something more complicated, more exotic. So, the difficulty is in communicating the deeper meaning of Shinran's thought in a language that the younger generation can understand. That is very difficult.

Pye: But surely that cannot be done just by chanting, can it? Chanting the *Shōshinge* 正信偈, for example, does not make it easier for young people to understand it, does it?

Inoue: Yes, it is still in *kanbun* 漢文 [i.e., classical Chinese], not modern Japanese, so it is difficult if we just hear it or read it. It has to be translated into

modern Japanese. Some priests argue that we should translate all the chanted texts into modern Japanese but conservative groups say it is important that the style is maintained similar to what it was, because in a sense, it is a ritual. When I teach a class of eighteen year old college students to read the *Shōshinge*, they say that after one term they have understood the meaning for the first time in their lives. All those years they had just been chanting it without knowing the meaning behind the content.

Pye: But, if they had not been chanting it, you would not be able to explain it (laughter). I mean because they had been chanting it even without understanding it, they did become familiar with the text. So when you explain it, they do know what it is that you are explaining.

Inoue: Yes, that is true.

Race: So that is an argument for retaining chanting.

Wratten: And the same could be said for our communities in Britain. In the same way, in Islamic communities, when the children go to the *madrasas* every day and learn the Qur'an there is one argument which runs, "Well, they are not learning the context or the meaning of the Qur'anic verses, but hopefully that does come later, sometimes" (laughter). But you know, you do need to get further down that road, and then, since they know it, they will be able to link the meaning to it. So yes, I know what you mean.

Pye: Maybe I can mention a possible parallel from our situation in Kyoto. When we went to the Rokkakudō, we saw a group of pilgrims and although we did not actually hear them chanting, because they had just finished, I do know that they were chanting the *Heart Sutra* (*Hannyashingyō* 般若心經). Of course they chant this at each of the thirty-three temples they visit for the Kannon pilgrimage (Kannon Reijō 観音霊場). So they chant it quite a lot altogether. The *Heart Sutra* is quite difficult to understand if you just give it to a young person as a text, and in fact they would not understand it. But this is another example of people using it again and again, so that maybe one day they will somehow make it their own and understand it. On the other hand, by doing that throughout a pilgrimage, it is an act of self-development or "self-power," *jiriki* 自力. So when you are chanting the *Shōshinge*—this is just a question—could this be something which you are developing as an act of *jiriki*, or self-power, or can you chant with a consciousness of "other power"?

Inoue: I think that with the *nenbutsu*, that is, just chanting "Namu Amida Butsu," it could be *tariki* 他力 (other-power)—and should be *tariki*. But otherwise, chanting without some effort or intention of the practitioner, that is difficult because even with the *Heart Sutra* you either have to memorize it

or you have to read it and so they [the pilgrims] do expect the chanting to have an effect. If they chant it many times it's like a mantra, and so more and more merit is expected.

Pye: But when you chant the *Shōshinge*, you don't expect to achieve anything?

Inoue: No, you feel and learn something but there is no merit-making or anything like that.

Pye: Good. I just wanted to have that clarified. Thank you very much.

Inoue: So, what kind of rituals are used in your tradition? Do you chant often? Are the rituals used by Catholics or Anglicans very conservative? Or are they more modern, or progressive?

Race: Again, it depends who you ask, of course. In the Church of England, and generally in Anglican or Episcopal churches, as well as in the Catholic Church, there is a kind of ritual rehearsal, weekly or daily in some places, which is in some ways repetitive. Prayers, readings, praises, intercession, prayers of petition and so on, blessings, and of course, the receiving of communion, that is the consecrated bread and wine, which is food for living a religious life. That is all regular and is encouraged in those churches. Although it is not quite "chanting," there is also the singing of hymns and the regular saying of prayers. So there is a shape to the liturgy, we would say, which takes you through different moods from the beginning to the end of the devotion, and that makes possible the giving of oneself and the opening of oneself to receive the grace of God, as we would say, or to receive the blessing of God. Mostly that is done in a language you can understand.

(Inoue: Not in Latin?) No, not in the Anglican Church. No, nor in the Catholic Church now. In England it is in English. It is in the language of whatever country you are in. Having said that, there is a move now in the Catholic Church to bring back more Latin chanting, and to have just the priests doing the Latin chanting while the people listen to it. But that is controversial. You might say that it is a reassertion of conservative ways of thinking. It is not just conservative with regard to older chanting methods and chanting patterns, but it goes along with a more general reversion to some older ways, and as I would say, less critical ways of thinking about religion.

Atkinson: There is also a lot of other ritual activity, isn't there, behavior which is increasingly hard for people to understand. Some of it, I guess, is obvious. Ritual washing, for example, is common to many faith activities, isn't it? However, with washing, or bowing, or kneeling at particular points, if you are not familiar with it, you can very easily get it wrong. I have a feeling that it is difficult for people to access. There is a lot of activity that has

to be learned. I recall being taught, when I was a child, how many buttons the priest has on his cassock, but now I can't even remember how many or even what the general meaning of it is. The people who would understand that now must be a small minority, and one which is just ebbing away. Things like that would require a lot of explanation these days!

Wratten: Well, we find it gets taken to extremes. We are living in a time of extremism in various respects really, and I am not just thinking of the extremism of terrorism here. I have a friend who was not brought up as a Catholic but who has moved into the Catholic tradition. So ritual, including daily ritual, became a very important part of his faith. It might be said that he makes that more important than other things like moral issues, or the way he lives his life, or the way he interacts with others. He gives ritual the priority, and that is something others might disagree with. So you see that we have some extreme expressions of Christian faith which are played out in a ritualistic manner.

Pye: You could call that ritual fundamentalism, I suppose. Would you be happy with that expression? Just as there may be scriptural fundamentalism, there can also be ritual fundamentalism.

Wratten: I think that is tricky because like "extremism" the word "fundamentalism" has come into very wide use in the last ten to fifteen years, post-9/11, I suppose, and that corresponds to a huge shift of perception in the west. So both fundamentalism and extremism, as these terms are now widely used, are actually major problems in the world.

Inoue: Does that cause tension between Christians and Muslims in England?

Race: I think you will find fundamentalisms which cause tensions in other traditions too. The problem is that fundamentalism involves a kind of exclusivism. The implication is that only one particular way is correct. Anything else that comes along is perceived as a threat to that religion, and to that way of life, and therefore is perceived as something that needs to be countered, resisted, or even overcome. This is not a massive problem in England. I think it is bigger in other parts of the world. However, in global terms it is there, of course.

Faith and Social Responsibility

Pye: This seems to be a good point at which to turn to questions about the social meaning or implications of religious faith. Maybe we should go into that now? We have brought Islam into our discussion quite a few times and Islam is a very social religion, a very social faith. Christianity in many cases has also had a strong social outreach even if it does not always seem

to be important to all Christians. And in Buddhism, there has recently been talk about what is called “engaged Buddhism.” Even before this expression became widespread, there has been quite a strong effort in the Shin Buddhist tradition to address important social problems, especially since World War II. It is really quite significant. So I think there are some parallels here, and I just wonder how we can best start off to talk about them, I wonder if the same kinds of questions are being addressed, or whether they are rather different questions. So to begin with, Inoue-sensei, what would you say were the most important social questions that the Shin Buddhist tradition has addressed in recent years or decades? What are the main areas?

Inoue: The main areas? Well, with this in mind I prepared a photocopy of the contents of a book on the subject by Ugo Dessi (see footnote 3 above). His introduction has a good summary of such matters. One of the important issues is social discrimination. Starting in 1962, our denomination (Jōdo Shinshū) launched a movement known as the Dōbōkai Undō. His translation of the name is “Fellow Companions’ Movement.” (p. 167). The first social issue they tackled was that of discrimination against a traditionally excluded population group known as *buraku* 部落 in Japanese, but more correctly as *hisabetsu buraku* 被差別部落. Many people of this socially discriminated group have traditionally been members of this denomination and the problem is that inside the religious organization, as Ugo Dessi has written, they are not in fact equal. Even among the followers of Shinran, they have been discriminated against. The issue was therefore taken up and it has been one of the most serious social problems that has recently been talked about in Jōdo Shinshū circles. The other important topic has been the wartime cooperation of our denomination with the military government of Japan, which has continued to be debated in connection with the Yasukuni Shrine problem. In 1995, we published an official statement of self-examination and an apology for this involvement. (*Pye: Self-examination?*) Yes, self-examination. The public apology, relating to various matters including that of the so-called “comfort women” was directed especially towards the people of Asian countries, in particular Korea and China.

Pye: So that was a very important event, a major declaration which was made in 1995?

Inoue: Yes, in 1995.

Race: So the denomination has been pulling away from alignment with the government. Is that the way to see it?

Inoue: Yes, although in the 1990s, I think this denomination was in fact more progressive than it is today, and the chief administrator and his advisors

were more liberal than today. The national parliament was also more active in discussing those issues.

Another major issue of recent years has been that of Hansen's disease or the leprosy problem.

Pye: Are you all familiar with the term Hansen's disease?

Everyone: No.

Pye: Well, it used to be called leprosy. But now people refer to it as Hansen's disease, in Japanese *hansenbyō* ハンセン病.

Inoue: Yes. The traditional medical policy was to isolate these patients on an island or in remote places, and Jōdo Shinshū cooperated with that government policy. The cooperation involved sending priests to those isolated institutions, known as *ryōyōin* 療養院. The priests preached that isolating them like that was all right because they were being looked after. So, the problem was that this provided support for the policy of isolation, which we now see to have been wrong. We issued an official statement about that, too, saying that we were wrong to support that policy. Is there such a big problem like that in England?

Race: No, we do not have that particular problem.

Pye: The Christian church world-wide is quite active in the care of leprosy patients.

Race: Indeed, historically.

Inoue: Mm. Historically?

Race: Yes, and in parts of the world where the disease is still current the churches are still active.

Pye: So the question is about the rightness or wrongness of their separation from ordinary life. There used to be a Christian leprosarium in Kiyose 清瀬 in the Kantō 関東 region which, since it was a special institution, also involved a separation from society in general. At the same time, the patients, apart from being cared for, were also regularly visited by Christians. However, I am not familiar with the present situation in the wider world. Does anyone know more about it?

Atkinson: It is not an issue in England at all.

Race: I believe there is a general move away from any kind of isolation.

Inoue: That is probably because Hansen's disease is not as contagious as people used to think.

Race: Yes. And also people understand better what it is and how it is passed on. There are very many myths about that kind of thing. I suppose the nearest example of this today would be with AIDS and HIV. Twenty years ago, quite a long time ago now, I think there was probably more interest and concern generated as to how to respond to the appearance of HIV/AIDS. Now

there is much less discussion about it, mainly because of the development of better drugs and treatment. However, the problems are still not completely resolved in terms of the acceptance of people affected, and how sufferers can be included within normal society. It is perhaps not talked about enough.

Wratten: There are still persons who are HIV-positive and for that reason isolated.

Atkinson: Yes, there are a significant number of people with HIV who are still isolated from society in general. It is a question of the stigma which is attached to it.

Race: There has been chaplaincy activity in that area, so the Church had, and has, a certain role.

Atkinson: But it is not an obligation.

Race: No. It is simply a matter of pastoral care.

Wratten: Other churches are also involved. A few years ago when I was a mentor I worked with a group of women of whom some were HIV positive. They were first or second generation African women in Britain. They indicated that there was isolation within their own community. That is some time ago, in 2005, so things have probably changed. However, the point is that it was something they wanted to hide and not talk about. Most were members of Pentecostal churches rather than the Church of England. I believe there is a need for churches to try and help affected people to be more open, so that others can be more supportive of them.

Pye: I wonder if there are any major social problems in Britain which the Church of England or other major churches have been attending to recently. Jude Atkinson, perhaps you can answer this as a social worker.

Atkinson: But I work in a secular place.

Pye: Yes I know; and indeed the state is doing many things, yet somehow the churches are also still thinking about what they are doing in the social field. I am just wondering if there are any problems that have come to the fore in Britain which are not being considered in Japan at the moment, but might be relevant in future.

Atkinson: Problems not mentioned yet would be drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. There is a huge proliferation of domestic violence. In fact it is enormous in the UK.

Pye: Thank you. I know there are secular agencies to address these problems, but are they also addressed by church agencies?

Atkinson: I have to say that the secular world often has a suspicion of church activity that attempts to deal with such problems. This is because local government officials fear that when a church becomes involved with a person who has a particular problem, it might be for the sake of making a gateway

to evangelize. So, there is a certain amount of suspicion of the motives when churches are involved in helping people.

Pye: Oh, I see.

Atkinson: Does that make sense?

Pye: Yes, of course it makes sense. I think it is problematic, but it makes sense. The Church of England, if I am right, has a Board of Social Responsibility. Is that right?

Atkinson: Well, I think that on the ground it is not very influential.

Pye: But what does the Board of Social Responsibility talk about?

Race: Well there is another aspect to this. In the last ten years the work of that board has been in decline. Most dioceses or regions have their own local groups to pick up issues, whether big or small. But, even though they try to talk about them there is not very much practical work coming out of it. In fact, the very idea of looking outwards has been in decline.

Atkinson: Do you have the same kind of problems here in Japan? I mean, social problems such as alcoholism and domestic violence.

Inoue: Domestic violence has become a big problem recently in Japan. Possibly it is not such a big problem as in the United States or in England, but we do not really know. It is only recently that they started to report those incidents. Traditionally they were not reported.

Atkinson: So they don't talk about it.

Inoue: No, they don't talk about it very much.

Wratten: Another feature in England, and I do not know if this is also true for Japan, is that we had many philanthropists in the nineteenth century who gave money to areas of social concern. As a result many charities were set up, many of which are still at work today. They might not be explicitly seen as Christian charities now, but they mostly come originally from a sense of Christian mission. So, we have a very good charitable network, but the churches usually interact with them on a local basis. So, for example, there is a movement called "The Children's Society," which is a national organization working with children and young people. But, about once a year our local church will do a fundraising event for them. So, that is where the connection really occurs. You can see from this that there is quite a big space now between the local charities on the ground and the bigger, national organizations. In some ways it is as if the Christian ministry has given up that sort of social engagement. In any case, it is not going to come about if one is not on the ground. Would you say that?

Race: Yes. I think there has been some work in the last ten or fifteen years around poverty issues. For example, I am just thinking of something called the "Church Urban Fund." It is a small fund to which you can apply for

small grants, for example for a church to run a group for parents and small children. A weekly friendship and solidarity group would be another example of that.

Atkinson: Churches run food banks as well.

Race: Yes. My church takes part in food banks.

Pye: Here I would like to ask Inoue-sensei if “food-bank” is a concept in Japan. Do you have food-banks in Japan?

Inoue: Hmm. After the tsunami, the big earthquake, we sent many canned foods and so on to the affected areas.

Race: The most recent national reports in Britain have been about money and banking, about various myths about people on benefit systems, supposedly cheating the benefits system or that kind of thing. And, there have been myths about people receiving help with housing. So, the churches have tried to put together a report about dishonesty in public life. We have to be clear about the lies that government and political parties might tell in relation to dependency culture. Lies can be used as a way of withdrawing state funding or state help, when less money is made available for such purposes. I think we are struggling to think about how a critique of the whole financial system could be made.

Pye: Does Shin Buddhism, or in particular do the Higashi Honganji or Nishi Honganji as institutions have very close connections with Japanese big industry?

Inoue: No, I think they do not.

Pye: You do not think so? I ask because there has sometimes been talk in England about the investments of the Church of England, that is, how to invest ethically and how to deal responsibly with investments made in the past.

Race: However, in fact no one talks about such things very much nowadays.

Inoue: I know that there was a problem in Shin Buddhism. It was about losing money by investing in some bad stock.

Pye: Well losing money is always a problem (laughter). But there is also a question about how to invest money responsibly. You did not hear anything about that?

Inoue: No. I have never heard about that. There are some kinds of stock which I think would be better than those of the armaments industry and so on.

Race: Maybe it would be good to bring a critical voice to bear on the banking system (laughter). But who is going to do that in Japan (laughter)? Who is going to do it in England? Or in America?

Pye: Is the banking system bad in Japan?

Race: Well, it is part of a global banking system (laughter) and that is in bad shape, isn't it?

Inoue: Very bad.

Race: Yes. Complex as it is, it would be very good if we could talk about how to shift or re-orientate a banking system towards a sense of values which we might share—wisdom and compassion for example (laughter). I mean, really basic values.

Inoue: I think England depends on the banking industry more than Japan.

Race: Should I change my money into yen, then (laughter)?

Wratten: There must be members in the eastern Buddhist tradition, though, who are what we would call congregation members, who work in the banking system and take their faith values to their work and their work experience to their faith. Sometimes we see a separation of these things. Certainly in England we often see a separation in that people will think one thing at work, and then do something different in the temple or the church.

Pye: What would you say in general, from the point of view of Shin Buddhist faith, about people who are believers and who work in the real, outside big world, not in institutions like the Honganji or Otani University. Does their faith somehow influence their attitudes to work, social relations, and social action? Do you think it has some effect?

Inoue: There is some effect, I think. Traditionally well known among Shin followers are the *Ōmi shōnin* 近江商人, the merchants from the Ōmi region (in Shiga Prefecture), which is adjacent to Kyoto and also not far from Osaka. Many merchants are followers of Jōdo Shinshū and they are known for their ethics, especially business ethics. They do not demand too much profit from selling something. They treat customers well and among merchants and dealers they are very well trusted.

Race: So there are some effects.

Pye: It sounds like a good and fair business ethic, like that which the Jains, the Quakers and some other religious communities are known to have had.

Inoue: Yes, but I do not know how important that is today. I was thinking of the Edo period (1603–1867).

Gregory: I know your colleague is from the International Department of the Honganji. So in the Honganji do you have any kind of department which deals with social issues and concerns, whose members would set up strategies to deal with social issues? You have mentioned some very significant things you do in terms of wider social engagement, but I am wondering if there is anything more immediate in the local area or community, such as

poverty and homelessness. Is there some kind of strategy to discuss such concerns, perhaps bringing together believers and hierarchy? Has there been any tradition of that? Would you consider setting up something like that if it is not there already?

Inoue: Traditionally there have been those who have considered the problems of poverty as part of their official activity.

Gregory: But is there any kind of office in the Honganji whose job it is to pay attention to problems like social poverty, and to suggest to believers how they can be active in helping people who are affected?

Inoue: Ah. There is no specialized office like that at the moment. However, there have been voices raised about it from within the Higashi Honganji itself here. But we must remember there are about nine thousand affiliated temples of the Ōtani-ha in the whole of Japan. Various believers have raised such matters, and it is for that reason that a department or some structured arrangement is in process of being set up to deal with it. In fact, it is being built just outside here. There will then be a location in an actual physical building and there will probably be staff devoted to building up that mission. Traditionally, there has been a system of sixty-five representatives who are priests and another sixty-five representatives of the believers, and these all meet about once a year to raise various issues. Then there is a budget which can be allocated, and so therefore there is a structure to bring together priests and congregational members for such discussion.

War and Peace

Pye: The time is passing quickly. I would like to come back to the other main area Inoue-sensei mentioned, mainly the reflections and the declaration about the (Shinto) Yasukuni Shrine and the question of war responsibility. I think it is important that people outside Japan know that the voices in Japan are not only those of the government, which are sometimes very ambiguous. As a matter of fact, however, in this particular matter, the voice of the government has been very clear. To bring it to the point, very topically, the current Prime Minister of Japan, Abe Shinzō, has just stated in the last few days that we do not yet have “an agreed academic definition of aggression.”

Race: Did he say an “academic definition”?

Pye: Yes, that is what he said.

Race: Do we not know what it is in experience (laughter)?

Pye: Probably, yes. However, the point is that such a statement, about an “academic” definition, was being used in order to imply that we do not need to admit that Japan committed acts of aggression. This has probably not

been reported in the international press, but it is being used within Japan to introduce confusion into the discourse about Japanese war responsibility. This is happening even though the matter has been clarified very well among some people, particularly among Jōdo Shinshū and Sōtō Zen Buddhist followers. I think that outside Japan we need to be aware of this divergence of orientation. On the other hand, there is a question to be addressed to British Christians as to what sense of responsibility there is, if any, concerning wrongful British acts of a military kind in the past. I would like to give you the opportunity, if you wish, to say a word or two about it for the benefit of our colleagues on the Shin Buddhist side.

Wratten: We went to Hiroshima yesterday. One of the reflections that we had there was that the history that we were taught about Hiroshima has been wrong, even in our generation. My grandparents were involved in World War II, my grandfather was in the Navy. I suppose that World War II has been very much a part of the history and the stories of our families and our communities. I myself am thirty-six years old, and so I am still very much in touch with living memory, but the generation that was actually involved in the war is of course gradually dying out. The history that we learned as children painted a very different picture. Now, after visiting Hiroshima, I have an increased awareness of the accountability, and the responsibility, of being involved in an atrocity like that, which was not really so long ago—certainly not long ago in terms of the history of human kind.

Pye: Yes. It is still within living memory.

Wratten: It is very much in living memory. I visited an elderly person in Britain before I came to Japan and when I said that Hiroshima was one of the places we were going to visit, she said to me, “Well I still find it very difficult, as somebody who lived through World War II, to understand that it was wrong for that to happen.” She finds it very difficult to understand that we were wrong to do it, speaking for that generation. We had already spoken about setting up a one day program in August, near Hiroshima day, to really try to explain the real history of that to some people of that generation. That is a huge task, and yet it needs to be done. I feel that it is a part of our responsibility as Christians, in this day and age, to revisit that question. I think it is still worth doing, even though that generation is quite elderly and will not be with us for much longer. It really is important to revisit that, isn’t it?

Atkinson: Yes, and to learn from it.

Race: I suppose most governments, and the British government is the same as others, are not given to making great acts of apology for atrocities of the past, even though they might now see that they have been committed. I seem

to recall that Tony Blair did something that came close to that recently, but it was not really a full apology.

Atkinson: I think there has sometimes been a call for more, hasn't there, by the public. For example in Australia, there are citizens who are actually requesting their government to make public apologies.

Race: Yes, absolutely. I think so. But it seems to me that governments on the whole are very reluctant to do it.

Atkinson and Wratten: Yes, they are just not doing it.

Race: The nearest you get to it from the churches in England would be critical voices against the recent invasion in Iraq, and in Afghanistan too. Less so, but not unknown are critical voices about the use of drones in Afghanistan and more so in Pakistan. The more that gets reported, then the more the government might come under pressure to speak about it. But there is no huge surge of concern or dynamic energy to bring critical voices to bear. On the other hand, on the whole the churches have made it clear that they were not in favor of invading Iraq.

Pye: Yes. They have made that clear.

Race: But there has not been any governmental apology for it yet, and it is not in view.

Pye: Is there any awareness among the church participants here, or more widely, of the Yasukuni Shrine problem?

Race: No.

Pye: I see. Inoue-sensei, would you be so kind as to sum up for everybody, just briefly, what that problem is about?

Inoue: All right. Yasukuni Shrine was first established in the modern period after the Meiji Restoration. There had been a civil war, not as big as the American Civil War, but nevertheless it was a major military clash between the southern domains of Satsuma 薩摩 and Chōshū 長州 and the Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo. This eventually led to the downfall of the Shogunate, after which a new government was set up in 1868, based on loyalty to the Emperor Meiji. The new Meiji government established a shrine known as the Shōkonsha 招魂社 in Kyoto where the war dead were enshrined, but this included only those on the winning side. The rule was that those who died in battle in support of the emperor were enshrined as *kami* 神, which means a deity or divine spirit. This practice became routine for military events of any kind, and thereafter whoever died in battle, in any war pursued by the government and hence in the service of the emperor, has been enshrined as what is known as “a heroic spirit” (*eirei* 英霊). The shrine was soon relocated to Tokyo, which had become the new residence of the Emperor,

and was renamed Yasukuni Shrine. Accordingly, during World War II, the kamikaze pilots for example, as well as all others who died fighting for Japan, were enshrined there as heroic spirits. Even Christians and Jōdo Shinshū followers, whoever they were or whatever religion the fallen military personnel had been, were enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine as *kami*. This has become a big problem in recent years because of visits by Japanese prime ministers such as Nakasone Yasuhiro or Koizumi Junichirō. It was stated that the visits were private, and Koizumi insisted that his offering was drawn from his own pocket. However, the fact is that the prime minister visited the shrine where those who fought during the annexation of Korea and the invasion of China are enshrined, so the Chinese and Korean governments, and their peoples, are very angry about that. The problem is still going on and the current prime minister, Abe Shinzō is also intending to visit the shrine in the near future.

Pye: Thank you. So, we should watch this space in August. The anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing will be coming up, and you will also be here at a time when many people visit Yasukuni Shrine. Look out to see whether the prime minister will be going there this time.

Inoue: Indeed. The Chinese and Korean governments, and the people, are watching to see how the Japanese prime minister and other cabinet members behave during that period, especially on August 15th. So, this thing is still going on. As to objections, Jōdo Shinshū is the most active denomination against government involvement in Yasukuni Shrine.

Pye: I understand that there has been a longstanding attempt to nationalize the shrine, on the basis that rites at such Shinto shrines do not amount to being “religion” but are rather to be seen as “customs,” and that consequently Yasukuni Shrine should be regarded as a normal national memorial. That is why the question of defining “custom” versus “religion” is very tricky. If the shrine were nationalized it would then become more or less compulsory to teach about it in schools, and politicians would be able to visit it as part of their national duty. So, there is a lot of resistance to the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine by objectors. We have to remember that persons enshrined therein include all of the persons who fell on the Japanese side, but none of the fallen of other countries or persons who suffered in other ways. None of the Koreans who died in Hiroshima, for example, are enshrined there, even though they were being held in Hiroshima for forced labor. The shrine also includes some persons who were convicted as Class-A war criminals and executed. General Tōjō is one. Of course, one might say that that was victors’ justice, or ask in more detail who is or is not a war criminal. Anyway, the war criminals are enshrined there because when

they were executed it was considered that they had died in the course of their military service. So this is very, very difficult. Most of the Christian churches in Japan are very much against it, by the way. So it is something about which there is a shared perspective with Jōdo Shinshū in Japan. I think it is good if Christian churches outside Japan know about this, particularly in a country like Britain. There, people will no doubt say that they fought “on the right side,” but there is also some responsibility for things which should never have been done. We need this sense of reflection and care about what we are actually doing. People sometimes say, “Well it’s just like ANZAC day,” or refer to some other commemoration, but the matter of Yasukuni Shrine is just one degree more difficult than some of the parallels of which you might think. It’s a very difficult problem, a difficult area.

Inoue: Yes. So we have shared our concern about this, I think.

Pye: Yes. Thank you. Our time is nearly over and we have just a few minutes left. So would anybody like to raise any last questions or return to anything we discussed before?

Inoue: I would like to add a word about the anti-war demonstration which is supported by members of the Jōdo Shinshū (in both of the main denominations). Although it is not official denominational policy there are many activists participating in the peace and anti-war movement. Every year in summer time we hold demonstrations wearing our black robes and walk down Kawaramachi Street [a big commercial street in Kyoto] showing the Namu Amida Butsu flag. Based on our faith we protest against all the military tendencies, government policies over the Self Defense Force, the Iraq war, the atomic bombs, and nuclear testing too. Are there any such demonstrations elsewhere? This is not an official denominational thing. It is a matter for members to decide, and many members of Jōdo Shinshū participate. So, there are many activists.

Pye: Is there a particular day for it?

Inoue: It’s usually in the middle part of July.

Race: So it is about a month before August 15 [the anniversary of the end of World War II]. There is probably not anything quite like that in Britain at the moment.

Atkinson: I think Protestant Christians will be organized independently by political groups, workers’ groups, anti-fascist groups, and so on, and it is in this way that the churches somehow filter into those activities. Is that not right?

Race: Yes and no. In the 1980s there were a number of specifically religious anti-nuclear groups. That was a particular time of armaments escalation involving nuclear cruise missiles and so on. It was during the Cold War, notably between Russia and America.

Atkinson: I suppose my perception is that the church is not really active in itself. So that is perhaps an issue.

Race: Well, it is less active now than it has been, at least in those visible ways. It is not clear why this is. It may be a loss of social conscience, or it may just be on account of a general kind of conservatism.

Wratten: Just the other day we invited senior figures to speak from a group campaigning against nuclear weapons. This group is called CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) in England, and one of its leading figures is Bruce Kent.

Inoue: How about nuclear power plants?

Race: Well, no. There is no campaign against nuclear power plants, as far as I know. There are not really many campaigns against anything at the moment except the economic situation and the misuse of a system which is not working well for the people in general.

Inoue: Our denomination made a statement against nuclear power, against restarting nuclear power plants.

Race: I see. We would like to get copies of that if they are available somewhere.

Inoue: But, maybe it is not in English.

Pye: I am very sorry to say that it is now 17:00, which brings us to the end of our planned schedule. That is unfortunate because we are just getting into our conversation very well I think. Yoshimi Gregory, do you want to add something?

Gregory: I just wanted to say that I do not recall the Church of England as a whole ever having a campaign against a particular war. Did we make an official protest against the Iraq War?

Wratten: Well, many of us were involved in a demonstration.

Gregory: But not as a national organization, I believe.

Pye: No, not as a national Church. The leading bishops or archbishops often have to take a very careful line, I suppose. On the other hand, they also often try to educate the population into ways of peace rather than into ways of war. Would it be fair to say that?

Race: With a bit of luck (laughter).

Gregory: But, I do recall that at the last Lambeth Conference, attended by very many Anglican bishops from all over the world, there was actually a joint march against war, and at that time it was aimed mainly at the Iraq war.

Wratten: I also recall that Muslims and Christians from our local community went down to London and marched together. Although I was not there at the time, it was an amazing thing because it connected active protest with

interfaith cooperation, which is how I think it should be. Local Muslim communities could obviously be against the Iraq War, so that is something which brings us together.

Pye: Well it seems we will all have to stimulate our various religious institutions in this regard. We could encourage them to keep alert and active, and it would no doubt be good to share some of our experiences again in the future. If we keep informed, we may be able to help each other somehow. As we come to a close I would like to thank Professor Inoue particularly for being in the hot seat (*Inoue*: I enjoyed this) on one side and also Rev. Alan Race on the other side, and indeed all of our participants. We recorded the conversation in order to document it later, but in the meantime thank you all very much for your participation today.

Race: I would like to have some photographic evidence too (laughter), so can we please gather together for that?

The dialogue ended at this point.

