

BOOK REVIEWS

from the latter text to be found. The English translation of the seven jewels should have colons instead of semicolons after the Chinese characters (p. 123). On page 136, note 22, there should be a colon after "Petavatthu (PTS. p. 8)." On page 138, note 24, the eighth precept needs the phrase "in the" inserted between "eating" and "afternoon." On page 139, the Pali form of the three insights should be *tevijjā* (feminine).

However, these are small oversights when compared with the generally excellent level of work that went into this volume. It will undoubtedly advance Pure Land Buddhist studies internationally, and is sure to become the standard translation of the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching*.

MARK L. BLUM

ECHOES FROM THE BOTTOMLESS WELL. By Frederick Franck. New York: Vintage House, 1985, pp. 145.

There are two kinds of book of which reviews seem superfluous: obviously inferior ones, and those of such distinction that one feels almost impertinent to recommend them. I feel that Frederick Franck's latest *Echoes from the Bottomless Well* belongs in the latter category. How amazing that it got published at all, this highly unconventional work that was drawn and written without any preconceived idea, least of all with publication in mind! It was simply born. It just occurred. Therefore even such epithets as "good" or even "excellent" hardly fit it. It is, however, such an exceptional phenomenon that a brief discussion of it is more than justified.

What is so extraordinary about it? That these 144 brush drawings, each one combined with a pithy text, are doubtlessly the spontaneous manifestation of a radical breakthrough in its creator's inner process. The texts are mostly Zen sayings of Hui-neng, Dōgen, Ryōkan and other masters, brief Gospel words, quotations from Eckhart, Angelus Silesius and, one suspects, of Franck himself. One can't help feeling that the artist-writer, in the 48 hours in which this uninterrupted stream of image and word precipitated itself onto the paper, was in the grip of, was perhaps the instrument of what one might call "the Great Creativity," for the well from which these image-word twins loomed up is bottomless, inexhaustible indeed.

When at the end of this 48 hour-long ordeal of implosion he found that his paper supply had run out, his task fulfilled, and he was quite understandably utterly depleted. I am reminded of Rinzai who, after having pointed at "the True Man without rank in this mass of red flesh" shouted his "Speak!

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Speak!" at the monk who wanted further explanation.

For *Echoes* is nothing if not a direct witnessing to, a point at, naked reality/truth, as if seen, heard, pierced through the author's own "mass of red flesh." In some of the images he draws himself indeed naked. It is this nudity of reality/truth that faces one from each of these pages.

As drawings too, these brush drawings with their sometimes almost brutal impact, are a radical departure from Franck's usual drawing style, of his highly sensitive, featherlight tracings with pencil or pen. The images in *Echoes* can be shocking in their terse directness, but just as often they are full of gentle wit, irony and tenderness. Whatever their mood, they always speak out directly, persuasively.

In his brief introduction Franck speaks of an old dream of his, never realized, to gather in one slim volume those "crucial sayings, texts and aphorisms that could be a companion, a kind of breviary to take along to the uninhabited island or the prison cell." Here this "companion" obviously and simply came all by itself! His extraordinary experience was bound to stamp Franck's further creative work, and some reproductions of recently exhibited paintings are there to prove it. They show a meditative transparency of sense perception, as if the ten thousand things were somehow seen "from the other shore." One can't help thinking of Mozart or Gustav Mahler's last symphony.

It will be fascinating to watch whether this so highly personal vision, this intense and precise expression resulting from "a turnabout at the base," will find a response in the general public. Could this uncommon liveliness combined with the sometimes riddlesome character of image and text, after the initial surprise and astonishment awaken more readers than one might dare to expect? I hope so. For Eckhart's words at the end of his famous sermon "*Beati Pauperes Spiritu*" may well apply here: "He who does not understand this commentary, should not worry, for as long as a person does not reflect on this truth (*denn solange der Mensch die Wahrheit nicht gelicht*), he cannot understand this commentary, for it is an unhidden truth which has sprung directly from the heart of God."

I cannot but agree completely with Nanrei Kobori Rōshi's evaluation which Franck disclosed to me as in it he found abundant justification for having published *Echoes*: "I have never seen such a wonderful book which is quite unique. The bottomless well has no form. The moment it springs it takes form . . . but once it takes form in words, the words stop the spring from the original well. That is why brush work like yours makes the spring of the original well as lively as possible: Sengai, Hakuin, Ryokan achieved it, but no one in the West. I think your *Echoes* are Sengai in the modern West."

As to myself I am grateful that Franck has dared to publish—that is, to make public—a creative work which I feel belongs with the most intimate ex-

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pressions of a human being's attaining truth/reality.

HANS RINGROSE

THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN. Nichiren Shōshū International Center, Tokyo. Volume I, 1979, pp. xxxvii + 345; Volume II, 1981, pp. viii + 375. With appendixes and glossary.

Nichiren (1222–1282) holds an important and unique place in the history of Japanese religion. He is unparalleled not only in his strength and courage, but also in his antagonism, vehemence and exclusivism. Though he had only a small, albeit devoted, following during his lifetime, shortly after his death the tradition began to expand rapidly. Since that time the Nichiren tradition has given form to the faith of large numbers of Japanese.

Nichiren gave expression to a side of human nature which rarely saw light in the traditional value structure of Japan. In a society which treasures harmony and conformity, he alone made antagonism into a religious principle, progressively defining his own image in terms of the antipathy he aroused. But this antipathy emerged in part from the force and painful accuracy of his caustic criticism of the social, political and religious institutions of his day. It is probably due in large part to these characteristics that the Nichiren tradition has had a strong appeal, especially to those on the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder of Japanese society who lack prestige, power, wealth or respect.

One characteristic of Nichiren's teaching was its claim to hegemony in the political realm. The shift of the seat of the bakufu, the military government, from Kamakura to Kyoto in 1336 was undoubtedly one of the factors which gave impetus to a strong proselytization movement there in the Muromachi period. Strong support was garnered among the merchants and artisans who, in spite of the rise in their economic power, still lacked the prestige and privilege of the nobility. The remarkable growth of the Nichiren faith at this time is noted in several contemporary sources.¹

After recovering from harsh suppression at the hands of both Enryaku-ji,

¹ "Development of the Nichiren Sect in Kyoto: Formation of *Monryū* or Subject and their Organizational Structure," p. 6; paper delivered by Itohisa Hōken of Risshō University at the International Conference on the Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture, University of Hawaii, December 1984.

² "The Thought Based on the Lotus Sutra," p. 22; paper delivered by Tamura Yoshirō at the conference listed in footnote 1.