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# Zen in the West

## Historical and Philosophical Implications of the 1893 Chicago World's Parliament of Religions

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The 1893 Chicago World's Parliament of Religions was a significant event in the history of interreligious dialogue, generating excitement and anticipation on many levels. As a human spectacle, for example, consider the curiosity aroused by the appearance of the many delegates espousing strange and little-known beliefs, arriving from distant, mysterious lands, dressed in alien garb, acting in unfamiliar ways and speaking languages rarely heard by Americans. Gathered from all over the planet were representatives of (to use the Parliament's own nomenclature) Theism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and various philosophical traditions. In a world as yet unsophisticated by global war, the conference provided a journey into the unknown and relatively unexplored. Newspaper coverage of the event read like the fashion-page description of an Easter parade, often focusing on the Parliament as a "spectacle."

For those whose vision transcended this superficial level, other flights of imagination predominated. On the coattails of the discovery that there do indeed exist belief systems other than the Judeo-Christian came noble dreams of religious dialogue and expressions of the unanimity of human spiritual purpose. Imagine: the great religions of the world joining hands in mutual respect and admiration—a gallery of scholars and saints in white flowing gowns and saffron robes, resplendent with amulets and bark cloth, beads and trinkets, large braided turbans and feathered headdresses, raising their voices heavenward and proclaiming our collective humanity—kneeling to drink, perhaps at different localities, but from the same thirst-quenching, sweet-water, proverbial lake of truth.

On yet another level (and with a bit more of the dispassion of hindsight) we see that the 1893 Parliament was indeed a milestone. Because of it, debate between religions and among sects intensified; traditions previously dismissed

as pagan, primitive, or even "the bulwark of Satan" (as Zen was called) had to be confronted in the actual arena of philosophical discourse; and, finally, the very definition of religion had to be reevaluated. The Parliament was also a turning point for Zen Buddhism, in particular for it marked the first voyage of a Zen master—Abbot Shaku Sōyen (1856–1919) of Engakuji Temple, Kamakura—beyond the horizons of the eastern world. This event prepared the soil for the first planting of the seeds of Zen in the West.

In the discussion which follows, the Parliament and some of its more immediate historical and philosophical responses relevant to the spread of Zen to the West are explored. In particular, this paper focuses upon Abbot Shaku Sōyen, one philosophical exchange resulting from the Parliament, and Dr. Paul Carus (1852–1919) and his relationship with D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966).

#### SHAKU SŌYEN

Shaku Sōyen studied and practiced Zen under Imagita Kōsen (1816–1892) at Engakuji, under whom he received certification at the young age of 24, and later assumed the head abbotship of this temple upon the death of his teacher. In other respects, however, Shaku Sōyen's background was extraordinary for a Zen priest—a fact which enabled him to assume a primary role in the spread of Zen to the West. Although at that time it was highly unusual for a certified Zen priest to pursue the study of western subjects, Shaku Sōyen's keen interest in western thought and culture eventually led him to Keiō University. D. T. Suzuki describes the reaction this aroused:

Many people criticized him for the step, including Kōsen Rōshi, who told him that western studies would be of no use to him at all. But Shaku Sōyen never took any notice of other people's criticisms, and just went quietly on his way. So, altogether he was a remarkable person, though with rather unconventional tendencies.<sup>1</sup>

Sōkei-an Sasaki, a disciple of Shaku Sōyen's disciple, Shaku Sōkatsu, however, gives us another picture of this episode. According to Sōkei-an, it was Imagita Kōsen who encouraged Shaku Sōyen to take this course of action:

Sōyen had been sent to Keiō University by his teacher Kōsen, who seems early to have foreseen the influence he was destined to wield in the world of Zen. So during the early years of Meiji [1868–1912], while other Buddhists were sleeping comfortably pillowed on the customs of the feudal period, Sōyen was studying western thought and culture. Later, in 1887, when he

<sup>1</sup> *The Training of a Zen Buddhist Monk* (New York: University Books, 1965), p. xviii. Originally published in 1934.

was twenty-nine years old, he was sent to India to complete his education with the study of Sanskrit. Here we must not forget that his teacher Kōsen was also an unusual man in that he chose for his disciple an education which was both modern and ancient.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the case, Shaku Sōyen's departure from tradition displayed his unshakable individuality, and afforded him the potential of communicating with westerners on their own intellectual terms.

An autobiographical sketch, purportedly written while in Ceylon in 1888, substantiates the claim of the abbot's highly independent spirit:

This fellow Shaku Sōyen was a son of Ichinose Goemon Nobusuke of Takahama, in the province of Wakasa. His nature was stupid and tough. When he was young, none of his relatives liked him. When he was twelve years old, he was ordained as a monk by Ekkei, Abbot of Myōshinji Temple. Afterwards, he studied literature under Shungai of Kenninji Temple for three years, and gained nothing. Then he went to Miidera and studied Tendai philosophy under Taihō for a summer and gained nothing. After this, he went to Bizen and studied Zen under the old teacher Gisan for one year and gained nothing. He then went to the east[ern part of Japan], to Kamakura, and studied under the Zen master Kōsen in the Engakuji for six years, and added nothing to the aforesaid nothingness. He was in charge of a little temple, Butsunichi, one of the temples of the Engakuji, for one year and from there went to Tokyo to attend Keiō for one year and a half, making himself the worst student there, and forgot the nothingness that he had gained. Then he created for himself new delusions, and came to Ceylon in the spring of 1887; and now under the Ceylonese monks, he is studying the Pali language and Hinayana Buddhism. Such a wandering mendicant! He ought to repay the twenty years of debt to those who fed him in the name of Buddhism.<sup>3</sup>

The content of Shaku Sōyen's two addresses at the Parliament is significant, and relates to his unusual training. Shaku Sōyen was by no means a cloistered monk, unaware of the world around him. To the contrary, for him the world situation was precisely the arena in which the drama of the human condition unfolds. Thus, his addresses were both timely and representative of his Zen Buddhist perspective. Shaku Sōyen's knowledge of Christianity, furthermore, allowed him to speak in terms Christians could understand and to draw from examples familiar to his listeners. Thus, not only did he deal from a Zen Buddhist point of view with questions current at that time; he was also able to raise

<sup>2</sup> "On Sōyen Shaku Rōshi," *Wind Bell* 8 (Fall, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

many of the issues taken up by critics of Buddhism down to the present day. Already introduced at this early date were Buddhism's alleged "atheism," pacifism, and denial of the existence of the soul. As we shall see, Sōyen sought to correct these misunderstandings.

The shorter of Reverend Sōyen's addresses was presented to the Buddhist Congress of the Parliament, one of the Parliament's many subgroups, and was entitled "Arbitration Instead of War."<sup>4</sup> In short, Sōyen called for "peace and love, instead of the gloomy, cloudy weather of bloodshed, battles, and wars. The participants in the Parliament were naturally concerned with questions of militarism, since the major nations of the world were involved in imperialist, expansionist policies at that time, and were beginning to clash all over the globe. Many of the events that would lead to the First World War were already occurring. Thus, responding to an actual situation, rather than merely philosophical abstractions, Shaku Sōyen taught the Buddhist Congress that the boundaries which divide men should be cast aside and that the ideal of world peace can be realized with the help of "the religion of truth, the fountain of benevolence and mercy." He said: "We must not make any distinction between race and race, between civilization and civilization, between creed and creed, and faith and faith. You must not say 'Go away,' because we are yellow people. All beings in the universe are in the bosom of truth. We are all sisters and brothers; we are sons and daughters of truth, and let us understand one another much better and be true sons and daughters of truth. Truth be praised."

Sōyen spoke of a "religion of truth" which transcends the artificial boundaries separating man from man, emphasizing the universal quest for truth which must unite human beings regardless of their cultural or doctrinal differences. He did not preach a single religion that would implant itself universally, causing all others to become obsolete. His intention was rather a religion "prior" to any doctrine, grounded thoroughly in the human heart. He found no contradiction in preaching the "religion of truth," on the one hand, and sharply differing from Christianity on the other. The light of truth is best served through rational thought, and Zen, as Shaku Sōyen taught it, could be reasonably argued.

In "The Law of Cause and Effect as Taught by the Buddha," Shaku Sōyen's major address to the entire Parliament, an important philosophical difference between Buddhism and Christianity is stressed. Here Sōyen deals with causality in a manner reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas's proof for the existence of God from efficient cause. Their conclusions, however, are diametrically opposed. Sōyen asserts, first of all, that any particular phenomenon has a complexity of

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<sup>4</sup> This address, as well as his "The Law of Cause and Effect as Taught by the Buddha" (discussed below), may be found reprinted in *Zen Notes* 17 (August 1970 and February 1970).

causes: "No effect can arise unless several causes combine together. Take for example the case of fire. You may say its cause is oil or fuel; but neither oil nor fuel alone can give rise to a flame. Atmosphere, space, and several other conditions, physical or mechanical, are necessary for the rise of a flame." There is, therefore, an "endless progression of causal law. A cause must be preceded by another cause, and an effect must be followed by another effect." From this point on, Shaku Soyen's line of argument diverges from that of Thomas Aquinas's. Sōyen infers from the above that, since an infinite regress of causes is impossible, the world must be without a cause, that is, "there is no beginning in the universe." Unlike Thomas Aquinas's inference that the impossibility of an infinite regress of causes implies a prime mover, God, Sōyen flatly denies the identification of Buddha with such a prime mover by using the same line of argument. Finally, in order to argue for the Buddhist position, Shaku Soyen employs a metaphor of which theologians in the West have traditionally been fond: "Just as the clock moves itself without any intervention of any external force, so is the progress of the universe. . . . Our sacred Buddha is not the creator of this law of nature, but he is the first discoverer of the law who led thus his followers to the height of moral perfection."

Also, in his major Parliamentary address, Shaku Soyen presents the Buddhist alternative to the Christian notion that there exists a heaven and hell to which one is assigned after death. Explicating his understanding of the notion of karma, Shaku Soyen states: "Heaven and hell are self-made. God did not provide you with a hell, but you yourself." Buddhism, according to Reverend Soyen, does not admit of a savior outside ourselves who metes out justice on the basis of how well his laws are followed. Rather, "in Buddhism the source of moral authority is the causal law. Be kind, be human, be honest, if you desire to crown your future! Dishonesty, cruelty, inhumanity, will condemn you to a miserable fall."

In his Chicago Parliament address, and often thereafter, Shaku Soyen claimed that his intent was not to argue for the Zen perspective and against Christianity or any other religion. He was interested rather in fathoming the depths of religious truth, employing the measure of reason to the extent to which it is appropriate, and arriving at a religion which reflects the truth arrived at by human knowledge and understanding. Although Shaku Soyen acknowledged the limits of reason and empirical observation, he nevertheless believed them to be tools which can be employed to indicate religious truth. This approach allowed him to enter into dialogue non-dogmatically, non-defensively, and even to employ Christian metaphors and examples at will. Without hesitating to point out where religions differ, he attempted to stand aloof from uncritical adherence even to Buddhism.

This rational, almost unaffiliated approach was not universally shared by the Parliament's participants, however. If Shaku Sōyen's openness to western culture

and religions was a deviation for a Zen master, so western religions were unaccustomed to confronting Zen (and Buddhism in general) on an equal footing. Understandably, the Parliament sparked intellectual debate that was not always either dispassionate or unbiased.

It is interesting to examine the organizing principles of the Parliament in this regard for, indeed, many of the anti-Buddhist western biases which became important in the debates following the World's Parliament of Religions may be traced back to the Parliament itself. Notable in this regard is the fifth expressed object of the Parliament: "To indicate the impregnable foundations of theism, and the reasons for man's faith in immortality, and thus to unite and strengthen the forces which are adverse to a materialistic philosophy of the universe."<sup>5</sup> While Buddhism can hardly be called a "materialistic philosophy," Shaku Sōyen's exposition at the Parliament made it clear that Buddhism may be expressed equally well in metaphysical or materialistic terms. Furthermore, Buddhism's notion of "theism" or divine being—if any such may be found—differs from that of God as traditionally defined in the Judeo-Christian sense. As Shaku Sōyen pointed out, Buddhism does not admit of a supreme judge who metes out reward or punishment to human beings. Similarly, the concept of "faith in immortality" as usually understood in the West cannot be found in Buddhism. Instead of a "self" or "soul" which lives on eternally, Buddhism employs such terms as non-self (*anatta*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in this connection. Throughout the history of Buddhist-Western religious dialogue, these points of difference—traced back to the Parliament—have remained important.

Despite the "pro-theistic" predispositions of the Parliament, Shaku Sōyen was in accord with its general thrust. He also expressed his approval of Dr. Paul Carus's plan to establish a Religious Parliament Extension in order to continue in the direction of the original conference. In a letter to Carus, published in the April 1895 issue of the *Monist*, Shaku Sōyen states:

I deeply sympathize with the plan of continuing the work of the Parliament of Religions. It appears to me that the present age is a period in which a religious reform is preparing itself all over the world, and it is our duty to investigate the truth with impartiality, so that its light may shine brighter than before. Some narrow-minded persons imagine that they can suppress the universal aspiration that called the recent World's Religious Parliament into existence, which is the greatest spiritual event of our age. But they will not succeed, and I hail the movement of the Religious Parliament Extension which you have started. It is new proof that progress cannot be checked. We have to fight a religious battle against superstitions and narrowness by

<sup>5</sup> "The Objects of the Parliament," *Monist* 5 (April 1895), p. 330.

taking the spirit of universal brotherhood as sword. The distinction between Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism should not be made before the altar of truth, and we should be open-minded enough not to exaggerate the importance of the differences which exist between races, rituals, and languages. I sincerely hope that your movement will be successful so as to unite the religions of the world and lead them to the recognition of truth.

Shaku Sōyen remained active in the interreligious dialogues sparked by the Chicago Parliament, contributing to written debates and participating in organizations which sought to emulate the spirit of the original conference. One such organization was the World's Unity League, the advisory committee of which included Sōyen.

#### "A CONTROVERSY ON BUDDHISM"

One dialogue in particular, directly emerging from the 1893 event, involved the Reverend Dr. John Barrows of Chicago, theologian and president of the Parliament. In a letter dated 1 March 1896, Sōyen objected to Barrows's interpretation of Buddhism, which was carried in a newspaper account. He was referring specifically to the second of the Haskell lecture series delivered by Barrows at the University of Chicago's Kent Theatre. In this lecture, Barrows identified Nirvana as the element which makes Gautama's a "dubious gospel" because it "involves the extinction of love and life, as the going out of a flame which has nothing else to feed upon." Sōyen responded: "Your utterances are of importance because they will be received as an impartial representation of our religion, since you, having been Chairman of the Religious Parliament, are commonly considered to have the best information about those religions that were represented at this famous assemblage." Shaku Sōyen, "greatly disappointed" in Barrows, felt it necessary to correct the Christian representative's remarks. He felt that Barrows had "unknowingly misrepresented the doctrines of the Tathāgata, . . . repeating errors which are common in the various western books on Buddhism." Shaku Soyen's response to Barrows elicited the Chicago theologian's rejoinder, as well as comments by Rev. F. F. Ellinwood of New York. Carus published the entire dialogue in the January 1897 issue of the *Open Court*, and called it "A Controversy on Buddhism."

Sōyen criticizes two major points made in the Haskell lecture. Barrows had asserted that "human life does not breathe, in Buddhism, the atmosphere of divine fatherhood, but groans under the dominion of inexorable and implacable law." First, as to lacking the "atmosphere of divine fatherhood," Shaku Sōyen points out that the Buddha Amitābha represents a "father figure" in Buddhism, thus refuting the claim that Buddhism is "fatherless." Furthermore,



Barrows appears to have compared the relative divinity of Buddha and Jesus Christ and to have maintained that one must grant Christ's claim to be the supernatural agent of God the Father, since Christ successfully worked miracles. Buddha, on the other hand, may be explained without reference to miraculous deeds. Therefore, according to Barrows, Christ must be recognized as more in touch with divinity than Gautama. Shaku Sōyen objects that miracles are irrelevant, and questions how mankind may benefit by believing in them. He even points out the inhumanity of some of Christ's miracles. The New Testament account of the draft of fishes, for example, in which the fishermen followed Jesus and left the fish behind to die constitutes for Sōyen "great and useless destruction of life."

Secondly, as to the "dominion of inexorable and implacable laws," Sōyen argues that Buddhist principles are like the doctrines of modern science, for "while the law is irrefragable, no one but those who infringe upon it groan under it. . . . The immoral man suffers from the moral law, he groans under its inexorable and implacable decree, while the moral man enjoys it, and turning it to advantage glories in its boundless blessings." This moral law is identified as the source of enlightenment in Buddhism; and to recognize it is to have attained Buddhahood, according to Sōyen.

Barrows received Sōyen's letter in Göttingen, Germany. The theologian's reply voices his protest that the *Chicago Tribune* report of his lectures was incomplete and that his treatment was actually appreciative of the teaching of the Buddha. It was his *Tribune* account that Shaku Sōyen had seen and was responding to. Barrows reemphasized his conviction that "religion may help to draw men together," and sent Shaku Sōyen's letter to a friend in New York, F. F. Ellinwood, for a fuller response.

Ellinwood's comment is not as cordial as Barrows' reply; nor is it sympathetic to Shaku Sōyen's position. Ellinwood brings the research of such eminent western scholars as Max Müller, T. W. Rhys Davids, H. Oldenberg, E. Burnouf, and Saint Hilaire to show that Buddhist Nirvana actually does mean an extinction of karma and a denial of "continued and conscious blessedness." Hence, Buddhism preaches soullessness, and not the "real salvation" of Christianity. Ellinwood also criticizes the causality argument used by Shaku Sōyen in his main address before the members of the Parliament of Religions:

This theory, of course, excludes the idea of a Great First Cause. This is to western minds unthinkable, as was illustrated at the same Parliament by Father Hewitt of the Paulist Brothers of New York. . . . He used the illustration of a train of cars in which the last car is drawn by the one before it and that by another. In his view such transmitted motion would be impossible unless there could be found at the head of the train, an engine having power

in itself. Your theory seemed to involve the supposition that an infinite number of cars on an infinite circular track might move without an engine. But the point which I would make just here is that your theory appears in itself to exclude the idea of a conscious and blessed Nirvana beyond this life. . . . It is an eternal standstill, a rest, not of a soul, not of skandhas, not of karma, but of a something which produces no longer the old effects, and which therefore does not belong to your world of invariable causality.

Ellinwood's understanding does not coincide with Shaku Sōyen's view, however; for the "soul," which Ellinwood argues the continuance of after death, exists, according to Shaku Sōyen, neither before nor after Nirvana. The soul, furthermore, cannot be said to exist or not exist as a "spiritual" thing. Shaku Sōyen expresses this: "For however ethereal and astral the soul may be conceived, it cannot be anything but material, as long as it is concrete and individual." If the soul is concrete and differentiated, then it must be material, and for this reason "those self-advertising spiritualists are no more nor less than materialists."<sup>6</sup>

Reverend Ellinwood further criticizes Shaku Sōyen for attempting to discuss Buddhism as though it were a single monolithic philosophical system. He states: "When we come to speak of a system which has undergone many and radical changes in the course of the ages, and a system which has presented important modifications in different lands even in the same age, we can hardly make one broad assertion which shall cover the whole ground." Again, put in different language, Ellinwood states: "Buddhism is one thing in Ceylon, quite another in Tibet, and still another in China and Japan, where we find at least a dozen more or less divergent sects." And finally, he concludes: "There are as many different conceptions of Nirvana as there are Buddhisms."

In 1906, Shaku Sōyen dealt with this criticism in a paper he read before the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. Suzuki translated the address, and later included it in *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*. Shaku Sōyen maintained that there are two distinct manners in which the diversity and unity of Buddhist sects may be understood. The first focuses on the "development" of Buddhism historically; the second deals with its unchanging unity. According to Sōyen, later Buddhism is an improvement over the earlier form when viewed "developmentally." He sees the pessimistic, monastic, ethical, and ascetic Hinayana as a stage preparatory to the Mahayana. Ultimately, Buddhism reached a "metaphysical phase" of development. Sōyen describes this form: "What may be called the metaphysical phase of Buddhism is to recognize (1)

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<sup>6</sup> *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1913), p. 41. Reprinted in 1974 under the title *Zen for Americans*.

the reality of the phenomenal world, (2) the existence of one ultimate reason, and (3) the immanence of this reason in the universe." In terms of the essential goal of Buddhism, however, the development of the religion as well as its sectarian differences are unimportant. When we come to Buddhism's practical side, according to Shaku Sōyen, "The aim of Buddhism, to state it briefly, is to dispel the clouds of ignorance and to make shine the sun of enlightenment."

It is clear, then, that for Shaku Sōyen Buddhism must be seen on both of these levels to be properly understood. It entails not only the changing, developing side which varies from time to time and from place to place, but also the immutable, practical essence. From Sōyen's point of view, Ellinwood's criticism is one-sided and thus misses the mark.

The Ceylonese Buddhist monk A. Dharmapāla also entered the "controversy," addressing his reply to Ellinwood's critique of Shaku Sōyen. Dharmapāla, stressing the universally accepted notion of the "Four Noble Truths" of Buddhism, wrote: "There is no genuine Buddhist who does not accept the Four Noble Truths, and everyone who does accept them is a Buddhist."<sup>7</sup> He thereby supports Shaku Sōyen's approach, which embraces this and other basic Buddhist notions.

A final criticism of Ellinwood's position should be noted. Ellinwood derived his understanding of Buddhism from translations and interpretations by western scholars who were undoubtedly among those Shaku Sōyen dismissed as having misunderstood Buddhism. It is therefore quite understandable that Ellinwood's grasp of the religion would be regarded as incorrect from Sōyen's point of view.

Ellinwood's contribution to "A Controversy on Buddhism" provides an important insight into the attitudes taken by participants in the Parliament with regard to interreligious dialogue. He asserts that while both he and John Barrows attempt to be tolerant of other faiths, they both consider Christianity to be "the only religion that is adapted to the universal wants of mankind, and the only one that offers real salvation." This position is asserted rather than arrived at through reason, and precludes the possibility that there is wisdom to be gained from the religions of other people or that there is value in viewing religious questions from perspectives other than one's own. It is a predisposition allowing in fact no more than "tolerance," "putting up with" religions which are *a priori* held to be inferior. Put in terms of a Buddhist metaphor, entering into dialogue with religionists who presuppose their own exclusive monopoly on truth is like attempting to pour tea into a full cup.

Shaku Sōyen's post-Parliament writing does not exhibit a feeling of having "triumphed over Christianity on its own soil," as many Christian participants feared. To the contrary, in a letter of 16 December 1893, written to thank the

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<sup>7</sup> "Is There More Than One Buddhism?" *Open Court* 11 (February 1897), p. 83.

Chicago philosopher for his gift of the *Open Court*, Sōyen describes himself as a stern critic of religious formalism in *both* Buddhism and Christianity:

My Dear Dr. Carus,

It is certainly a good fortune that through the light of Buddha we met together in the hall of Truth while I sojourned at Chicago to attend the Parliament of Religions. I am very glad to see your impartiality which inspired you to establish a new world of the religion of science without any bigot adherence to Christianity or to Buddhism. As for my part, I am a Buddhist, but far from being a conservative religionist, my intention is rather to stir a reformation movement in the religious world. In other words, I am one who insists on the genuine and spiritual Buddhism to renovate that formal and degenerative Buddhism. And I believe that if the present Christianity be reformed it will become the old Buddhism, and if the latter be reformed it will become the future religion of science which is still in the womb of Truth, but which is steadily growing up there to be born in full power. My dear friend, be always a faithful servant of Truth. I, though a man of no consequence, have a great mind to propagate the tidings of Truth together with you. It is now severe winter, protect yourself against cold.<sup>5</sup>

[SHAKU SŌYEN]

Again, it is "Truth" that is the basis both of Shaku Sōyen's reforms and the religion of science he predicts. The "genuine and spiritual Buddhism" on which he insists, refers not to the cultural or ritualistic "outer garments" of Buddhism, but rather to the inner core of man's religious nature. While the externals of religions may differ, Shaku Sōyen stressed that man should only be a faithful servant to Truth itself.

Against the background of sometimes unfriendly "mis-meeting," it becomes all the more remarkable that Paul Carus and Shaku Sōyen—kindred spirits with lofty visions of the future cooperation of mankind through religion—could meet at the Parliament and begin an association that was long and fruitful in terms of the spread of Zen to the West. Paul Carus was sufficiently impressed with Sōyen to invite him for a week's visit following the Parliament, and to pursue their association even after the Zen abbot had returned to Japan.

It is difficult to ascertain specifically what it was about Shaku Sōyen's role in the Parliament that sparked Carus's interest. The Chicago publisher was elated at the success of the meeting, and designated it "the dawn of a new religious era . . . the most noteworthy event of the decade." But in singling out the Parliament's

<sup>5</sup> In the Open Court Archives at the Southern Illinois University Library.

most important participants, Carus neglects to give credit to Shaku Sōyen. It is only in retrospect—some nine years later—that he writes of Sōyen: “In 1893 he visited the World’s Religious Parliament in Chicago and was rightly esteemed as the most prominent delegate of Japanese Buddhism.”<sup>9</sup>

Carus’s importance to the world of learning cannot be overstated. Indeed, Chicago was a major center of intellectual activity at the turn of the century, due in no small part to the presence of the Open Court Publishing Company in nearby LaSalle, Illinois. Its two journals, the *Monist* and the *Open Court*, shared between them articles by the most distinguished pioneers in such fields as physics, mathematics, evolutionary biology, philosophy, and religion. The editor of these journals during this period was Dr. Paul Carus. An intellectual giant, he commanded a vast and profound store of knowledge, prolifically authored books and contributed articles on subjects ranging from art and aesthetics to German literature, religion, and psychology. He was highly esteemed in learned circles.

Carus’s most consuming interest was the comparative study of world religions. From a careful understanding of other faiths, he believed truths could be gleaned and then applied to our lives in meaningful ways. This attitude, as has been pointed out above, may be distinguished from the more competitive postures taken especially by some of his apologetic Christian contemporaries. Carus was more interested in developing a “religion of truth” (a phrase he shared with Reverend Shaku Sōyen) than in protecting a vested interest. With this approach, he set out to understand Buddhism. In *Philosophy as a Science* (1909), Carus writes of the importance of this undertaking: “For the sake of purifying our conception of religion, there is no better method than the study of comparative religion; and in comparative religion there is nothing more fruitful than a tracing of the analogies and contrasts that obtain between Buddhism and Christianity.” Thus, Carus was making a genuine attempt to learn from Buddhism and make its literature accessible to the general public in the West. D. T. Suzuki gives credit to Carus in this respect, and emphasizes his historical significance. Prior to Carus’s work, Suzuki holds, “Buddhism was viewed . . . as an unusual religion, studied primarily as a subject of scholarly enquiry. In America it was largely due to the efforts of Dr. Carus that the study of Buddhism became popular.”<sup>10</sup>

There were Western intellectuals who reacted negatively to Carus’s concern with Buddhism. His frequent short editorials concerning Buddhism attracted

<sup>9</sup> In his introduction to Sōyen’s “The Buddhist View of War,” *Open Court* 18 (May 1904), p. 274.

<sup>10</sup> “Introduction: A Glimpse of Paul Carus,” in Joseph M. Kitagawa, ed., *Modern Trends in World Religions* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1959), p. x.

reactions which expressed disbelief that anyone could be concerned with such nonsense. A comment by Thaddeus B. Wakeman, to choose one extreme example, declares the hope that Carus would soon "recover from this 'Asiatic mildew,'" and stop dealing with "this dry rot of occultism [which] is fatal to all healthy life and activity."<sup>11</sup> Carus's interest in eastern religion, however, was fired by his general conviction that religion and the scientific method must be reconciled. He held the vision that the twentieth century stood on the brink of a new age in which science would displace superstitious beliefs in all areas of human knowledge. Experience and experimentation would be the cornerstone of further belief; rigorous scientific enquiry would be employed to test its validity. Carus viewed himself as the one who would explicate the philosophical underpinnings of this scientific approach, as the creator of a philosophy of science applicable to any discipline. In the introduction to *Philosophy as a Science*, Carus states: "Mankind has become more and more convinced of the efficiency of science, and in this sense the philosophy of science prevails even now as a still latent but nevertheless potent factor in the life of mankind, manifesting itself in innumerable subconscious tendencies of the age. We may confidently hope that the future which the present generation is preparing will be the age of science." That Zen and Buddhism are conducive to scientific expression sparked Carus's interest in their study.

The initial presentation of Zen to the West in 1893 provided an interesting parallel to Carus's vision. At the same time as Reverend Shaku Soyen, in his main address to the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions, was stressing Buddhism's accord with the natural law and its correspondence to scientific data, Carus was warning the assemblage that religion must not reject scientific discovery. He told the Parliament: "Science is a revelation of God. Science gives us information concerning the truth and the truth reveals His Will."<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Carus's position, the attitude of many western religious leaders during that period was one of distrust of and even scorn for scientific methods. Carus attacks this narrow-mindedness and hostility as itself impious: "Reverence for our master makes us easily forget our highest duty, the reverence for an impartial recognition of truth. The antipathy of a certain class of religious men toward science, although natural and excusable, should nevertheless be recognized as a grievous fault; it is a moral error and an irreligious attitude."<sup>13</sup> Carus had coincidentally gained an intellectual ally in Shaku Sōyen in his battle against those who closed their eyes to science.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Paul Carus, "Buddhism and the Religion of Science," *Open Court* 10 (March 1896), p. 4844.

<sup>12</sup> "Science: A Religious Revelation," in J. H. Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament, 1893), Vol. 2, p. 980.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 281.

Paul Carus found Buddhist intellectuality appealing and contrasted it with those aspects of Christianity which were disillusioning to him. His attitude toward myth provides a good example. In Christianity, as he interpreted it, the myth occupies a place of primary importance; Buddhism, on the other hand, while rich in mythology, does not insist on its literal interpretation as the basis of truth. One could strip Buddhism of its mythological elements without losing its essential teaching. Therefore, Buddhism may be expressed either mythologically or scientifically. Christianity, he believed, could never divest itself of its nonscientific elements, since they are too central to Christian teachings.

As a result, Buddhism can assimilate the myths of any religion or culture non-exclusively. Carus expresses his admiration for this breadth of vision in *Buddhism and its Christian Critics* (1897), a book directly inspired by the Parliament. He writes: "Buddhism can comprehend other religions and interpret their mythologies, but no mythology is wide enough to comprehend Buddhism. Buddhism is, as it were, religious mythology explained in scientific terms; it is the esoteric secret of all exoteric doctrines. It is the skeleton key which in its abstract simplicity fits all locks."

Carus's positive impression of Buddhism was shared by his father-in-law, E. C. Hegeler, who was himself an important figure in the Chicago publishing world at that time. Suzuki describes Buddhism's appeal for Carus and Hegeler: "What impressed Dr. Carus and Mr. Hegeler about Buddhism was the fact that Buddhism was singularly free from such mythological elements. For example, in contrast with Christianity, which accepts Christ as God-man, Buddhism regards Buddha as a human being. In a sense, Buddhism may be regarded as rationalistic and positivistic."<sup>14</sup> This intellectual element is stressed by Suzuki in an early article published in the *Open Court*. He maintains that Buddhism is more philosophical than other religions, but that its religious quality is not thereby diminished. In Buddhism, according to Suzuki, "faith and knowledge are intimately interrelated and equally emphasized."<sup>15</sup>

Paul Carus responded positively to the openness and tolerance that he found in Buddhism. This, together with the coming of a new age of science, Buddhism's dedication to truth, convinced Carus that Christianity had much to learn from Buddhism if it were to remain a viable religion. "The question of the survival of a religion is mainly based on its capability of growth,"<sup>16</sup> he maintains, and from this point of view, Christianity is in danger of becoming obsolete. Unlike Shaku Soyen, Carus believed there will be a single religion which will eventually be

<sup>14</sup> "Introduction: A Glimpse of Paul Carus," p. x.

<sup>15</sup> "The Breadth of Buddhism," *Open Court* 14 (January 1900), p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> "The Message of Buddhism to Christianity," *Open Court* 20 (December 1906), p. 755.

embraced by all mankind. That religion will surpass the others on the basis of its compatibility with the scientific method. The inflexibility of the dogma within the Christian Church means that it probably will not be able to survive in the coming age of science. He writes: "One reason why Christianity loses ground in certain spheres, especially among intellectual and earnest people possessed of the deepest religious sentiment, is the spirit of dogmatism which still dominates almost all the Christian churches and prevents Christianity from growing and expanding and from assimilating the truth that can be found in other quarters, especially in science and in the faith of a religion like Buddhism, based upon enlightenment."<sup>17</sup> Carus projects that unless Christianity mends its ways, Buddhism will surpass it: "If Buddhism can accept all that is good and true in Christianity it will not only maintain itself in the long run, but outgrow Christianity in significance and power."<sup>18</sup> Carus's hope was to the contrary. Though he was sympathetic toward Buddhism, and though he derived much from his study of Asian religions, he was still most eager that Christianity would correct its flaws and retain its position of world leadership into the new era.

#### PAUL CARUS AND D. T. SUZUKI

Carus's association with Shaku Sōyen at the Parliament of Religions had another important consequence for the history of Zen in the West. As a direct result of this association, Carus made the acquaintance of D. T. Suzuki, Shaku Sōyen's lay student at Engakuji. Suzuki produced a long-lasting effect on Carus's thinking, and provided an in-depth understanding of Buddhism, Taoism, and Zen, as well as the linguistic capabilities which made it possible for Carus to continue his research and publications. In a sense, Suzuki's influence was already present at the Parliament. Shaku Sōyen relied heavily upon Suzuki for interpreting English-language materials and correspondence with westerners such as Carus. Shaku Sōyen's Parliament addresses, furthermore, were Suzuki's translations, although they were also inspected and edited by the eminent novelist Natsume Sōseki. Most of the letters from Sōyen to Carus are written in Suzuki's hand. Similarly, the articles Shaku Sōyen published in the *Open Court* were translated by Suzuki, including the above quoted portion of the post-Parliament dialogue.

Suzuki was a logical choice to serve Shaku Sōyen in this capacity. Not only was Suzuki a conscientious lay student in Engakuji, but he had also taught the English language previously in the villages of Takojima and Mikawa. Later, reflecting upon his grasp of English during that period, Suzuki modestly states: "The English I taught in those days was very strange—so strange that later

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 755–56.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 756.

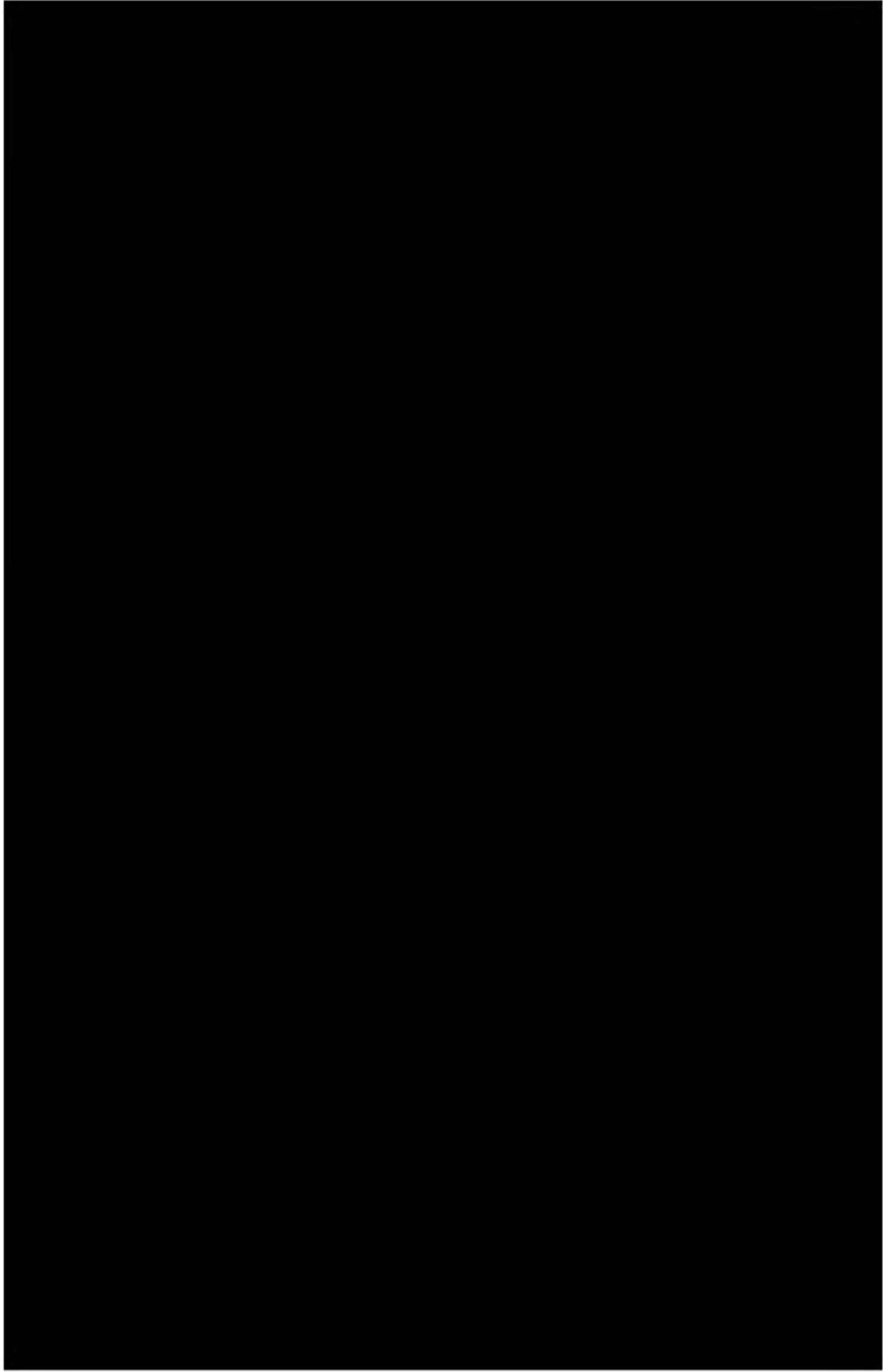




*D. T. Suzuki's Room in LaSalle*



*A Rare Photo with Carus (l) and Suzuki (r)*



*Shaku Sōyen, Suzuki, and Beatrice Lane at Engakuji (c. 1917)*

when I first went to America nobody understood anything I said."<sup>19</sup> Judging from the clear and precise language of the addresses, however, Suzuki's modesty seems unwarranted.

Suzuki was well versed enough to undertake the important task of translating into Japanese Carus's first major work on Buddhism, *The Gospel of Buddha* (1894). Shaku Sōyen was aware of the importance of Carus's work. Western scholars such as Müller, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg had already begun to make Buddhist materials accessible to western specialists. Carus started from these scholarly translations, and endeavored to understand Buddhism's essential spirit. He hoped that his reworked version of the Buddhist canon would express this spirit to the lay reader. Since Carus did not understand Sanskrit or Pali, he was limited to the texts and translations of texts already available in western languages. He took liberties with these translations, even rearranging the order of the texts. Included also were tables of reference, pointing the reader to some possible parallels between Buddhist sources and western thought, especially the Christian Bible.

D. T. Suzuki attests to the fact that *The Gospel of Buddha* was a direct response to the Chicago Parliament and indicates Carus's fervor as well as his methodology: "Soon after the Parliament, Dr. Carus must have collected all the available books on Buddhism written in English, German, French, and other languages, because he was not versed in Sanskrit or Pali. After working nearly two years on *The Gospel of Buddha*, Dr. Carus sent the proof sheets of the book to Japan for the inspection of Shaku Sōyen."<sup>20</sup>

For Suzuki, then, the convergence of Shaku Sōyen's meeting Carus at the Parliament and Carus's new zeal in putting together *The Gospel of Buddha* was a unique opportunity. It also turned out to be a fortuitous moment in the history of the spread of Zen to the West.

Suzuki took advantage of his new status as translator of Carus's book to introduce himself by letter to the American publisher. In fact, Carus already knew of Suzuki in connection with the translation. The February 1895 issue of the *Open Court* mentions the Japanese edition appreciatively, and includes the section of Shaku Sōyen's forward in which Suzuki is mentioned as displaying "a very easy hand." Suzuki's letter of introduction, dated 10 March 1895, is quoted below:

Dr. P. Carus,

I am the translator of your valuable work *The Gospel of Buddha* and the interpreter of the Right Rev. Shaku Sōyen. I have tried my best to translate

<sup>19</sup> *The Training of a Zen Buddhist Monk*, p. xiv.

<sup>20</sup> "Introduction: A Glimpse of Paul Carus," p. ix.

your work in an easy style by using the least possible Buddhistic terminology, with which the people are not much familiar. We are very glad to see that you as a western thinker have so clearly and rightly comprehended the principles of Buddhism, while most of them are prejudiced to look at Buddhism as a nihilism or pessimism as you know.

I read with great pleasure the *Open Court* and the *Monist*, every number of which you send to the Right Rev. Shaku Sōyen.

I am a student of philosophy curriculum at the Imperial University in Japan.

As I am not well acquainted with the etiquette of letter-writing or with English idioms, should I have made any mistakes or used any impolite expressions in the many letters for the Right Rev. Shaku Sōyen, I hope your generosity will excuse those faults I have committed. With kind regards I remain,

Your faithful servant,  
T. SUZUKI<sup>21</sup>

Carus's interest in Oriental religion did not end with the publication of *The Gospel of Buddha*. On the contrary, he started to work almost immediately on a translation of Lao-tze's *Tao Te Ching*. For this task, he needed someone who was well versed in both English and Chinese. According to Suzuki, it was with this in mind that Carus wrote to Shaku Sōyen for help; it was in response to this request that Shaku Sōyen suggested Suzuki's journey to the United States. Shaku Sōyen wrote a long letter to Paul Carus, dated 17 December 1895, outlining Suzuki's virtues:

Now I have something to ask with your kind consent relating to the person of Suzuki Teitarō whom you know as the translator of your *The Gospel of Buddha*. So you are already informed he is an earnest student of philosophy and religion, and his ambition is to work for truth and humanity, not being anxious about worldly interests. He tells me that he has been so greatly inspired by your sound faith, which is perceptible in your various works, that he earnestly desires to go abroad and study under your personal guidance. If you will be kind enough to sympathise with his ambitious intention and to consent to take him under your patronage, he will willingly obey to do everything you may order him, as far as he can. I deal with him here as my ordained disciple. Though poor, he will be able to afford the expense of the journey. He is of good character and diligent in study. I am sure

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<sup>21</sup> This letter and the following one are in the Open Court Archives at the Southern Illinois University Library.

he can do his best under you. If that be realizable, by your kind agreement, you and your other eminent American thinkers' opinions will be introduced to Japan through him more favourably than ever; and I believe your country may have also a good opportunity to know what the Japanese Buddhists would say. He understands English pretty well and with a little study will come to write and speak it. I think in time he will be able to help do some work. In case you finally accept my request, I shall attempt to let him go to your country . . . early next spring.

*The Gospel of Buddha* was received as an authoritative text among easterners and westerners alike. More than thirteen editions appeared during Carus's lifetime, including translations into Chinese, Malay, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Siamese, German, French, Dutch, Spanish, and, thanks to Suzuki, Japanese. Carus was therefore important not only as one who responded to Buddhism, but also as one to whom Buddhists throughout the world looked for source material and instruction in their own religion.

During the years between the publication of *The Gospel of Buddha* and Suzuki's arrival in 1897, Carus continued to publish material devoted to the study of Buddhism. His reputation as a proponent of Asian religions spread, and his publications attracted critical acclaim from such outstanding figures as the Russian Count Leo Tolstoy. Commenting on the Buddhist story "Karma" by Carus, he said: "I read it aloud to children, and they liked it. And among grown-up people its reading always gave rise to conversation about the gravest problems of life. And, to my mind, this is a very good recommendation." The literary giant translated the story "Karma" into his native Russian. Consequently, he was erroneously attributed to be the author of its English, French, and German translations. Tolstoy remedied this by adding a complimentary note: "I deeply regret not only that such a falsehood was allowed to pass unchallenged, but also the fact that it was a falsehood in reality, for I should be very happy were I the author of this tale. . . . It is one of the best products of a national wisdom, and ought to be bequeathed to all mankind."<sup>22</sup>

Carus's interest in Buddhism grew continually as may be seen from the books and journal articles he wrote as well as those by other authors which he published. In 1896, Carus wrote *The Dharma*; that was soon followed by his important book, *Buddhism and its Christian Critics* (1897). During the same period, he also began work on the first of several translations of Chinese texts—Lao-tze's *Tao Te Ching*—which was published in 1903.

Carus was in the process of translating Lao-tze when Suzuki arrived in America and joined the staff of the Open Court Publishing Company. Suzuki describes the stage of completion of this work and his role in its preparation:

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Carus, *Philosophy as a Science*, p. 75.

Upon my arrival at LaSalle, I found that Dr. Carus had partly translated the *Tao Te Ching* already. However, he wanted me to make a word-for-word translation, placing an English meaning next to each Chinese character. After this was completed, I explained to him the peculiarities of the Chinese language, which ignores most grammatical modifications usually observed in the Indo-European languages. For example, the Chinese language does not use tenses, cases, or moods. The characters are strung together as in piling one block over another with no cement in between; the position in which the characters are placed determines the meaning. . . . Thus, I was able to help Dr. Carus in this respect. He carefully compared my rendering with the available translations of the *Tao Te Ching*—an English translation by Legge in the *Sacred Books of the East*, a French translation, and perhaps a Latin translation.<sup>23</sup>

Suzuki provided the nuances and special feeling of the Chinese language, while Carus formed the words into a coherent literary style. The finished product erred, perhaps, on the side of abstractness and philosophical objectivity. Suzuki noted this problem later in his life, but nevertheless felt that Carus's translation remained one of the best available—that Carus was able to “enter into” the spirit of Lao-tze. The translation did lack the concreteness of the Chinese version, and in retrospect, Suzuki expresses his regret for this inadequacy: “If only I had been more literarily equipped then, I might have been better able to help him understand the original meaning.”<sup>24</sup>

After completing the *Tao Te Ching*, Carus and Suzuki worked together on several other translations. First they attempted an English version of the *Analects* of Confucius which was never completed. In 1906, they published translations of two important Taoist texts, *T'ai-shang Kan-ying P'ien* and *Yin-chih Wen*. Motivating Carus was his devotion to “the religion of truth.” Through his studies of Oriental texts he could glean information, add to his general understanding, and apply his critical scientific methodology.

Carus's critical approach to understanding Buddhism won for him the admiration of both Shaku Sōyen and Suzuki. His scientific methodology precluded an *a priori* acceptance or rejection of the religion, so that he could become neither an unquestioning adherent nor a closed-minded adversary. In Suzuki's words: “Dr. Carus combined the spirit of science and philosophy, and his sympathy went beyond mere interest. Thus, he was able to check himself from becoming a fanatical sympathizer, and presented Buddhism impartially and justly.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “Introduction: A Glimpse of Paul Carus,” pp. xi-xii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

Although Paul Carus employed Suzuki's talents to suit his own purposes, Suzuki was also allowed time to pursue his independent interests. Along with the more mundane tasks that Suzuki was called upon to perform for the Carus household, he was able to work on his personal studies of *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*. Suzuki describes his life at LaSalle in a letter, dated 1898, to his teacher in Japan:

Every morning I go to the editorial office to translate the *Daijō Kishin Ron* [*The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*]; every afternoon and evening, I usually stay at home also studying and doing research. When the weather is fine and I am in the mood, I go cycling about the suburbs and take pleasure in reading the books which I take with me in peaceful surroundings. These days I am leading a somewhat strange life, helping at times members of the family in menial work such as drawing water from the well, carting earth, going on errands to the grocery, chopping firewood and even cooking, if need be.<sup>26</sup>

Though the work he did was not always intellectual, Suzuki retained his humble, patient attitude, expressing no resentment toward his employer. He used the term "slavish" to describe some of the tasks he was asked to perform, but also remarked to Shaku Sōyen: "Please understand that I am not bothered about the kind of work I do at present, for everything serves to earn my livelihood."<sup>27</sup>

Carus, for his part, did much to present Buddhism in a more favorable and accurate manner than was previously available to the non-specialist in the West. Furthermore, amidst the often scornful responses of his colleagues, Carus defended Buddhism and helped extirpate it from the realm of the curious and esoteric. On a practical level, Carus created the opportunity for Suzuki's stay in America, helped his teacher's 1905 visit, gave him a publication outlet, and opened his home—as well as new horizons—to the young Japanese scholar. Even after Suzuki left LaSalle to return to his native Japan via New York, London, and Germany, Carus's dedication to the "religion of truth," a monism which could be fully reconciled with science, continued to bear the mark of Buddhism he had acquired from his own studies, as well as from Suzuki and Shaku Sōyen.

D. T. Suzuki's interpretations matured and eventually turned from Buddhism in general to Zen. Although his role in spreading Zen to the West is well known, the magnitude of his accomplishments is still inadequately appreciated. As a translator of Buddhist and Zen materials into English, Suzuki made primary

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Bandō Shōjun, "D. T. Suzuki's Life in LaSalle," *Eastern Buddhist* NS II, 1 (August 1967), p. 140.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

source material available where before there was little. As an interpreter of Far Eastern religious literature, he followed Shaku Sōyen's example by mastering western fields such as religion, psychotherapy, and the arts, and by couching his explanations in language and on levels of sophistication appropriate to his audience. A scholar competent enough to accomplish the most demanding academic tasks admirably, yet humble enough to be able to simplify when necessary, Suzuki influenced important western personalities of his time, such as C. G. Jung, Thomas Merton, W. T. Stace, John Cage, J. D. Salinger, Bernard Leach, and Erich Fromm, to mention but a few.

#### CONCLUSION

A significant change took place in the West in part as a result of the influence of Sōyen, Suzuki, Carus, and the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions. Before the twentieth century, Judeo-Christian religions were relatively well insulated from eastern religious teachings. Debate in the West was limited to problems of intrareligious sectarian differences or to confrontations between Judaism, Christianity, and, on occasion, Islam—all theistic, scriptural religions related to one another by history, geography, and philosophy. Beginning with the Chicago Parliament, however, the West started to take seriously a very different approach. It was forced to deal with Buddhism as an alternative, as a religion which could not be labelled as "pagan" and dismissed.

The first Christian missionaries to Japan had already made adjustments in their beliefs as a result of their encounters with the East. Heinrich Dumoulin describes this:

Many notable beginnings of spiritual comprehension mark the first encounters between Zen and Christianity at the dawn of the modern era. Two points are of particular importance. First to be noted is the strong influence toward refinement and "inwardness," or, more accurately, toward Orientalization, which the Christian mission experienced at the instance of Zen and the art of tea. This was true despite the fact that the turbulent century of civil wars and religious conflict provided no congenial climate for the development of these impulses, and that the storm of persecution soon destroyed these germs of new life. In the second place, Christianity promoted the development of personal self-awareness. At the end of the feudal Middle Ages new energies were stirring in Japan which foretold the coming of the modern era.<sup>28</sup>

With Shaku Sōyen's logical presentation of Buddhism and Zen, followed by Suzuki and Carus's work, however, the confrontation took on another dimension. Westerners felt constrained to defend their religious beliefs against the

<sup>28</sup> *A History of Zen Buddhism*, trans. Paul Peachey (Boston: Beacon, 1969), p. 224.



claims of Zen in the arenas of philosophical disputation. Since the religions of the East, and Zen in particular, are so different from those traditions with which the West had been comfortable for so long, the parameters of religious thought were broadened. Christian scholars at first would not admit that there could be a religion which lacked the concepts of an eternal soul or a personal God. In short, there was an attempt to show that Buddhism was not a religion at all. Once this attempt was understood to be futile, and Buddhism was admitted as a "religion," the Western world was forced to confront the fact that it had thereby significantly altered its definition of the term "religion" itself. Dumoulin describes this change: "But Christian scholars . . . had to concede to the force of the facts and recognize the religious character of Buddhism. Up until that time the term 'religion' had designated the relationship of man to a transcendent personal God or to a divine Being. Now the concept had been broadened to embrace the phenomenon of Buddhism. Today Buddhism is generally recognized by scholars as a religion, and, because of its historical and contemporary significance, it ranks among the world's great religions."<sup>29</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century also found Western religion in a state of disarray with regard to science. The positivistic worldview was gaining in popularity, and many conflicts between religious claims and the discoveries of science were making it necessary for religious thinkers to reconcile the two, apparently contradictory, directions. That Buddhism could meet the challenge of science and that someone of Paul Carus's stature could at once embrace Buddhism and "the religion of science" made it less possible for Christianity—and Western culture in general—to avoid the issue.

The 1893 Chicago World's Parliament of Religions—a spectacle of rare splendor—on one level enabled people of diverse beliefs and cultures to share the same podium, if only for a short time; on yet another it set in motion a series of events which profoundly changed the history of interreligious dialogue. For, as the early history of Zen in the West exemplifies, the lure of esoterica and the dream of diverse religions in a unified quest for "Truth," brings into stark contrast the reality of difference and disagreement, and the far more perplexing question: What do we do with our different Truths?

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.