

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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In spring of this year Heinrich Dumoulin celebrated his eightieth birthday. In the fall, he will celebrate the completion of fifty years of work as a priest and scholar in Japan. The *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* is proud to be able to publish this special double issue between those two milestones as a modest tribute to a truly remarkable man.

Father Dumoulin was born in the small Rheinland village of Wevelinghoven on May 31, 1905, the third of four children.¹ His father served the district as a Notary Public. During his Gymnasium and High School years he took a leading role in a Catholic youth renewal movement inspired by the work of the noted theologian, Romano Guardini. At the age of 19 he decided to enter the Jesuit novitiate to begin training for the priesthood, a step that surprised family and friends alike, who had simply presumed he would follow in the footsteps of his father and take up the study of law.

It was during his novitiate years that the young novice made up his mind to work in Japan and received approval from his superiors. At the time, the Jesuit mission in Japan, centered in Tokyo and Hiroshima, had not yet gained autonomy and was officially part of the West German Province. This meant not only that Japanese seminarians were occasionally sent there for theological studies, but also that the German seminarians were given considerable exposure to the work of the mission in Japan. (The Japanese region became an independent province in the post-war period.) After completing his novitiate he went on to philosophical studies at Jesuit scholasticates in Holland and France, which were then

affiliated with the Gregorian University in Rome, receiving the doctoral degree in 1929. During this time he came under the influence of Karl Prumm, a specialist in the Hellenic influences on early Christianity who had developed a keen interest in oriental religions and who guided the young man into his first systematic study of world religions. After doctoral studies he was enrolled in a one-year program at the University of Berlin to begin his formal study of Japanese, and then returned to Holland to begin his theological studies for the priesthood. In 1933 he was ordained a priest in the Society of Jesus, and in the following year completed his Licentiate in Theology. Almost without a break, he was dispatched to England for his tertiate, during which time he learned spoken English. After a brief return home, he set off for Japan, taking the land route by way of the trans-Siberian railway and arriving in October of 1935.

As was to be expected, his first duty in Japan was to learn the language. With some previous study of Japanese, principally the written language, as a base, he was able to complete his formal studies in one year and was selected by the regional superior, Father Hugo Lassalle (who was later to earn international repute as a promoter of Zen meditation in the west) to do higher studies, preferably in law. Having already decided against a legal career at a much younger age, Father Dumoulin asked to be allowed to study oriental religions. The choice was a novel one, but permission was granted. In 1936 he enrolled as a free student in the Faculty of Letters at the prestigious Tokyo Imperial University with the help of a former graduate and then professor at the Jesuit-run Sophia University in Tokyo, Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko 吉満義彦.² He was not only the first Jesuit to do so, but the only foreigner in the Department of Religious Studies. In short order he was reclassified as a post-graduate student and began doctoral studies in earnest.

At the time, Buddhism was being taught in the Department of Indian Studies, and Shinto Studies had its own department. The religious studies program was of a more general nature. From 1936 to 1939 he attended classes, at first only understanding about half of what was being said but gradually finding his way in the

Japanese system of education. Doctoral requirements were then centered almost exclusively on the composition of a thesis, which was to be directed by one of the permanent members of the department. Professor Ishibashi Tomonobu 石橋智信, an Old Testament scholar who was fluent in German and always addressed him as "Herr Doktor," took Father Dumoulin into his care and encouraged him to work on the famous Shinto scholar, Kamo Mabuchi 賀茂真淵, one of the four great scholars who promoted the renewal of Shinto during the Edo Period. Having had only a passing knowledge of the man, he immediately went to the library and withdrew the five massive volumes of his writings (later reissued in a standard 12 volume edition). In no time he was deeply engrossed in the subject, and it occupied his attention for the next several years. At first he began writing in German, but with war conditions making study more and more difficult, he shifted to Japanese. The final draft, restored to a German version of over 500 pages, was successfully defended in 1946, earning him his doctoral degree. An abridged edition of the dissertation was then published in Germany. During these years he published numerous essays on Shinto studies in the pages of *Monumenta Nipponica*.

Father Dumoulin found Professor Ishibashi a kind and understanding mentor who was able to give him the guidance he needed in studying Shinto materials. But his work did not stop there. Two young Zen monks studying with Father Dumoulin at the time had sparked his interest in Buddhism, whose study he pursued simultaneously with the composition of his thesis. With them he translated the *Mumonkan* 無門関 into German and published it in pages of *Monumenta Serica*, a journal that the Divine Word Missionaries were editing out of the Catholic University of Beijing. Although he was later to revise that work for publication as a separate volume, the experience taught him much about the tribulations of translation and brought him into deeper contact with young Buddhist scholars. It was about this time, too, that he was invited to a select circle in Hongo to participate in the translation of the *Gennin ron* 原人論, a classic Buddhist text of the T'ang Dynasty in China. He later published a translation of this text in the first

issue of *Monumenta Nipponica*, a journal begun by the Jesuits at Sophia University.³ Also among his senior colleagues at Tokyo University was the younger Nakamura Hajime, who went on to become one of the most internationally famous Buddhist scholars of Japan.

As we noted, the war gradually made conditions for study worse, until eventually he was forced to interrupt them altogether. In 1942 he had begun teaching western philosophy at Sophia University and the Catholic seminary in Tokyo. By 1944 classes had stopped altogether and he spent more and more time instructing Japanese who were interested in learning about Christianity. This pastoral experience, while apparently a break in his studies, provided an intensified encounter with popular Christian faith whose influences remained throughout his career. Indeed, during his years as a priest he has preached over one hundred retreats, and in 1949 founded a popular Japanese-language monthly journal of Christian thought, *Seiki* 世紀, which he edited until 1970. In 1950 he was assigned to the post of Assistant Novice Master at the Jesuit novitiate in Nagatsuka, replacing Father Pedro Arrupe who was given a leave of 14 months to travel around the world in search of recruits for the mission in Japan. (Father Arrupe return to Japan to be named Provincial, and later went on to become Superior General of the order.)

In 1951 Father Dumoulin moved to the Catholic seminary in Tokyo, where he served for 3 years as a spiritual advisor, and resumed his post at Sophia University where his teaching now included courses on Buddhism and oriental thought. Among the many students who came under his tutelage was Onodera Isao 小野寺功, currently Professor of Philosophy at Tokyo's Seisen University and an authority on the thought of Japan's foremost modern philosopher, Nishida Kitarō. Shortly after returning to his academic work, Father Dumoulin was visited by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, the well-known American Buddhist who had just translated and published his work on *The Development of Chinese Zen after the Sixth Patriarch*. It was she who encouraged him to pursue a more thoroughgoing history of Zen. He took up the challenge and by

1956 finished his *Geschichte des Zen Buddhismus*, a work that predates even what have since become the standard reference works in Japanese. With that watershed behind him, he traveled widely through India and Ceylon on a grant from the German Research Society to study Buddhist meditation and contemporary trends in Buddhism. This resulted in a collection of essays he edited under the title *Buddhismus in der Gegenwart* and published in 1970. These travels also inspired in him an interest in Buddhist art that he has sustained ever since. Later he was to extend his travels to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia. For a short while, he practiced Zen meditation himself, but gave it up when he found the physical strain too much. Years of experience in teaching, academic conferences, and travel flowed over into one book after another, many of which were translated into English.

After his history of Zen catapulted him into the limelight as an international scholar, he traveled throughout the United States, Europe, and parts of eastern Asia lecturing and addressing congresses. He was visiting professor at the University of Munich (1973-1974), the University of Innsbruck (1977), and the Theologischen Hochschule Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt (1979). In 1970 he was awarded a doctoral degree *honoris causa* from the theological faculty of the University of Würzburg.

In 1965, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, a group of Japanese colleagues published a *festschrift* to honor the occasion and his many efforts on behalf of interreligious dialogue.⁴ The tribute was already at this time more than deserved, but in a sense he was only at the beginning of his work in this area. From 1964 to 1979 he served as an advisor to the Secretariat for Non-Christians in Rome. In fact, it was he who put the finishing touches to the passage on Buddhism in the Second Vatican Council's decree *Nostra Aetate*,⁵ something he says he would do differently today if he had it to do over again. During these same years he served as secretary to the Japanese Bishops' Conference on their Committee for Interreligious Dialogue, in which capacity he arranged for the visits of Cardinals Marella and Pignedoli to

Japan where they met with prominent personalities in the Buddhist world. Since 1967 he has been a leading member of the Annual Colloquium between Zen Buddhist and Christian scholars.

In 1969 Father Dumoulin was approached by Father Giuseppe Pittau, a fellow Jesuit and Chairman of Sophia University's Board of Trustees with the proposal from Rome that Sophia found an institute for interreligious dialogue. Ever since the Council, Father Pittau had dreamed of establishing such a center for research and dialogue at a higher academic level than that permitted by undergraduate teaching and courses in the International Division. When a direct request came from the Vatican, he approached Father Dumoulin who gave his consent, drawing members from several departments of the University to set up what has since been known as the Institute of Oriental Religions. The work of the Institute has blossomed into an impressive array of conferences, seminars, publications, and research projects. During this time, he collaborated briefly with John Maraldo to edit a series of volumes on "Religious Encounter: East and West," the opening volume of which was his own *Christianity Meets Buddhism* in Maraldo's translation. Father Dumoulin stepped down from the directorship in 1976 and was succeeded by Fathers William Johnston (1976–1979), Thomas Immoos (1979–1985), and Kadowaki Kakichi (1985–).⁶ From 1975 to 1976, he also aided in the establishment of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya, serving briefly as its first director until failing health obliged him to resign.

Although officially retired from the University and official posts since 1976, Father Dumoulin's scholarly work has continued as before, perhaps even more intensely. Beginning in 1979, he undertook the laborious task of revising and expanding his history of Zen Buddhism, to over double its original length. The final touches to the second volume were completed during the final days of 1984.⁷ While he has no more major projects in mind at this time, one cannot visit his room without finding his desk piled high with new essays or talks in progress and new books to be read.

On more than one occasion his deep affection for Buddhist

thought and his unassuming manner have created the impression in those who came to hear him lecture abroad that he himself is Buddhist. But just as often, he has been told that his approach to Buddhism has helped Christians find their way back to their own tradition. For his part, Father Dumoulin has never tried to convert the Buddhist believers and scholars with whom he came into contact to his own faith, nor has he leveled public criticism against Buddhism. By the same token, he remains adamantly opposed to syncretistic attempts, whether institutional or private, to melt the two traditions into one. As a Christian he has always felt it his duty to inspire respect for Buddhism among his fellow believers and to open them to a wider understanding of the unfathomable, unscrutable ways of the divine providence that guides the Buddhist and Christian faiths alike.

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The essays gathered together here were all submitted especially for the occasion by colleagues of Father Dumoulin in the field of Buddhist Studies who share not only his devotion to scholarship but also his conviction that the scholar's work must answer to the larger demands of history in the making. Each of the contributions may be said to reflect one or the other aspect of his wide-ranging concerns.

Nakamura Hajime's opening essay represents the first installment of a lengthy treatise on comparative mysticism east and west. John Maraldo and Whalen Lai take up problems related directly to the study of Ch'an Buddhism, the former dealing with the thorny issue of its attitude towards historicity, the latter with a rather neglected figure whose work has recently begun to attract new attention. In his contribution, Nishimura Eshin takes up the question of the role of transcendence in Zen Buddhism, a crucial point of contact between Christian and Buddhist studies. A panoramic critique of the theory of *tathāgata-garbha* by Minoru Kiyota draws attention to the tangle of theoretical and critical

problems involved in this important Buddhist concept. This is followed by Ruben Habito's general overview of the Buddhist notion of the Dharma Body of Buddha in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the central text of the Tathāgata-garbha tradition, an issue that he has attempted elsewhere to relate to Christian incarnational theology. A concluding reflection by Julia Ching on a classic passage from the New Testament commonly cited in defense of a Christian posture of uncompromising superiority vis-à-vis other religious traditions argues that a closer reading of the text rather encourages a more sympathetic and cooperative attitude. Finally, a select bibliography of Father Dumoulin's writings has been prepared by Watanabe Manabu 渡辺 学, a Junior Research Fellow of the Nanzan Institute and former student of his.

Special thanks are due to George Pope of Nanzan University who took the recent portrait of Father Dumoulin printed at the outset of this issue.

As Father Dumoulin himself would be the first to acknowledge, and as I am sure all the contributors to this volume would agree, each in their own way, it is not the work of scholars that has generated interest among Buddhists and Christians in one another's academic and spiritual traditions, but a unique constellation of historical factors to which theirs is but one of the many necessary responses. I can think of no better introduction to this collection, and no better statement of Father Dumoulin's fundamental understanding of his own work, than the words that he himself penned in the Prologue to his first book-length monograph on Christian-Buddhist dialogue:

For the first time in history, Buddhism and Christianity are openly and intentionally encountering each other today, and in many lands. This encounter comes in a time of change and even crisis. Technology is forcing man to envision a new world unity, and at the same time threatening to manipulate nature and man so as to give man the technologist control over mankind's welfare—or mankind's destruction.

What role can the religions play in this age? Are they

destined to decline, to be crushed from without, emptied from within, to vanish from the face of the earth? Buddhism and Christianity both face new and unusual—perhaps unprecedented—tasks.⁸

NOTES

1. Much of the material for this Introduction was drawn from an interview with Father Dumoulin on April 2, 1985.
2. Yoshimitsu, who had also studied in Paris under Jacques Maritain, went on to become a leading Catholic philosopher. He died almost immediately after the end of the war. In 1984 Kōdansha published his collected works in 5 volumes. Father Dumoulin has an introductory essay in the opening volume.
3. Of this translation Father Dumoulin notes that it was "inadequate and full of errors" (*Geschichte des Zen-Buddhismus, I: Indien und China*. Bern, Francke, 1985, p.318, n.39).
4. *Nihon no fūdo to kirisutokyokyō* 日本の風土とキリスト教 [Christianity and the spiritual milieu of Japan]. Ed. by Okada Jun'ichi 岡田純一, Tokyo, Risōsha, 1965.
5. *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), par.2.
6. Father Thomas Immoos of Sophia University has supplied the information on the founding of the Institute.
7. Vol. 1 of *Zen Buddhismus* was published in spring of this year (Bern, Francke) and Vol. 2 is promised for later in the year. An English translation by Paul Knitter and myself is currently in preparation.
8. *Christianity Meets Buddhism*, LaSalle, Open Court, 1974, p.1.