

FALSE RELIGIONS, FORCED CONVERSIONS, ICONOLASM*

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The most distinctive characteristic of Sōka Gakkai^a has been its iconoclastic attitude and its fanatical conversion technique. In order to save mankind in this age "when the true Buddhist Law has been forgotten," it has launched an aggressive campaign to eradicate all vestiges of "false religions." This campaign has involved forced conversions and a systematic destruction of all their symbols, that is, all religious symbols formerly used by its converts.

On the night of April 28, 1952, a group of young men formed a long queue in front of the Main Hall of Taiseikiji^b head temple of the Orthodox Sect of Nichiren Buddhism (Nichiren Shō-shū).^c With bamboo flutes, drums, and a banner reading, "Thi Evil Priest Who Killed Our Teacher Makiguchi,"^d they marched up the stone steps, seized a priest by the name of Ogasawara,^e and took him off to an inner room where they held a Kangaroo Court. During World War II this priest allegedly compromised with the military leaders and advised Sōka Gakkai to receive the talisman of Ise Shrine. (It was because of his refusal to accept this talisman that the revered founder, Makiguchi, and others in Sōka Gakkai were imprisoned, charged with the crime of lese majesty, and it was in prison that Makiguchi died.) Moreover, the priest had compounded his crime by asserting that the Shinto kami were "the basic reality" and the buddhas only "a reflection," thereby being guilty of making the Buddha inferior to the Shinto kami. Consequently, with a flashlight

a. 創価学会 *b.* 大石寺 *c.* 日蓮正宗 *d.* 牧口 *e.* 小笠原

* For a detailed explanaton of some technical points see notes at the end of the chapter.

beaming in the old man's face the youths demanded: "Were you right when you said that the kami are 'the basic reality' and the buddhas are only 'a reflection'? Is the Great Worship-Object only 'a reflection'?" Trembling and stammering, if we are to believe the report, the old priest answered: "I was mistaken. What I said was wrong. It was bad. Praise be the Lotus Sutra. *Namu Myōhōrenge kyō.*^a *Namu Myōhōrenge-kyō.*"

This incident, which later became known as the Badger (*Tanuki*)^b Incident in the annals of Sōka Gakkai, gave the organization such a reputation for violence that a religious council of the Orthodox Nichiren Sect was called. It decided (1) that the young men should apologize through the heads of their local temples, (2) that Jōsei Toda,^c who was held responsible for the incident, should be dismissed, and (3) that he should never again be permitted to worship at the head temple. However, the issue was settled by Toda going to Taisekiji and apologizing to the temple authorities for the impetuous actions of the youth.

This was not an isolated incident. On the contrary, since then the general public has come to look upon Sōka Gakkai followers as a group of "violent religious fanatics."*

Is this reputation justified?

Nichiren's Condemnation of All Other Faiths

From its very beginning Nichiren Buddhism has been noted for its idol smashing. With the founder, Nichiren^d (1222-1282), this took the form of invectives against contemporary religions, chiefly Amida,^e that is, Pure Land Buddhism, and memorials against the government which, he claimed, was inviting foreign invasion and the nation's ruin by countenancing false teachings. During the

a. 南無妙法蓮華經 b. 狸 c. 戸田城聖 d. 日蓮 e. 阿弥陀

* Takase, Hiroi, *Daisan Bummei no Shūkyō*, (Tokyo, Kōbunshō, 1962).
pp. 160

intervening centuries most of Nichiren's followers gradually outgrew his fanaticism, but the tradition was preserved in the Orthodox Nichiren Sect and a few other small groups. Its more crass manifestations are rarely seen today except in Sōka Gakkai.

Criticism of Shinto

In the *Risshō Ankoku-ron*^a Nichiren claimed that the good kami (Shinto deities) had left the country and only the evil ones remained. Therefore, he concluded, "calamities and sorrows" had befallen the nation. In 1264 he was on his way to the execution grounds where he was supposedly to be beheaded for his crime of lese majesty against the Regent Tokimune,^b because he had publicly declared that the former Regent Saimyoji^c was in hell and that Tokimune was soon to follow. As the party paused for rest in front of the Tsurugaoka Hachiman^d Shrine in Kamakura^e, Nichiren taunted the deity to come out and save him. He did not deny the existence of the Kami but had little use for them.

Buddhism

Nichiren regarded himself as the prophet of "true Buddhism," which he claimed had been replaced throughout the land by false religions, that is, false Buddhism. "It is said in the Sutra of the Great Decease (Nirvana Sutra)," he wrote, "that if a monk sees a man injuring Buddhism and fails to reprove him, he is a worthless brother: but if he speaks up and reproves him, he is a true brother. I am scarcely worthy to be called a monk, yet I am trying to do my duty."*

The calamities which had recently shaken the country, according to Nichiren, were a punishment of the nation for its apostasy.

a. 立正安国論 b. 時宗 c. 最明寺 d. 鶴岡八幡 e. 鎌倉 f. 鎌倉

* Lloyd, Arthur, *the Creed of Half Japan*, Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1911, p. 322.

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Because of pestilence and disaster many are turning to religion. "A sharp sword is the Name of Mida," some say, and turn in prayer to the Lord of the Western Land, whilst others take up the magic charms and formulae against disease, which belong to the Lord of the Eastern Quarter When I come to examine things more closely in the light of the Scriptures, I find that the whole world is in rebellion against what is right, and that men have universally become the slaves of evil; further, that on account of this not only have the good deities left the country, but even the saints abandon the place and refuse to come back to it. Evil spirits and demons have come to take their places, and calamities and sorrows have befallen us.*

Therefore, he condemned all other religions as false.

Here is what he had to say about other Buddhist sects.

Tendai He was most considerate of Tendai.^a He maintained a deep respect for the wisdom of Tendai Daishi,^b the Chinese priest who founded the Tendai School of Buddhism; but he declared that the original teaching of the master had been perverted by Jikaku^c (died. A. D. 864) and his followers, whom he accused of "slandering the Dharma."

According to Nichiren, Tendai Daishi's teaching was efficacious for the period of the "Accommodated Dharma" but it was useless for men living in the period of the "End of the Dharma":

... even if the an identical law given by Tendai Daishi and Dengyō Daishi^d remained, it would be like last year's calender in the present time of the End of the Dharma.*

Though his criticism of Tendai Buddhism was mild, Nichiren nonetheless declared that the Tendai Sect had become corrupt and that the teachings of its founder were no longer applicable.

Amida Sects Nichiren's strongest language was reserved for the

a. 天台 b. 天台大師 c. 慈覚 d. 伝教大師

* Lloyd, *op. cit.* F. 310.

** *Kanjin Honzon Tokuishō* 観心本学得意鈔

condemnation of Hōnen^e (1133—1212), the founder of Amida Buddhism in Japan. The popularity of the Amida sects (Jōdo and Jōdo Shin)^a had caused the other temples of the country to fall into ruins and their priests to starve. In burning words Hōnen was denounced as a “deceiver” and a “blasphemer.”

Shingon^b Shingon Buddhism was attacked for its sin of “dividing the body of the Buddha.” Like the Kegon^c Sect, it had elevated the Buddha Dainichi^d (Mahāvairochana) to the head of the Buddhist pantheon, worshipping him as the “body of essence.” In Shingon the Buddha Amida is said to possess the “body of bliss” and the historical Buddha (Sakyamuni) the “body of manifestation.” Because they had denied his material body, wrote Nichiren, the followers of Shingon were like a prince who despised his father, the king, as of no rank,* a most damning statement in a class-conscious society. Shingon, he clared, relied upon sutras† that were accommodated teachings, which he said had no relation to man in the period of the “End of the Dharma.” He claimed that the most evil teaching of the Shingon Sect was its censorship and ridicule of the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, whom it had replaced by a buddha (Dainichi) whom he considered to be so ethereal as to have no direct relationship to man at all. Though Nichiren recognized the existence of Dainichi he said that he was an explanation — an accommodated teaching — given by Sakyamuni. Moreover, he criticized Shingon for stealing and distorting Tendai Daishi’s teaching that “the three thousand worlds exist in one intent thought of the mind (*Ichinensanzen*).”^e

Nara Sects The Nara sects were also attacked because they dissected the body of the Buddha. The Kusha,^f Jōjitsu^g and Ritsu^h sects, through their worship of the Buddha, Sakyamuni, the “body

a. 法然 b. 浄土真 c. 真言 d. 華嚴 e. 大日 f. 一念三千
g. 俱舍 h. 成実 i. 律

* Nichiren’s *Kaimokushō* (開目鈔), Toda’s edition, p. 63.

† Dainichi-kyō 大日經, Kongōchō-kyō 金剛頂經, Soshitsuchi-kyō 蘇悉地經, etc.

of manifestation," brought the Buddha down to a low plain, as if a prince should consider himself to be the son of a person of low rank. He denounced the Sanron^a and Hossō^b sects for worshiping only the "body of bliss," and said they were like a prince who considered his father to be of the rank of a samurai. He asserted that in all of these sects the believers, like a child who could not recognize the true nature of his father, failed to recognize the true nature of the Buddha. In contrast to them he claimed that the *Lotus Sutra* taught the oneness of the three bodies of the Buddha.

Zen Zen,^c with its faith in self-effort and its worship of the historical Sakyamuni himself as the "body of manifestation," according to Nichiren, despised the *Lotus Sutra*, which he regarded as the highest of all scriptures. To support his position he quoted from the *Nirvana* (*Nehan*)^d *Sutra* a sarcastic criticism of the Zen practice of meditation (*zazen*)^e and the continual searching of the mind for truth:

Pray that you may be the instructor of your mind and not instructed by your mind.

Zen was to be condemned as a "slanderer of the Dharma," and a work of the devil.

Finally, with one sweeping invective Nichiren summed up his contempt for all other Buddhist sects: "The Nembutsu^f (*Amida* sects) is hell; Zen is a devil; Shingon is the nation's ruin; and Ritsu is a traitor to the country."

Sōka Gakkai takes up the Torch

The torch of witch hunting was taken up very effectively by Sōka Gakkai, which believes that the Nichiren Shō Sect, that did not exist in Nichiren's day, is now the one and only true faith. All others are said to be false. The extermination of false teachings — which misguided the people, plunged the nation into despair, and ultimately

a. 三論 b. 法相 c. 禪 d. 涅槃 e. 坐禪 f. 念仏

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brought about the country's defeat in World War II — is the battle-cry of Sōka Gakkai members as it was of Nichiren himself.

Shinto The Shinto kami are ridiculed. Money offerings must be presented to them, but what use, they ask, has a kami for money? Paper talisman are supposed to offer protection from all kinds of calamities — fire, theft, sickness — and to guarantee peace at home and success in business, but in six months or a year the holder is supposed to burn them and secure new ones! If there were any power in them, the Sōka Gakkai believers declare, no one would ever think of burning them. Finally, they argue that, if a person is in need, he usually goes to the place where he can get help. If he needs healing, he goes to a doctor; if he needs fish, he goes to the fish monger. Praying at a shrine for healing, says Sōka Gakkai, is like praying to a fish monger. Various superstitions (e. g., if three persons have their picture taken together, the one in the middle will have an early death) are ridiculed.

The ancestral gods, so dear to the heart of Shinto and the established Buddhist sects, are not completely denounced: the true believer may render them thanks but not worship. The numerous kami are included among the deva gods of Buddhism, and then made sport of, much in the manner that Nichiren himself did. Without denying them outright, Sōka Gakkai claims that they have left Japan, or that only the evil kami remain.

In the *Manual on Forced Conversion* the origin of Shinto in animism is briefly traced and criticized as having no doctrine at all. The existence of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, the imperial ancestress, is not denied, but it is contended that she has left the country and will not return until Japan has turned to the true religion, the Nichiren Shō Sect.

Buddhism

Sōka Gakkai teaches that by the time Nichiren appeared Buddhism

had already cut itself off from its true roots. Tracing the history of Japanese Buddhism, Sōka Gakkai accuses it of vacillation and compromise in its endeavor to always stay in the good graces of the governing powers. Thus, they say, Buddhism was indolent and oblivious to the needs of the people in the Edo period and yielded itself as a tool of the government against Christianity. In the Meiji era it joined the group in power and then catered to the military during their rise to power in the Showa era; but today it pretends to be democratic!

All forms of Buddhism, other than its own, are nothing but a bare skeleton with no doctrine, no "power of the Dharma," no "Buddha power." As for the priests, they are priests in name only, with no faith or practice. Their only concern is to eke out a living through performing funeral and memorial rites for the dead, and watching after the graves.

New Buddhist Sects Some of The new, or popular Buddhist sects, which have their roots in the Nichiren tradition, are the Reiyū Kai,^a Risshō Kōsei Kai,^b Kōdō Kyōdan,^c Kokuchū Kai,^d and Nihonzan Myōhōji^e and Daijō-kyō.^f These new religions are criticized for their practice of ancestor worship, onomancy, shallow social works, copying the True Mandala, and so forth.

Tenri-kyō^g Several reasons are given for the success of Tenri-kyō, Sōka Gakkai's leading rival. Among them are (1) the general ignorance of the people regarding religion, (2) a large, impressive headquarters, (3) an attraction for down-and-out people, (4) simple guidance for everyday living, (5) the practice of healing, (6) the training of the followers not to think of misfortune as misfortune. The most cutting criticism that Sōka Gakkai makes of Tenrikyō, however, is that the believers are poor and that their religion, far from helping them to improve their lot, encourages personal bank-

a. 霊友会 b. 立正佼成会 c. 孝道教団 d. 国柱会 e. 日本山妙法寺
f. 大乘教 g. 天理教

ruptcy for the benefit of the headquarters.

Konkō-kyō^a The teaching of Konkō-kyō's scriptures is criticized as being common sense ethics mixed with the basest kind of religious practices. From the point of view of Sōka Gakkai, Konkō-kyō's teaching that man will be redeemed if he can get rid of desire is ridiculous, since a man with no human desires would have no reason to go on living. The destruction by fire of the headquarters of this sect in 1925, is pointed out by Sōka Gakkai as an evil omen, proving that Konkō-kyō is a false religion.

Seichō No Ie^b This sect is labeled a "business concern" or publishing house rather than a religion. People are promised salvation if they will carry a book in their pockets. They do not grapple with the problem of the origin of unhappiness and sickness, but simply deny the existence of such things. They mistakenly try to synthesize Christianity and Buddhism which are poles apart. They deny matter, claiming that everything is in the mind. A person is told to be grateful for everything. Even if he gets his trampled on in a crowded street-car, he is supposed to say to the unthoughtful person who trod on him, "I am so grateful you didn't get your shoe dirty." This kind of teaching is said to be modeled on Christianity's impractical teaching of "love thine enemy."

Christianity Christianity is the universal non-Buddhist religion singled out for attack. The Christian idea of a Creator God is considered to be out of date and unscientific. The self or soul is denied. Christianity is called a religion without power to change man's present condition. It is inferior to Buddhism. While Buddhism promises salvation to all, Christianity threatens the unbeliever with eternal damnation. The doctrines of the divinity and the resurrection of Christ are outside the province of rational thought. Buddhism alone grapples with the main problems of life: the origin and the goal of suffering. Belief in a heaven to which one goes after death

a. 金光教 b. 生長の家

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is, like that of the Pure Land of the Amida sects, nothing but a fabrication. In talking of God, love, goodness, and sin, the followers of Christianity are frantically searching for something which, if they only knew it, can be found in the Worship-Object of the Nichiren Shō faith. Trying to cover up the impotence of their faith, Christians lose themselves in social works by which they lead others astray.

How, they ask does Christianity regard the following contradictions?

(1) Only believers will be saved, yet there is an obligation to save those who have gone astray.

(2) The same Christian Church that preached “love thine enemies” persecuted Galileo and other scientists.

(3) Dropping the atomic bomb directly on the Japanese Christian city of Nagasaki.^a

(4) While the Great Holy One was victorious when his life was threatened at Tatsunokuchi,^b Christ suffered a miserable, violent death.

(5) Not one of Christ’s prophecies was fulfilled.

(6) Isn’t the internal disunity of Christianity, which is apparent in the current ecumenical movement, proof that Christian doctrine is impotent?

(7) While speaking of the poor in spirit and the pure in heart, the Vatican has had a history of colossal power and political pressure.

(8) Since the various sects contain false doctrine and teach principles that cast men deeper into sin turning their backs on Christ, which of all the Christian sects represents the true tradition and doctrine?

Forced Conversion

Three terms in the Buddhist or, more specifically, the Nichiren

a. 長崎 b. 竜の口

Buddhist tradition are important for an understanding of this faith: *Shōju*,^a *shakubuku*^b and *hōbōbarai*.^c The latter two provide the rationale for Sōka Gakkai's aggressive conversion activities, and its intolerance of all other religious faiths, even including other sects of its own faith.

Moral Suasion or Pressure

Shakubuku (pronounced *shakufuku* by some members) means "to destroy and conquer." It is an old term which originally was used by Nichiren to designate the conversion activity of his followers, but it had long since been outgrown and generally forgotten even by most Nichiren sects until its revival by Sōka Gakkai. Today there is hardly an adult Japanese that does not know the word. The term occurred originally in the *Shōmangyō*,^d in connection with a parallel term, *shōju*, which means, literally, "acceptance." *Shakubuku* designates intolerant propaganda to produce a forced conversion; *Shōju* a tolerant approach by means of moral suasion. Nichiren stressed that tolerant, moral suasion could be used with some men, but that with others it was necessary to use intolerant methods."

Moral Suasion: Shōju

Examples of the use of moral suasion are numerous but these are seldom sensational enough to make news.

A woman follower of Sōka Gakkai, without any thought of financial remuneration, served as a practical nurse and housemaid for three years in the home of a neighbor dying of cancer. Inevitably, then, — so the story goes — when the patient finally died her husband and all the members of her family became converts to Sōka Gakkai.

A tenement dweller felt perfectly free to call upon her Sōka Gakkai neighbor for help in the middle of the night when her father was

a. 摂受 b. 折伏 c. 誘法 d. 勝鬘經

being rushed to the hospital with stomach pains. Later, after this man too had died of stomach cancer, the same neighbor stayed away from her work for three days (sacrificing badly needed wages) in order to help the family with funeral arrangements. Naturally, here too a conversion followed.

Twenty of the thirty residents in a dormitory for working girls in Yokohama recently joined Sōka Gakkai after one of the girls was healed of scars of the atomic bomb on her face. The "miracle of healing" was accomplished by a plastic surgeon, but it was a devout Sōka Gakkai member who insisted that she could be healed, and it was this believer who worked and prayed until the "miracle" was accomplished.

Forced Conversion : Shakubuku

It is stories of forced conversions, however, that have mainly reached the press and it is these that are responsible for the generally unfavorable public attitude toward the sect. This technique of intimidation is carried on in a very systematic manner. Two or three members will approach a prospect at his place of business in the presence of customers, or in his home in front of guests, and will not give up until the object of their attack has promised to become a member. The average housewife is often subjected to conversion efforts from a delivery man, the gasmeter man, or even former classmates and school friends who ostensibly just drop in for a chat.

The reason for this frenzied conversion activity is not difficult to understand. President Ikeda,^a speaking to a group of Sōka Gakkai leaders in Nakano^b Ward, Tokyo (June 17, 1960), pointed out three reasons for *shakubuku* activity. (1) It is the quickest route to achieving Buddhahood and happiness in this life. (2) It is necessary to break the chain of karma and cut oneself loose from the effects

a. 池田 b. 中野

of deeds of one's past existence. (3) Through winning another by means of *shakubuku* the believer shares his happiness and reaps additional merit for himself. According to Ikeda, this is "killing three birds with one stone."

Consequently members compete to see who can win the most converts, and thus acquire greater merit. At first a member may approach a friend or an acquaintance who has indicated in some way that he may be undergoing some particular trial or misfortune — usually business difficulties or sickness. If the person does not turn the Sōka Gakkai caller away absolutely, other members will hear about it, and an onslaught will begin from all quarters. Whenever a person seems likely to give in, members begin coming in teams; but a new convert is credited only to the person who can show that he won him, and the membership is registered in this member's own group wherever that may be. Those with a large number of successes to their credit are rewarded with positions as the head of troops, districts, and so forth.

Appeals to be Reasonable Toda however, was aware of the danger of fanaticism and often cautioned against irrational activity in his public lectures. In an essay entitled "The Middle Path." (June 1, 1954), he appealed to his followers to be sensible in their religious fervor.

The attitude of the man of faith is the attitude of the Middle Path. Of course there is merit in *shakubuku*; and, if a man has something special to ask for, *shakubuku* is extremely important. But there are some of you who are neglecting your work to do *shakubuku*. and then weeping because the money doesn't come in. This is ridiculous. Business is business. Do your business, and dedicate your free time to *shakubuku*. The man who hears about *shakubuku* and shoves his work aside to engage in *shakubuku* only is off his rocker. Business is business, and it takes planning and thought. The basic power which enables a man to plan and think is the power of faith. That which enables a man to cut down his losses and increase his gains is the Wonderful Reason of faith —

the power of faith*

Moreover, in what purports to be a definitive history of the faith and doctrine of this sect, put out by the Lotus Sutra Society (a Sōka Gakkai organization of students of Tokyo University), the section on *shakubuku* is illuminating in its attempt to make this activity respectable.

A person hears about the Nichiren Shō Sect or Sōka Gakkai from a member of Sōka Gakkai. This is *shokubuku*. Since there are members in every class and branch of society, people hear about it through their relations with friends, acquaintances, social companions, neighbors, relatives, and so forth. As for the place where *shakubuku* activity is conducted, it varies from the occasion of receiving a visitor in one's home, or visiting in another's home, after leaving work, on a trip, or at a discussion meeting of Sōka Gakkai.

Opposition and criticism may accompany *shakubuku*. *shakubuku* is often referred to as "forcing faith," or as an "attack on individuals," but is it indeed so? Can a person be forced to believe? ... *shakubuku* first and last takes the attitude of charity (*jihi*)^a. It is "an invitation to true faith," coming from a desire to eliminate mistaken religions which are the root of unhappiness, and to make another happy. It is pure, sincere activity based upon "conviction" which has back of it abundant experience. But there are a great many people who are opposed to *shakubuku* either because of ignorance or because of (its insistence on) discarding traditional religions which have become a habit. There are people who have a negative psychological reaction to the very word *jashūkyōb* (false religions). †

Finally, the current president has also appealed to members to "speak and act with common sense." He has reprimanded them for making obscene gestures when passing before shrines and temples of other sects and calling out in loud voices, *Jashūc* ("False Religions")!

a. 慈悲 b. 邪宗教 c. 邪宗

* Kasahara, Kaxuo, *Kakumei no Shūkyō*, Jirnbutsu Ōraisha, 1964, pp. 298—299.

† *Nichiren Shō-sha Sōka Gakkai*, Sankibō Butsushorin, 1962, pp. 304—5.

And he has forbidden *shakubuku* activity on the job and staying at a neighbor's house until the early morning hours trying to win a convert.

Examples of Forced conversion In spite of these admonitions, however, the practice of trying to force people to convert has continued throughout the years, although admittedly there has been a gradual diminution in stories of extreme violence.

To give an early example of what has happened, the unprecedented increase in members throughout the mining community of Yūbari,^a Hokkaidō,^b created quite a sensation in 1957, when a clash with the coal miners union turned the nation's attention to that area. It was reported in the *Weekly Asahi* (*Shūkan Asahi*,^c July 7, 1957) that Sōka Gakkai members would call on the housewife in her husband's absence and threaten her saying, "We hope your husband comes home safely from work today," or "It will be fortunate indeed if your child develops normally."

Intimidation of the parents of middle school children by school teachers doing home visitation were reported in Hyōgo^d Prefecture, and a headline of the *Yomiuri News* (*Yomiuri Shimbun*,^e July 6, 1957) read, "Sōka Gakkai becomes Problem in Tokyo." This article told how school teachers in Tokyo elementary schools used the regular home visitation program as an opportunity to proselytize. Parents were told that if they did not become members of Sōka Gakkai their children would become abnormal. When the matter was investigated by the education committee of local school districts, one teacher defended herself by saying that, since she had gained so much happiness from her faith, she felt it was only natural to try to offer to help when she visited an evidently unhappy home.

A still earlier case of forced conversion, which is typical of many others, was reported in the *New Religions News* (*Shin Shūkyō Shimbun*,^f November 20, 1955). Because she did not say "no"

b. 夕張 c. 北海道 d. 週刊朝日 e. 兵庫 f. 読売新聞 g. 新宗教新聞

firmly enough to discourage them, three or four young members called on a young woman for days in succession, each time warning her that if she did not become a believer within a week some terrible calamity would befall her home. On the last day they said they wouldn't move until she gave in, and she finally allowed them to sign her name at two o'clock in the morning.

A more recent example is the experience of the Rev. Mitsuzō Gotō,* a Christian minister and Professor of Evangelism at Japan Christian College, who tells in a recent publication of being lured into attending a Sōka Gakkai meeting in July, 1963, where he was given the third degree for several hours. A veteran with thirty years of pastoral experience, Mr. Gotō reportedly turned the tables on his attackers, answering every criticism which they made of Christianity, taking the young members to task for screaming at him without giving him a chance to explain his position, and, in the end, bringing his antagonists to the point where they begged to be released so that they could go home to sleep. A similar attempt at conversion occurred the previous year in Okinawa. When members began to gather for an evening meeting in the Kin Baptist Church, a group of Sōka Gakkai youth suddenly appeared and forced some of the Christians to accompany them to their own discussion meeting in a building not far away.

The following two incidents are somewhat typical of what has been happening in recent years:

Sixty-eight Sōka Gakkai youth with saws and pliers entered a Buddhist cemetery at midnight on February 10 (1962), broke down barricades set up by the Buddhist Association of the village, and routed the policemen in order to conduct a burial for the father of one Wakameda Kushiro (age 45) in Karasuyama,^a Tochigi^b Prefecture. Priest Iso of the Ichijūin^c Temple of the

a. 烏山 b. 栃木 c. 新潟

* Gotō, Mitsuzō, *Sōka Gakkai no Shakubuku ni Kotaeru*, Word of Life Press, 1964.

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Shingon Sect told the police that Kushiro had been refused burial rights at the cemetery since his lease on the family plot had expired and since seven years before he had joined Sōka Gakkai and withdrawn from the sect which owned the burial ground, (*Asahi Shimbun* (newspaper), Feb. 10, 1962)

Mrs. Sui Tamura (age 56) was beaten over the head and bruised about the face by her son in the latter's fanatic effort to destroy the family Buddhist altar and convert his mother to faith in Sōka Gakkai. Fleeing her son and daughter-in-law the mother sought asylum at the local police station at 11:00 p. m., on April 21 (1962). The incident took place in a village called Seiro in Niigata^c Prefecture. (*Asahi Shimbun*, April 23, 1962)

Election Violence Of relevant interest is the fact that, while in recent years reports of violence on the part of Sōka Gakkai fanatics in connection with elections have noticeably fallen off, cases of this type are still not lacking. In connection with the 1962 House of Councilors election, for example, the *Asahi Shimbun*^a carried a report of an attack on police in Kyōto by Sōka Gakkai youth who were enraged by police action in arresting members for election law violations. Similar incidents of violence were reported elsewhere, as, for example, the case of the Yokohama^b City Councilman who had all of his posters torn down because he wouldn't convert to the faith. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a definite change in tactics on the part of Sōka Gakkai adherents.

An example of the promptness and efficiency with which Sōka Gakkai follows up leads for possible converts is a recent experience of the writer. In order to find out directly from headquarters what the attitude of Sōka Gakkai's leaders was toward their victory in the 1962 Upper House election, a letter was sent asking for information. Within a week a middle-aged, well-dressed gentleman appeared at his home and presented his card. He was head of the Sōka Gakkai district in which the writer lived. He said that he had received a telephone call from the headquarters in Tokyo, from no less a person than a

a. 朝日新聞 b. 横浜 c. 新湯

Mr. Shiraki who had been successful in the election. Needless to say, his intention was not to impart information about the election but to effect a conversion.

However, conversion through these high-pressure methods of necessity is extremely superficial. Often a person decides to join in order to put a stop to the incessant nagging of friend or relative. Afterwards superstition and fear of divine punishment are employed to keep a new member from falling away.

Sweeping away Slanderers : *Hōbōbarai*

Hōbōbarai,^a sometimes pronounced *bōhōbarai*, is a follow-up technique which means, literally, "sweeping out all slanderers of the Dharma." Specifically, it means to remove, forcibly or otherwise, the talismen and amulets connected with the worship of Shinto kami and to destroy any Buddhist statues or symbols which previously have been used by a new convert as objects of worship.

In Fukushima^b Prefecture, Ishikami Mura,^c a group of seven Sōka Gakkai men tore down a Kannon^d temple building and burned the image. Several men entered a Christian Church in Aomori^e Prefecture and, when the minister would not convert, took his Bible and beat it upon the floor. A man came home one day to discover that his wife had thrown into the ocean a Buddhist altar which had been in his family for generations. He left her immediately and instituted divorce proceedings.

Such is the fervor of Sōka Gakkai's iconoclastic activities. Recently, however, because of the constant recurrence of unreasonable acts of violence on the part of overly devout members and public criticism, Sōka Gakkai has also modified its instruction regarding *hōbōbarai*. In the book by the Tokyo University Sōka Gakkai group, already mentioned above, the advice to members is in a much milder vein

a. 謗法払い b. 福島 c. 石上村 d. 観音 e. 青森

than what appeared in Kodaira's^a earlier (1958) work, *Sōka Gakkai*. Moreover, in a book which came off the press in May, 1962, members were advised not to tear down god shelves or burn talismen and amulets before they had secured the consent of the other members of the family. Younger members, especially women, were advised that they might have to be content to let the god-shelves remain in their homes if family members of higher status did not consent to their removal. Ancestral tablets, they are now told, do not have to be burned but must not be treated as objects of faith. And Shinto deities, in many cases the spirits of former rulers, great men, or pioneers who are enshrined throughout the country, can now receive respect but must not be worshiped.

The truth of the matter is that Sōka Gakkai leaders have never been happy about the public image that its fanatical members — especially its young members — have created, and they have consciously sought to change this image and gain as much respectability as possible for their organization. One way to achieve this, of course is to persuade the press not to publish unfavorable reports and it is understood that this has been done. The general director of a leading literary journal said in an interview that Sōka Gakkai was “quite noisy” about unsolicited news coverage in the secular press. It is easy to understand how a newspaper with a national circulation would be wary of offending a potential reading public of several million! Perhaps this may account for the “silent press . . . created during the last eight years,” about which Kiyooki Murata wrote in the *Japan Times* (June 11, 1964).

However, in spite of recent indications of a more conciliatory attitude Sōka Gakkai continues to be intolerant of all other religions. On this point there is no evidence of any change of heart.

The Manual of Forced Conversion (Shakubuku Kyōten) is Sōka Gakkai's indispensable guide for conversion activities. In this one

a. 小平

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volume the member is given all that is considered necessary concerning the teachings of his own faith, as well as the essential characteristics of all other religions. The points most vulnerable to attack in other religions are listed, and the faithful member has them all on the tip of his tongue. It is interesting for members of other faiths to talk to a number of members in entirely different situations, and listen to them reeling off the same criticisms. If the conversation advances one step beyond what they have been taught from the manual, they are lost. It is a most sobering experience for a Christian missionary, such as the writer, to discover that apparently the sum total of all that these people know about Christianity is what is presented in their *Manual of Forced Conversion*. Probably the followers of other religious faiths feel the same way.

NOTES

1. *Tendai Daishi's five-fold classification* of the sutras was the model for Nichiren's own classification. He believed, however, differing from Tendai, that the *Lotus Sutra* was the culmination of the Buddha's teaching and had been given to replace all sutras in the period of the End of the Dharma, which had been initiated by Nichiren himself.
2. In a book called *Senchakushūa*, Honen criticized the traditional sutras of Buddhism and settled on a three-part sutra composed of the Muryōju-kyō, Kammuryōju-kyō, and Amida-kyō as the only reliable teaching. Thus, Hōnen defied the Tendai tradition of the reliability of all the sutras and committed the mortal sin, according to Nichiren, of discarding the *Lotus Sutra* along with the others.
3. The word *kami*, ordinarily used to designate Shinto deities, is defined in the *Manual of Forced Conversion (Shakubuku Kyōten)* as beings whose function it is to protect the followers of the true Buddhist Dharma. This idea of the function of the traditional Japanese deities is not new with Sōka Gakkai. By the end of the Heian period (ca. 1,100) a syncretic form of Shinto, called *Ryōbu Shintō*, had evolved which was especially related to esoteric Buddhism. Buddhist deities were assumed to be the real entities of the traditional Shinto deities which were only reflections. Great Shinto deities such as the Sun Goddess were identified with particular buddhas or bodhisattvas, while lesser Shinto *kami* were assigned the role of "protector"

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of the devout, a role similar to that given to the deva gods in primitive Indian Buddhism. It was a reversal of this idea that was back of the "Badger Incident" described at the beginning of this essay.

4. The Itchi Branch of Nichiren Buddhism, a classification which includes the temples at Ikegami, Nakayama, and the Itchi Branch of Kyōto, as well as the Fuji Fuse (or Fuji-Fuse Kōmon), professes faith in the oneness of the basic and footprint doctrines found in the *Lotus Sutra*. This means that they consider the literal teaching of the first fourteen chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* to be of equal importance to the hidden teaching found in the last fourteen chapters. To Sōka Gakkai members, the hidden, basic teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* is the truth that the Buddha exists from eternity and that all men can attain buddhahood in the present state of existence. Thus, Sōka Gakkai members contend that the basic doctrine is superior to the footprint doctrine, and that those Nichiren sects which hold to the unity of the two are mistaken.
5. Shōretsu Branch of Nichiren Buddhism is a group made up of the Hommon Hokke Sect (the former Happon Branch) and the Butsuryū Sect, the Kempon Hokke Sect, the Hokke Sect, and the old Hommon Sect. These are regarded by Sōka Gakkai as closer to the truth in that they recognize the superiority of the basic doctrine of the *Lotus Sutra* to the footprint doctrine, but they are condemned for not having preached the complete realization of the true meaning of the basic doctrine itself.