

NICHIREN—PROPHETIC PANTHEIST

BY TERESINA ROWELL

A MAN who could denounce the extreme political and social disorder of his age and at the same time proclaim his country as ideally the spiritual paradise on earth must have united prophetic vision with mystical intuition to an unusual degree. In a union still less familiar among prophets this same man brought together the 'three times'—past as well as present and future—by finding the sources of his inspiration in a scriptural tradition with its roots in the distant past.¹ And since prophets have not been wont to concern themselves with metaphysical speculation, his unique place in the biography of prophesy is assured, in the third place, by his keen philosophical interest in the eternal reality which is timeless, deep underlying the changing ages of passing time.

Nichiren, the mediaeval Japanese Buddhist reformer, metaphysician, and mystic of whom we speak, is justly set in the ranks of the prophets, because of his reforming zeal and ardent concern for the future, inspired by that conviction which is the distinguishing mark of all prophesy—the conviction that the cosmos is working toward some ideal goal, and that he, the prophet, has a significant responsibility for the realization of that goal even in his time. In the light of this cosmic purpose the prophet criticizes his own age and points the way to what the future should be, so that on earth the next age shall be a closer approximation to the "golden age" and a step towards its ultimate realization.

The appearance of such a conviction in Buddhism is unex-

¹Cf. Amos, a representative Hebrew prophet, whose authority is the direct inspiration of God: "Thus saith the Lord." He appeals to tradition only occasionally, and then not as authority but as the proof of Israel's debt to Jehovah. The rest of his verbs are almost entirely in the future.

pected. It is familiar in Judaism and Zoroastrianism,² for teleology is a natural and perhaps inevitable concomitant of their belief in a transcendent God outside of nature³ who created the world and directs it toward the ultimate realization of His purposes in some "far-off divine event." But pantheism or any worship of a God *in* nature tends to emphasize mechanism, causality, the natural order of events, and repudiates teleology.⁴

How then may we account for Nichiren's unexampled combination of immanent theism with a pronounced doctrine of cosmic purpose? It is really much more than a 'combination'; it is a synthesis which cannot be understood apart from the Buddhist teachings which inspired his ethical conviction and supplied the basis for his metaphysics, nor apart from his time and his own temperament, which help to explain the gospel he developed out of scriptural teachings and the earnestness with which he applied that gospel to the problems of contemporary life.

There were problems to vex the wisest philosopher-king confusing thirteenth century Japan. The imperial regime had broken down, its divided remnants fought each other while the new feudal organization really ruled the country from the north; the civilian population besides enduring a civil war, suffered from fires and plagues and all sorts of natural and unnatural calamities, while the effeminate nobles sought escape from responsibility in the aestheticism of a degenerate court life and a ritualistic cult of Buddhism. The calamities instead of encouraging a hardy religious life among the people only fomented the appeal of magic and superstition. It seemed, indeed, as if the long prophesied third age of Buddhism⁵ had come.

In 1222, in the midst of this chaotic period, Nichiren was born in a fishing village in south-eastern Japan. The outstanding quality of his character as shown even in his childhood was his zest for learning, not for mere intellectual knowledge, but for that under-

²Edwyn Bevan in his lecture '*The Hope of a World to Come underlying Judaism and Christianity*' maintains that *only* among Hebrews and Persians did the belief in a future consummation take root, and that this belief is what primarily distinguished Christianity from a Greek or Oriental mystery cult.

³This was suggested to me by Satomi who derived his idea from Tiele.

⁴See particularly Spinoza, appendix to Bk. V of the *Ethics* for a polemic against teleology.

⁵The age of the Latter Law, supposed to follow the 1st Millenium after Buddha's death, i.e., Age of the Perfect Law; and the 2nd Millenium, i.e., Age of the Copied Law.

standing which unifies and illumines all of life. From the time when he was twelve years old he prayed to the Bodhisattva Kokuzo, god of wisdom, to be made the wisest man in Japan.⁶ This is significant as indicating that in his unique combination of prophetic and philosophic temperament, the philosophical was primary, and that his prophetic conviction grew gradually out of his increasing understanding of the essence of Buddhist truth in contrast to the blind aberrations of the Buddhists of his time. A man in whom prophetic zeal was primary could not have spent twenty years in study like Nichiren, seeking for the one truth of Buddhism, which he felt must lie hidden beneath the labyrinthine wanderings of the contemporary sects. Yet we may question whether a conviction resulting from study alone would ever have produced a fiery enthusiasm like that of Nichiren; there must always have been a prophetic quality in the keen ethical interest with which he sought for the truth. The unity he sought was never a mere abstract essence, but a principle which should unify all of human life. This practical interest is illustrated in his effort to apply his unifying principle to the political disunity of Japan, which troubled him as much as the wanderings of the misguided Buddhist sects. From boyhood he had worried over the Shōkyu war (1221) in which the Hōjōs (head of the feudal regime) had beaten the imperial party, and a mere subject had exiled three ex-emperors; for he felt that the nation as well as the religion should be one. This concern for the social implications of the truth marks Nichiren a prophet; he was never a 'pure' metaphysician, but always insisted on embodying the truth in his life. We shall see how this notion of the individual embodiment of the Truth gives a key to his development of a prophetic gospel out of a pantheistic metaphysics.

Nichiren's native ethical consciousness was fostered by his early rural life, which gave him an excellent vantage point from which to criticize with a good deal of personal authority the luxurious debilitating life of the capital. And his country origin might further have fostered his prophetic career by producing in him that intolerance which is almost essential to prophesy—a certain naiveté, a certain oversimplification due to isolation from the skepticism and conflicting viewpoints of the city, an isolation which encourages prophesy, in that dogmatism is usually necessary for conviction

⁶*Works*, Ryozonkaku Ed., 2nd. Series pp. 88 quoted by Satomi *Japanese Civilization* p. 120.

and personal assurance, while wide understanding of all the complexities of life paralyzes action and produces a sense of impotence.

But here again Nichiren eludes our dichotomies. He escaped the intellectual intolerance which his rural background might have engendered, through his zeal for comprehensive understanding (sought in years of study with learned priests of various sects) but this wide understanding never paralyzed his prophetic zeal. It only developed it and gave it a basis in tradition, for his social conscience and passion for unification made him wring out of his varied learning a truly prophetic conviction expressing itself in the strongest *moral intolerance* of all the abuses of contemporary Buddhism. This intolerance was no naive oversimplification; it was a gradual growth, based on deep understanding of the principles of the various sects and their relation to the essence of Buddhist tradition. He even practiced the Nembutsu⁷ for a time in his youth; in his first essay he praised the esoteric Shingon ritual;⁸ he studied the deepest thought of Zen at Kamakura, of Tendai at Mt. Hiei, as well as Hinduism and Confucianism, all the while seeking diligently to find out the central and unique truth of Buddhism. And gradually he came to feel that this central truth was expressed in the Lotus Scripture, the Saddharma Pundarika or Hokke-kyō (Myōhō-rensge kyō in Sinico-Japanese). The more he studied it, the more light did he find in it concerning the problems of his time, and the stronger grew his conviction that most of the Japanese sects of the time were wandering in the dark. Particularly to the point in this connection were the passages in the Lotus Scripture describing the various kinds of mistaken Buddhists who should degrade the Law in the latter age. Nichiren found that these prophesies applied with extraordinary aptness to the vagaries of the contemporary sects in their departure from the True Law of Buddhism: the occult ritualism of Shingon, the easy-way salvation by faith of Amidism, the disciplinarian formalism of the Ritsu monks who sought only their own salvation, the excessive 'devilish' independence of Zen.

Continued study of the Hokke only deepened Nichiren's con-

⁷The practice of calling upon Amida, Lord of the Western Paradise. *Works* p. 1770 (ed. Katō, Tokyo, 1904).

⁸This casts a significant light on the Shingon elements in his final graphic representation of his truth in the "Mandala" where the union of the Eternal Diamond World with the phenomenal world is distinctly reminiscent of Shingon teachings.

viction of the errors of all existing forms of Buddhism, and, what was still more important, aroused his personal sense of mission. For the Lotus is full of passages praising those who preach its Truth and live its gospel, particularly in the latter degenerate age:

“Revere the Truth revealed in this holy book, and preach it to others! Anyone who will fulfill this task, so difficult to do, is entitled to attain the Way of Buddha beyond comparison. He is the child of Buddha, the eyes of the world, and will be praised by all Buddhas.”⁹

Particularly to be praised, according to the Lotus, is the man who lives its Truth in the latter age and suffers manifold persecutions for its sake:

“Just as the light of the sun and moon
Expels all dimness and darkness,
So *this man*, living and working in the world,
Repels the gloom (of illusion) of all beings.”¹⁰

In 1261 Nichiren set forth in a general way¹¹ how such a man, ‘reading’ the Lotus with his life, should be the leader of Japan:

“One who would propagate the Buddhist truth, by having convinced himself of the five principles, is entitled to become the leader of the Japanese nation. One who knows that the Lotus of Truth is the king of all scriptures, knows the truth of the religion. . . . If there were no one who ‘read’ the Lotus of Truth, there could be no leader of the nation; without a leader, the nation would do naught but be bewildered.”

Many of the prophesies in the Lotus are concerned with the persecutions which the man who embodies it in the latter age must endure. These descriptions agreed so well with the persecutions which followed Nichiren that he began to be convinced that he must be the man foretold:

“There are many in Japan who read and study the Lotus of Truth. . . . but there is none who is abused because of (his revering) the Lotus of Truth. . . . The one who really reads it is none other than I, Nichiren, who put in practice the text, ‘We shall not care for bodily life, but do our best for the sake of the in-

⁹*Sacred Books of the East*. vol. xxi p. 242-243, v. 38-41.

¹⁰*ibid.* p. 369.

¹¹*Works* p. 427, quoted in Anesaki, *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet*, p. 43 (Harvard University Press, 1916) I am indebted to Professor Anesaki for almost all the factual material in this paper.

comparable Way.' Then I, Nichiren, am the one, supreme one, the pioneer of the Lotus of Truth."¹²

As Nichiren became more deeply convinced that he was the man foretold in the Lotus, all the prophesies therein came to have increasing meaning for him, in that they related him intimately with the distant past and hoped-for future, setting him in the noble line of those Bodhisattvas who had in all ages sacrificed their own Nirvana in order to further universal enlightenment, the goal toward which the fundamental nature of things was working. The ultimate attainment of their goal was foretold aeons ago, as described in the Lotus, by the Buddha Sakyamuni who declared, "I have always from eternity been instructing and quickening all these beings";¹³ who had announced himself the commander (in the coming fight against vice and illusion) and "agreed to raise us mortal beings to the rank of Buddha."

These are the parts of the Lotus which especially inspired Nichiren's prophetic conviction—the assurances that there is a purpose in the universe working toward universal enlightenment and destined ultimately to accomplish it through the instrumentality of Bodhisattvas in all ages, particularly in the latter age through Nichiren himself who is one of these millions of "saints-out-of-earth" in whose presence Buddha declared the *vyākaraṇa*. Nichiren had no memory of having been present when the Buddha's prophetic assurance of ultimate attainment (*vyākaraṇa*) was declared to all the Bodhisattvas, but he wondered if he was not perhaps there after all, for "in the present I am unmistakably the one who is realizing the Lotus of Truth. Then in the future I am surely destined to participate in the Communion of the Holy Place, as Buddha promised to all the Bodhisattvas. Inferring the past from the present and future, I should think I must have been present at the communion in the sky. The present assures the future destiny and the future destiny is inconceivable without its cause in the past. The present, future, and past cannot be isolated from one another."¹⁴

Nichiren himself united the present with past as well as with future by embodying in his prophetic concern for the future the Lotus tradition of the long line of Bodhisattvas, but to him this

¹²Letter to Lord Nanjō, *Works* p. 524, quoted by Anesaki, p. 50.

¹³*Sacred Books of the East* p. 293.

¹⁴*Works*, pp. 959-964, quoted in Anesaki p. 84.

link was far more than a mere historical connection. He believed that his person was "the key to the efficacious working of the everlasting Truth, which has its origin in eternity and is destined to prevail forever in the future."¹⁵

We are dealing here with metaphysics as well as with history, or, more exactly, with history as the expression of a creative, active, metaphysical Reality. This attitude toward history immediately gives it reality as an expression of the 'Absolute'¹⁶; this means that process is real and progress is possible. But the progress is achieved only through the embodiment of the Truth, or ultimate Reality, in the lives of individuals. Nichiren hints at this doctrine in speaking of himself as the "key to the efficacious working of the everlasting Truth." As Anesaki puts it,¹⁷ the Truth abides eternally, but it is an abstraction, a dead law, without the person who perpetuates the life of the Truth. The individual is the indispensable organ of the cosmic process: it depends upon him for the realization of its purposes, and he at the same time may be said to depend upon it for his very reality.¹⁸ The significant point in this doctrine of embodiment which differentiates it from most pantheistic thought is that it does not content itself¹⁹ with describing what *is* as divine; it teaches the divine character of the 'nature of things' but insists that this divine character or Truth must be expressed in us, through our own efforts,²⁰ if it is to become effective. This effectiveness actually depends on us;—here is a gospel of what *ought to be*, with a distinct basis for individual responsibility—abundant inspiration for prophets!

We begin to see how it was that prophesy could arise out of Tendai metaphysics, given Nichiren's personal zeal for knowing

¹⁵Anesaki p. 68.

¹⁶This word should be used with caution, lest it suggest unwarranted parallels in western philosophy.

¹⁷p. 28.

¹⁸Thus he achieves metaphysical as well as historical status. Cf. C. A. Bennett on the "need to be real" as characteristic of the mystic in his determination to achieve union with reality. *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism*, p. 50-51 ff. (Yale Univ. Press, 1923).

¹⁹Here lies what seems to me the great distinction between Nichirenism and, for example, Stoicism, which never (so far as I am aware) developed a doctrine of process.

²⁰i.e. not merely expressed in us in the inevitable unconscious way in which all things cannot help expressing the "nature of things."

the One Truth with its ethical implications and embodying it in his life. What was unusual about Nichiren among prophets was his interest in the formulation and systematization of the metaphysical truth which he embodied. The inspiration for this metaphysics he drew likewise from the Lotus, whose second part expounds the doctrine of the "Buddhist Logos" in its eternal aspect, teaching²¹ that "so long as the Buddhists regard their master as a man who achieved Buddhahood at a certain time, they fail to recognize the true person of Buddha, who in reality from eternity has been Buddha, the lord of the world. So long as the vision of Buddhists is thus limited, they are unaware of their own true being, which is as eternal as Buddha's own primeval nature and enlightenment. The Truth is eternal, therefore the Person who reveals it is also eternal, and the relation between master and disciples is nothing but an original and primeval kinship."

"Things come and pass away, but truth abides; men are born and disappear, but life itself is imperishable. Buddhahood is neither a new acquisition nor a quality destined to destruction. The One who embodies the cosmic Truth, Buddha, the Tathagata, neither is born nor dies, but lives and works from eternity to eternity; his Buddhahood is primeval and his inspiration everlasting. How, then, can it be otherwise with any other beings, if only they realize this truth and live in full consciousness of it? Thus, the revelation of the everlasting life discloses the infinite measure of the Tathagata's life, which means at the same time the share of the true Buddhists in the eternal life of Buddha, and in the inextinguishable endurance of the Truth."²²

This 'Buddhology' depends upon Tendai metaphysics, whose essential truth is contained in the concept of mutual interpenetration or participation. According to this view,²³ each living being has inherent in him all the qualities which make up the rest of sentient life; he is not real apart from the universal order of nature but only in relation to all life. The individual achieves enlightenment by finding his place in the fundamental nature of the

²¹Anesaki, p. 26.

²²Anesaki p. 27-8.

²³From here I paraphrase Anesaki's presentation of Tendai metaphysics in his appendix to *Nichiren the Buddhist Prophet*.

universe (dhammatā), realizing in his life as well as in his ideas the truth that no individual can subsist or have reality by himself. The enlightened person lives the life of the universal self; he is called a Tathāgata, who has found his own real nature in the fundamental nature of all existences. He is one who has become truth, become insight, and thereby identified himself with the universe. Buddha in this his true person thus means the nature of the universe, at work for aeons enlightening all beings²⁴ by the One Road (described by Anesaki as "the unity of purpose, methods, and power in all the Buddhas of all ages").

Nichiren's own formulation of this doctrine of mutual interpenetration and the primeval Buddhahood immanent in our own souls is expressed most effectively in an essay written in the calm of his retirement at Minobu in 1279:²⁵

"In everything, in grasses and trees, in mountains and streams, even in earth and dust, there are present the truths of existence of the ten realms of existence (dharma-dhatu) which participate in one another; while the Sole Road of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth, which is immanent in our own souls, pervades the paradises in the ten quarters and is everywhere present in its entirety. . . . All these fruits are inherent in our own soul, and the soul is in reality identical with the Tathāgata of the primeval enlightenment (in his eternal entity) who is furnished with the three aspects of his personality. How can there be any other truth besides the soul (in this sense)?

²⁴This assertion, that a direction toward universal enlightenment is inherent in the very order of the universe, is based on an *a priori* which we cannot divide into separate elements without destroying its distinctive character. It should be illuminated by an understanding of its metaphysical presuppositions, and perhaps even more by a historical analysis of the genetic background (if we may use such an expression) of the *a priori*. Still more important is the effort on our part to enter imaginatively into the Japanese Buddhist *Weltanschauung*. It is difficult for us to sense the profound power of the symbolic ideology which identifies Buddha whose body is the cosmos, who thus represents the universe as a whole with Buddha the enlightening influence in the world. This identification seems to me more subtle, though perhaps no more rational, than the Stoic identification of the Logos, as the order of the universe—with the Logos as indwelling Reason enlightening men. Their identification was originally in large part the result of a verbal ambiguity and never to my knowledge developed a doctrine of process—The Logos was the Reason already in the world rather than *directing* the world toward universal enlightenment. Cf. Origen's Christian and neo-Platonic working out of a similar Logos doctrine with the idea of a future consummation.

²⁵H. Nichiren *Works*, pp. 1892-1913 ff., quoted in Anesaki p. 101.

“The perfection of truth in the Buddha’s soul and the same perfection in our soul are one, and it is inherent in us, and to be realized by ourselves. Thus, there is no truth or existence besides the soul. . . .

“The Tathāgata of the primeval enlightenment is furnished with these three categories of reality; his body, or substance, is the cosmos, or the realm of truth (dharma-dhātu) extending in ten directions; his essence, which is soul, is identical with the cosmos; and his manifestation in glories is manifest in the cosmos also. . . .

“The Paradise, or Land of Purity, is the realm of serene light, and is pure, exempt from all depravities; it exists in the soul of every being. . . .

“. . . Illusion occurs when we seek the Buddha, the Truth, and the Paradise outside of our own self. One who has realized this soul is called the Tathagata. When this state is once attained, (we realize that) the cosmos in ten directions is our own body, our own soul, and our manifestation, because the Tathāgata *is* our own body and soul. . . .

“When the truth of the mutual participation between the one and the many, between the particular and the universal, is fully realized, we shall know that everything and all things are found in each existence in the present life. . . . All truths revealed during the lifetime of the Master are only truths existent in ourselves. Know this, and your own entity is revealed. . . . Thus maintain harmony with the Buddhas of all times and live the life of the Lotus of Truth! Thereby you will attain the final enlightenment without impediment, and know the relation between self-perfection and the enlightening of others.”

This passage illustrates Nichiren’s mysticism even better than his metaphysics, but it seems contradictory to the prophetic passages in which he denounces the vices of his time and in which, as we shall see, he points to a consummation in the future when the world shall be moralized and live according to the True Law. In the passage we have just quoted the present world is represented as a paradise, yet we know that Nichiren more clearly than any of his contemporaries realized the ignorance and depravity of his age, which he denounced in terms hardly suggesting the celestial character of the present constitution of the world!²⁶

²⁶From Nichiren’s essay “Risshō Ankoku Ron” written 1259. Quoted by Anesaki p. 37.

“Woe unto them! They have missed the entrance into the gate that leads to the true Buddhism, and have fallen into the prison-house of false-teachings. They are fettered, entangled, bewildered. Whither will their blind wanderings lead them?”

“Ye men of little faith, turn your minds and trust yourselves at once to the unique Truth of the Righteous Way! Then ye shall see that the three realms of existence are (in reality) the Kingdom of Buddha, which is in no way subject to decay; and that the worlds in the ten directions are all Lands of Treasures, which are never to be destroyed. The Kingdom is changeless, and the Lands eternal. Then how shall your bodies be otherwise than secure, and your minds serene in enlightenment?”

From such statements it might be inferred that the only change necessary to make this world perfect is a change in state of mind! But such a view would seem to negate the passages in which Nichiren points to a consummation in the future, when political conditions as well as individual view-points shall have been changed in accordance with Buddhist principles. How then is this latter view to be reconciled with the doctrine of the ideality of the present world, so clearly set forth in the two passages quoted above?

Have we a contradiction here, an inconsistency, that Nichiren could in one essay speak of the spiritual paradise as present in our souls now; in another describe it as an ideal political and social as well as spiritual consummation in the future? Or is this another illustration of Nichiren's favorite method of analysis—combining two opposites and explaining each by reference to the other, thus illustrating the fundamental truth that no individual thing is itself except in relation to its opposite, and that the total reality includes both in a whole? No, the apparent contradiction here is a phenomenon deeper than any pet method of Nichiren's. It is common to all the mystics. Professor Bennett of Yale has most illuminatingly analyzed it in his “Philosophical Study of Mysticism”²⁷. The mystic experience, he suggests, is a synthesis of two paradoxical propositions:

“All is well”

“All can be made good”

The first proposition asserts that reality is good now—thus Nichiren asserts the inner presence of the Paradise. The person who realizes

²⁷Especially in ch. xi and xii.

this somehow achieves finality now. But the mystic insight, though in a sense final, is still at the same time only a foretaste of a good which in a very imperfect society must be worked out, so that in the future all men may achieve finality. Again Nichiren fits into Professor Bennett's scheme, though the inspiration which made him believe that "all could be made good" was probably very different from that of most mystics. For he derived his confidence in the ultimate universal realization of the Truth from his study of the *vyākaraṇa* passages in the Lotus Scripture. These prophecies gave him assurance regarding the future, and also encouraged him to face the evils of the present by interpreting them as marks of the third degenerate age which heralded the "approach of the sages."²⁸ This consummation is to be realized by all beings not only sages"²⁸ after which the light of the Lotus should illumine the whole world.

This consummation is to be realized by all beings not only individually but as a community, even as a state, whose center is to be the *Kaidan* or Holy See which Nichiren established as base for the propagation of the Lotus of Truth, representing the spiritual paradise on earth.

"When, at a certain future time, the union of the state law and the Buddhist Truth shall be established, and the harmony between the two completed, both sovereign and subjects will faithfully adhere to the Great Mysteries. Then the golden age, such as were the ages under the reign of the sage-kings of old, will be realized in these days of degeneration and corruption, in the time of the Latter Law. Then the establishment of the Holy See will be completed, by imperial grant and the edict of the Dictator, at a spot comparable in its excellence with the Paradise of Vulture Peak. We have only to wait for the coming of the time. Then the moral law will be achieved in the actual life of mankind. The Holy See will then be the seat where all

²⁸"I, Nichiren, might not be the messenger but still my time corresponds with the time. Moreover, my understanding of the law is exceedingly deep and sound, so that I am going to take a pioneer's task in proclaiming this Law until the sage shall appear. But when this law once appears, then all the laws which have been preached by many priests and scholars during the ages of the Right and Fanciful Law shall be as if they were the stars after the rising of the sun....

"After this time, all influences, inspirations and effects of Buddha's images and priests in the temple and monasteries which were founded during the former ages, shall disappear and only this Great Law shall spread all over the world." (*Works*, 580-1, quoted by Satomi)

men of the three countries and the whole *Jambu-Dvīpa* (world) will be initiated into the mysteries of confession and expiation."²⁹

"We have only to wait" hardly means premillarian acquiescence, for Nichiren was the most strenuous of Buddhists, ever advocating ardent violent propagation of the Truth. And elsewhere he describes the duty of the true Buddhist during the evil times: the loyal subject must protest against the rulers when he feels that they are not conforming to the Buddhist Law; only so does he fulfil his obligation to the rulers. Obligation is the focal point in Nichiren's ethical scheme; its application to political life grows out of his general ethical scheme which is based on this principle of recompense for indebtedness. A man's three objects of reverence should be his parents, his teachers, his rulers; to each of whom he should discharge his indebtedness by passing on in turn what he received from them. Thus we must pay our debt to our parents not only by revering them while they are alive, but also by propagating the life they gave us; so to our teachers by propagating the truth they taught us, and to our government by cooperating in the maintenance of law and order and by criticising when it acts contrary to right principles.

"If you would be free from the offence committed by the country as a whole, make remonstrance to the rulers, and be yourself prepared for death or exile! Is it not said in the Scripture, 'Never shrink from sacrificing the body for the sake of the Incomparable Way'? . . . That we have, from the remotest past down to the present, not attained Buddhahood, is simply due to our cowardice, in that we have always been afraid of these perils and have not dared to stand up publicly for the Truth. The future will never be otherwise, so long as we remain cowards." (*Works* p. 1937-8 quoted Anesaki p. 118)

This principle of mutual indebtedness is the correlate in the ethical realm of the metaphysical principle of mutual participation: the dependence of each upon all and the inseparable tie binding the individual to the community in which he lives. Because this is so, individuals cannot achieve enlightenment until the community is moralized, nor can the community become perfect until the individuals do their utmost to "protect the moral law" and

²⁹*Works* p. 2053 quoted by Anesaki p. 110.

shape the nation in accordance with it. For the nation is the natural unit with which to start, though the ultimate realization must include a world of moralized nations. This political application of Nichiren's doctrines has been set forth by a modern advocate of "Nichirenism"—Kishio Satomi.³⁰ He quotes significant passages of political bearing from Nichiren's works and then amplifies the modern implications of his master's doctrine of the immanent spiritual paradise and its ultimate universal realization:

"In brief, my religion is the law of the political path."
(Nichiren, *Works* p. 391)

"The priests among my disciples shall be the Masters to the Emperors or the ex-Emperors, and the laymen shall take seats in the Ministry; and thus in the future, all the nations of the world shall adore this law."
(Nichiren, *Works* p. 583)

After quoting these and similar passages, Satomi goes on to say:

"Religion is intended to redeem living beings and their environment."

"According to Nichiren, the heavenly paradise has not an allegorical existence, but is the highest aim of living beings in the living world, in other words, it must be actually built on the earth. For such a fundamental humanistic aim we must all strive. The true commandment has not its being apart from the vow. If one fully comprehends his thought, and will strive for it, then the signification of one's life will be realized. This thought is the most important idea of Nichiren's religion, and, in fact, the peculiarity of Nichirenism consists therein. For him, to protect and extend the righteousness over the world, through the country and to everybody is the true task of life.

"... In the religious sense, the unification of the world or the salvation of the world is impossible unless the religion and the country assimilate.

"According to Nichiren, in the degenerate days of the Latter Law, there is no Buddhist commandment outside of our vow for the reconstruction of the country and the realization of the Heavenly Paradise in the world. Even the so-called virtuous sage, if he does not embrace this great and strong vow, in other words only enjoys virtue individually, such a sage is pretty useless.

"Although a man be imperfect, let him carry out Bud-

³⁰In his book *Japanese Civilization and the Principles of Nichirenism*, (Kegan Paul, 1923)

dha's task with the strong vow for the realization of Buddha's Kingdom, or with preaching or with economical (sic) power or with knowledge of sciences or with all sorts of such things: We can find the true significance of religion, of commandment, of human life, therein.

....."The protection of moral law is the sole task of human life."

We have quoted at some length from Satomi to illustrate the significant prophetic and 'humanistic' gospel which modern Buddhists are developing out of Nichiren's doctrines of the spiritual paradise on earth and the dependence of the cosmic Truth upon individual embodiment for its complete realization. In the synthesis of these two aspects of his teaching, united in his stirring vision of cosmic process toward universal enlightenment, lies a mighty inspiration for prophesy. And whether such visions be based on Hebrew monotheism or Buddhist pantheism, our age, too, has need of individuals who shall embody the Truth and further the enlightenment of all beings!

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